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Local theater group covers all things love during latest performance



By Lawrence Synett TribLocal reporter Monday at 1:21 p.m.



The four-person ensemble of Christopher Davis, Amy Ferraro, Amanda Flahive and Mark Mahallak take centerstage this weekend at the Raue Center for the Arts in Crystal Lake. (Photo provided by Raue Center for the Arts)

At the midway point of its inaugural season, the Williams Street Repertory at the Raue Center for the Arts will cover all things love just in time for Valentine's Day.

"I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change" is the third production by the Crystal Lake-based troupe, and dissects relationships with a four-person ensemble and live music. The musical opens at 8 p.m. Friday at the Raue, 26 N. Williams St. Two other performances are scheduled for 4 p.m. and 8 p.m. Saturday.

"We had a slot open in the early spring, and what better way to fill that than by celebrating romance," Raue Executive Director Richard Kuranda said. "It's a great date-night event about couples coming to terms with their relationships."

Local resident and performing arts-lover Regina Belt is directing the group's newest theater installment. She has had four children's plays published and directed other shows at the Woodstock

Opera House, McHenry County College and Elgin Community College.

All of the scenes are independent from one another, and feature a total of 58 characters, all played by only four performers, according to Belt.

“This is a show most can relate to because it’s about love, whether you’re searching for it, have it or lost it,” she said. “It’s absolutely hilarious and with Valentine’s Day right around the corner, it makes it even better.”

The production company — spearheaded by Kuranda — was created more than two years ago and began by co-producing local shows. The troupe includes local talent, as well as performers from throughout the Chicagoland area.

After garnering financial support from private citizens and grants, the group started producing its own shows beginning with “The Rocky Horror Show” in October. That was followed by a successful run of David Sedaris’ short story, “Santaland Diaries.”

With performances costing upwards of \$45,000, the first two shows have been profitable, Kuranda said.

“The response thus far has been truly amazing,” he said. “We are cautiously optimistic, almost waiting for the other shoe to drop, because it has been so well received.”

Having a local company allows theater lovers in the area the opportunity to see professional shows without having to travel far.

“We’ve needed this for a long time,” Belt said. “You don’t have to go into the city to find the arts. It’s like having a professional company right in your own backyard.”

The troupe is looking at performing an adaptation of “Romeo and Juliet” for later this spring. The American musical, “The Fantasticks,” is slated for summer.

For information about Raue or upcoming performances, visit www.rauecenter.org.

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