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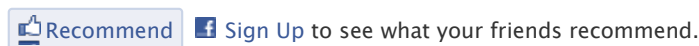
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[Aerospace Players put on “The Producers”](#)

By [Andrea Ruse](#) | July 28th, 2010 | Filed under [Theater](#) | [No Comments](#)



Max Bialystock (center, played by Bob Minnichelli) sings to the crowd in “The King of Broadway.” Photo by Peggy Magee

by Janet Oshiro

Watch out Broadway, there’s a rising cast of singing and dancing... rocket scientists?

The Aerospace Players, a volunteer theater company, consists of employees from The Aerospace Corporation, LA Air Force Base, Northrop Grumman, Raytheon, Boeing, MIT Lincoln Lab, and other businesses. Their most recent production is Mel Brooks’s “The Producers.”

“The Producers” follows failed Broadway producer Max Bialystock (Bob Minnichelli) and accountant Leo Bloom (Joe Essner) as they carry out a scheme to produce an instant theatrical failure, while simultaneously striking it rich. In their hunt for a show that’s so offensive it’s sure to flop, they find the musical, “Springtime for Hitler,” which ultimately leads them to cross paths with flamboyant directors, lovely Swedish actresses, and devious elderly ladies. “The Producers” is a comedic masterpiece that

blends one ridiculous situation after another with catchy musical numbers.

Probably one of the more impressive feats of this production is its set. Made by members of the cast, it changes seamlessly from the front of a theater to Bialystock’s office, to the elegant foyer and living room of Roger De Bris’s Upper East Side Townhouse. The creativity of the set is also apparent in numerous musical numbers; “I Wanna Be a Producer” features singing showgirls sprouting out of filing cabinets. A projector is also included in the show, giving the illusion of headlines across billboards reading everything from “Whitehall and Marks Accounting” to “Another Bloom Production.”

While the lead singers of The Aerospace Players’ “The Producers” are by no means jaw-dropping vocalists, they do possess clear and in-tune vocals that are pleasant to listen to. All the lead characters stay in time with the music, and it is apparent that although The Aerospace Players is comprised purely of volunteers, its members have worked hard for this show. The only concern to be found in this production is the chorus, which has an unfortunate tendency to fade and become lost in the music of the live pit orchestra. On the other hand, the orchestra, which includes everything from a harp to violins, sounds quite wonderful and well rehearsed.

Jon Sparks, who plays Roger De Bris, definitely steals the show. It’s no coincidence that the two most entertaining musical numbers, “Keep It Gay” and “Springtime for Hitler,” feature his character and vocals. It’s hard to go out on stage in a sparkling silver ball gown, while wearing jewelry and a pair of gloves – especially if you’re a man. But Sparks wholly embraces his role, making his character both outrageous and undeniably hilarious.

It is apparent from the minute Sparks sings the first notes of “Keep It Gay” to when scantily clad cowboys, Indians, and construction workers parade and sing onto the stage, that regardless of vocal ability, the Aerospace Players are intent on making this show enjoyable. Creative and cheeky choreography, like that in “Along Came Bialy,” which features a line of elderly ladies dancing with walkers, definitely adds to the enjoyment of what is already an amusing show.

The Aerospace Players aren’t interested in being the next big hit – they’re simply looking to entertain their audience and themselves. This production of “The Producers” is pure fun.

The Producers, presented by The Aerospace Players, is being performed tonight, tomorrow, and Saturday, at 8 p.m., in James Armstrong Theatre, 3330 Civic Center Drive, Torrance. Tickets, \$22 at the door. For more information, visit aeclubs.org/theater. ER

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