

Pacifica Tribune



photo by Lance Huntley

"Ya got trouble, my friends," Prof. Harold Hill (Doy Charnsupharindr) points out to the now nervous residents of River City, IA.

Five-star 'Music Man' plays the Spindrift

By Jean Bartlett
Tribune Writer

Sure a bunch of the townsfolk of the fictional town of River City, Iowa are bickering and gossiping at the start of playwright/composer Meredith Wilson's multi-Tony award-winning musical "The Music Man" like there's no tomorrow. But that's because they have nearly forgotten what they are supposed to do with today. Yet they are going to be reminded already, and by one of the most beloved scoundrels to ever fly off the pages of Broadway's Golden Age songbook – Prof. Harold Hill.

A traveling con man with a patter so sly he could shake off the dew from a perfect day's morning, Prof. Hill arrives in Iowa after narrowly escaping the angry citizens from the numerous towns he has bamboozled throughout the state of Illinois. What's he going to do in River City? Well, he's going to convince the citizens that they need a marching band to keep their children and their youth away from all the horrifying troubles lurking just inches away from personal disaster. With their money, he is going to buy their children the instruments and uniforms they need, and then he is going to teach all his new students his not-to-be-disputed, or frankly investigated, "think system" of music instruction.

Oh, Prof. Hill is a swindler alright and it's almost impossible to believe that River City's most eloquently educated and best nonsense detector – librarian and piano teacher Marian Paroo – could possibly find a space in her heart for this nearly 100 percent jerk. But the key words here are "almost" and "nearly" and when coupled with the age-old conviction that "true love conquers all," well, you've got yourself a match made in heaven.



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Can true love foil a flimflammer's flimflam? Traveling bandleader Harold Hill (Doy Charnsupharindr) and town librarian Marian Paroo (Elizabeth Neff) are about to find out.

Meredith Wilson's "The Music Man" is currently playing the mainstage of the Pacifica Spindrift Players. It is directed by Gary Craig Schoenfeld, choreographed by Lizzie Chapman and Doug Greer, and Jad Bernardo leads its vocal/music direction. It is a five-star performance from start to finish. How come?

First off it's got some of the best-loved lyrics/melodies in the footlights serenade, and they include: "Ya Got Trouble," "Goodnight My Someone," "Seventy-Six Trombones," "Pick-A-Little, Talk-A-Little/Goodnight Ladies," "Marian the Librarian," "Gary, Indiana" and "Till There Was You." Second first off, the always exceptional Mr. Schoenfeld has pulled in a fantastic cast with two outstanding leads – Doy Charnsupharindr as Harold Hill and Elizabeth Neff as Marian Paroo – that absolutely make the audience fall head over heels with every inch of this production. In addition, there is the sublime treatment of movement and vocals by Chapman, Greer and Bernardo. And also, a moment must be taken to praise costume designer Jennifer Gough. Not only can she dress cast members in the finest of 1912's jaw-dropping threads, but she can put a lady in a hat that's a story all its own. Brava.

Doy Charnsupharindr as Prof. Hill is flawlessly charming as he masterfully maneuvers speed-dial lyrics with a lovely baritone. Elizabeth Neff as piano teacher and town librarian Marian Paroo is sensational. What a voice, what a stage presence. In addition, the sparks between Neff's Paroo and Charnsupharindr's Hill nearly ignited fans of love everywhere.

Gabi McColgan as Marian's sweet, but not-to-be-fooled, widowed Irish mom Mrs. Paroo is loveable perfection. Joanie Pugh Newman as flared-nostril society lady, and Mayor's wife, Eulalie Shinn wins the flat out "hoot of a performance" award – and can she wear a hat! Bobby Singer as the not terribly intelligent Mayor George Shinn is finely booming windbag exquisiteness. The Barbershop Quartet made up of River City's once ever-squabbling School Board Members Olin Brit (played by bass Michael Weinberg), Oliver Hix (played by baritone Will Tenney), Ewart Dunlop (played by second tenor Tim Lynch) and Jacy Squires (played by high tenor Madeline Tenney), not only find blissful harmony under the

direction of Prof. Hill but deliver blissful harmony. Special cute-as-a-button-and-talented awards to: Chloe Fong, as Marian's lisping brother Winthrop Paroo; Emma Berman as Marian's piano student Amaryllis; and Andy Serrano as Marcellus Washburn, former con man and friend to Harold Hill – and one shiny head award to the always ingenious Gary Pugh Newman as Charlie Cowell.

Sure there are holes in the playwright's plot if one tries to analyze how this kind of behavior, on Prof. Hill's part in particular, might really play out in today's world. But don't do it! From the opening scene of fast-talking salesmen riding a train rocking to the rhythm of its rail-gripping wheels, through the town's realization that a little faith and optimism can build a better day – this family-friendly musical is all about the love. Get your tickets.



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Prof. Harold Hill (Doy Charnsupharindr) learns a life lesson from his River City band.

"The Music Man" plays weekends at PSP Theater, 1050 Crespi Drive, Pacifica, through September 1. Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m. Sunday at 2 p.m. Box Office: 650-359-8002 or online at www.pacificaspindriftplayers.org. Tickets: \$35/adults, \$30 seniors and students.

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