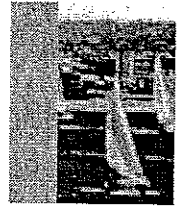


# THE BEACH REPORTER

The Newspaper of the Beach Cities



Thursday, July 25, 2002

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## Stepping Out

### Theater: El Camino makes the most of its 'Guys and Dolls'

By Kent Stoddart

"Guys and Dolls" is a 52-year-old American theater treasure. The reason for its longevity does not solely rest in its memorable music by Frank Loesser, clever lyrics by Jo Swerling and Abe Burrows, or Damon Runyon's witty present-tense dialogue and humorous Times Square characters. It is the fable, the moral premise or principled human behavior, that gives this show legs.

As all gamblers know, it is about taking a chance on what you believe, regardless of the odds. That one more roll of the dice, the drawing of that extra card or betting on that long shot is just an allegory for giving up your fears, anxieties or prejudices and taking a risk. It's kissing lady luck on the lips, and taking a leap of faith on love and life.

Director Ron Scarlata and his production team at El Camino College's Center for the Arts realize that for "Guys and Dolls" to really knock 'em dead, the abstract moral theme must take center stage. Scarlata and his team spotlight these themes and character epiphanies, and then back them up with strong acting, big voices, a flawless orchestra and impressive production values.

The four principals -- Kevin Earley (Sky Masterson), Nathan Holland (Nathan Detroit), Nora Roque (Sarah Brown) and Kayleen Leone (Miss Adelaide) -- are marvelously cast and add fresh interpretations to their canonized roles. Earley and Roque have substantial chemistry as lovers and their duet, "I've Never Been In Love Before," is a show-stopper.

Leone and Holland play off each other beautifully, which adds a believability to the 14-year engagement between Nathan and Adelaide. Their "Sue Me" is a comedic high point in the show. Richard Blake (Nicely-Nicely Johnson), David Rossetti (Benny Southstreet) and Jason Slyter (Rusty Charlie) do a wonderful job as Nathan Detroit's gambling cohorts. Their "Fugue for Tinhorns" really got the show cooking and Blake's "Sit Down, You're Rockin' The Boat" brought the house down.

The rest of the cast and ensemble were fully committed and thoroughly enjoying themselves, which seems to be -- along with his curtain encore -- a Scarlata trademark.

Musical director Hector Salazar's men and women in the pit capture that Broadway energy that is inherent in the Loesser score. Dorothy La Spina's choreography is nostalgic and fun. The production team of Chuck Turner, Sherry Linnell, Bill Georges, Joyce Ann Littrell and Dawn Huntoon create the energy and spectacle of 1950s New York with paint, plywood, muslin, lights, clothes and grease paint -- no easy trick.

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