

The Drowsy Chaperone

Written by Editor

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If it's laughs you're looking for this Christmas, cross it off your Santa wish list. The Arts Center's production of *The Drowsy Chaperone* will have you ho, ho, hoing like the jolly old elf himself. *Drowsy Chaperone* runs Dec. 7-31, closing with a special New Year's Eve performance. The 9:30 p.m. show on Dec. 31 will feature champagne, party favors and a countdown to 2012 with the cast. A hilarious homage to the old Broadway musicals of the 1920s and the carefree, madcap Jazz Age, this song-and-dance comedy won five Tony Awards in 2006, including Best Book and Best Score. It's a spoof of musicals that started out as a stag party skit written by actors for actors, said Stephen Day, who is playing the lead role of Man in Chair, an agoraphobic Broadway musical fanatic. It went over so big, they reshaped it for the Toronto Fringe Festival. The fun begins when the down-in-the-dumps Man in Chair decides to cheer himself up by putting on his favorite cast album a recording of the fictional Broadway musical *The Drowsy Chaperone*. No sooner has the needle touched the 33 LP than the musical magically comes to life in his living room. The play within the play unfolds telling the story of a glamorous *Feldzeig Follies* starlet who wants to give up show business to get married. Her producer, determined to keep his meal ticket in the show, concocts a plan to sabotage the wedding. He convinces Latin lover Adolpho to seduce her, however he mistakenly charms the star's inebriated chaperone instead. Mayhem ensues when the plot entangles a host of other characters, including the dashing bridegroom Robert Martin, the harried and bumbling best man George, the ditzzy wannabe showgirl Kitty and a pair of gangsters disguised as pastry chefs. People keep popping out of his refrigerator and slowly his apartment turns into *The Drowsy Chaperone* set, said Arts Center veteran Casey Colgan. It's really clever how it's done. Day, who played the flamboyant director Roger in *The Producers*, is one of several actors in the show audience members may recognize from previous productions. Among them is Shannon Lee Jones, whose Arts Center credits include *Mame*, *Some Enchanted Evening* and *Hairspray*. She is cast as the Drowsy Chaperone, the diva who is always downing a cocktail. It's so well-written, you actually forget you're in his apartment, Jones said. You think you're watching the show. Playing the Latin lothario is Richard White, featured in the lead role of Horace Vandergelder in last winter's *Hello, Dolly!* and was the voice of Gaston in the movie *Beauty and the Beast*. Other Arts Center alumni include Drew Taylor, best known for his roles as ex-Nazi Franz in *The Producers* and Alfred Doolittle in *My Fair Lady*; Samantha Gershman, the shimmy girl in *Smokey Joe's Caf* and Gail Cook Howell, who starred in *Damn Yankees*, *Fiddler on the Roof* and *Mame*. Tickets for *The Drowsy Chaperone* are \$54 for adults and \$37 for kids and are available at www.artshhi.com or by calling the box office, 843-842-ARTS. [Read more Theatre](arts/theaterdance)