

A 'Lovely' Show

Written by editor
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"My Fair Lady", the musical that turned a loveable London street urchin into American theater's favorite aristocrat, takes the stage of the Arts Center of Coastal Carolina this December in a production every bit as lovely as its main character.



Casey Colgan, the mastermind behind last season's much-acclaimed "Les Miserables," returns to direct "My Fair Lady," running Dec. 2-27. An actor as well as a director, Colgan has appeared in several productions of the musical, including the European tour starring Maximilian Schell.

"It's the perfect musical," Colgan said. "If you don't love this show, you don't love theater."

Based on "George Bernard Shaw's Pygmalion," the play tells the story of Professor Henry Higgins, a famed linguist who bets his colleague that he can teach anyone to speak English so properly he could pass them off as nobility. He chooses as his guinea pig a low-class Cockney flower seller named Eliza.

Critics have called it a textbook case study on how to combine comedy, romance, sentiment and wit into a work of charm and brilliance. Winner of six Tony Awards, it features such memorable Broadway tunes as "I Could Have Danced All Night," "The Rain in Spain," "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face" and "Wouldn't It Be Lovely."

"It's one of my top three dream roles," said New York actress Lindsie VanWinkle, who is playing Eliza. "The character grows so much through the course of the show. I have to do three different dialects and transform from a street urchin to a very proper English lady."

Arts Center audiences will remember VanWinkle as Eponine in "Les Mis." An accomplished New York actress, VanWinkle has performed in numerous off-Broadway productions.

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“Lindsie is going to be divine as Eliza,” Colgan said. “She’s so elegant and regal; she’s going to make everybody forget Audrey Hepburn. And she’s got the voice to sing the part.”

Hepburn, who starred in the 1964 film adaptation of the musical, was vocally dubbed by Marni Nixon. The movie won eight Academy Awards, including Best Picture.

The Arts Center production will include several other familiar faces, among them Nic Thompson, Dan Gibson and Scott Evans, who will be reprising his role as Freddie, Eliza’s love-struck admirer. Evans made his Arts Center debut in the 1998 production of “My Fair Lady” and most recently played Leopold Bloom in “The Producers.”

Drew Taylor, who also starred as Franz in “The Producers,” is back playing Eliza’s father. Among the 25-member cast are several local actors, including Patti Maurer, Margaret Crenshaw and Candice Skingley.

For the part of Higgins, Colgan chose British actor Peter Simon Hilton, whose theater credits include the UK’s first national tour of “Les Miserables” and the Broadway national tour of “Frost/Nixon .”

“‘My Fair Lady’ is the kind of play you know walking in you’re going to enjoy,” Hilton said. “The central characters are so rich, you can’t help but get involved in their plight. You’re rooting for everyone to come out on top in the end.”

Tickets for “My Fair Lady” are \$49 for an adult preview ticket (\$35 for a child) or \$53 for a regular performance (\$37 for child), or you can purchase a four-show subscription package that offers discounted tickets to the remaining Arts Center Theater Series performances.

Performances are Tuesday-Saturday at 8 p.m. and Sundays at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. There will also be a matinee on Christmas Eve. Doors open Tuesday-Saturday at 7 p.m. for a happy half-hour celebration with discounted drink discounts until 7:30.

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For tickets, visit www.artshhi.com or call 843-842-ARTS.