

Feast Dinner Theatre Offers Audiences a Delightful Evening of Dinner and Theatre

By Brodie MacRAE

Ah, if only life were more like dinner theatre. People would have bigger smiles, wilder gestures and more outrageous personalities. They would all be musical and enjoy moments of spontaneous and absurd breaking into song, entertaining each other with the tunes of Canadian legends like Tom Cochrane and Bryan Adams. Plus, problems would only present themselves over a well-prepared meal and would resolve themselves shortly after dessert.

Those crazy fools at the Feast Dinner Theatre are now in the midst of their annual Fall production, which this year is titled "Life is a Highway." The story begins with Arthur Nash, a Federal cabinet minister in charge of the Social Cooperation and Merriment (or SCAM, for short) department of the Canadian government. Their mandate is to increase national unity, and in order to attain this goal, they are holding a nationally-televised race across Canada. There are 5 participants: Mark, a mechanic from BC; Miss Pelham, a wealthy young heir to a Saskatchewan agriculture company, who is accompanied by her chauffeur, Bruce; Karen, a Newfoundland mother of 7 (who have all joined her on the trip, but are thankfully absent from the show); and Giovanni, a recently landed Italian immigrant who desires nothing more than Canadian citizenship. The reward for completing the race first is a \$500,000 cheque, for which each contestant has already formulated plans. However, Mr. Nash receives a call telling him that the Prime Minister is due to arrive any moment with some "big news." Will it be good news or bad news?

Overall, the show was very enjoyable. The script contained many laughs, the actors were all well-suited to their roles and were talented musicians. Giovanni, played by UPEI music student Matt Simon, was the comic highlight of the evening, eliciting the most laughter and stealing the most scenes. His portrayal of a naive

Italian immigrant was reminiscent of Rowan Atkinson's Enrico Pollini in 2001's Rat Race, perhaps largely due to Matt's great facial expressions. Bruce the chauffeur, played by Tarky Whitlock, was also exceptional in his role, providing charmingly dry humour and playing off the other characters quite well. He easily captured the audience's attention whether acting, singing or playing the guitar. As well, Carrie McClellan of the UPEI music department performs the role of Miss Pelham to perfection.

The opening night of the Charlottetown show unfortunately suffered from some problems due to the fact that the show was at the Brothers Two Restaurant in Summerside the previous week and the Charlottetown Hotel was a new venue to the show. The performance and dining area is rather compact and the performers didn't appear to be entirely comfortable in their environment. As well, the balance of the music was off in many of the songs. Lyrics were often drowned out by the bass and drums, and at the start of the show, the songs weren't all that together. However, these details steadily improved throughout the show and it is quite reasonable to assume that

these problems will work themselves out as they continue to perform at the Charlottetown Hotel.

I found parts of the script disappointing, as there are a number of things left unexplored that should be explained. The relationship between Miss Pelham and Bruce is rather unclear. At times their dialogue seems flirtatious, but Bruce also seems to despise his job. So does Bruce secretly love his boss or loathe her? We don't find out. We are also kept completely in the dark about what will happen to the other characters who don't win the prize. Plus, the incredible coincidence of Mr. Nash's department being an acronym which spells "SCAM" is never explained. Despite these small points, the story is still enjoyable and as Scott Robinson notes, "I can't think of any dinner theatre productions that have won awards for outstanding script-writing, so who cares, stupid!?"

The show will be running at the Brothers Two Restaurant in Summerside from September 24-29 and at the Charlottetown Hotel from October 1-6, all shows beginning at 6:30. Go for the great meal. Go for the great music (all of which is Canadian, by the way, including a Stompin' Tom



Artist's rendition of what would happen if dinner theatre erupted into massive food-fight.

medley.) Go for the great comedy. Go because Miss Pelham is also our current yearbook editor and you never know what she might do to your picture if you snub her show. You'd better go, just in case.

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