

BWW Review: PPT'S Marvelous THE FULL MONTY Presents More Than Eye Candy

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From left are actors Matthew Scott Campbell, Jackson Evans, Adrian Aguilar, Harter Clingman, Byron Glenn Willis and Steve Koehler. Photo by Len Villano

"Everything which is necessary, the entire thing, the whole shebang." This was the original meaning of the British slang term "the full monty," before the 1997 British film of the same name. At Peninsula Players (PPT) in August 2016, everything which is necessary, the whole shebang, appears on stage in their marvelous production of *The Full Monty*. Ever since the 1997 British version heralded this cult classic term, these words have transformed in meaning to mean, "full nudity." Which is exactly the meaning Terrence McNally, (book), and David Yazbek (lyrics and music) displayed in their 2000 adaptation musical production reset in Buffalo, New York and applies to six unemployed steel workers. Or named in an alternate title completely reality, 21st century: Desperate Men, Desperate Moves, Desperate Mania.



From left are actors Ashley Lanyon, Erica Elam, Brianna Borger and Katherine Duffy. Photo by Len Villano

PPT Artistic Director and Director for the production Greg Vinkler captures these desperate men who love their wives and sons, their children, with aching insecurity and sincerity. While the women of all ages in the audience this weekend certainly relished "the eye candy" stripping on stage, Vinkler's heartwarming, sensitive direction gave the audience "the whole shebang," for a great everything which is necessary in the theater, a production perhaps unmatched throughout the Midwest.

Vinkler presents these six men-Jerry, Dave, Malcolm, Ethan, Howard and Noah-struggling with their intimate relationships, masculine and feminine, egos and body images to come to terms with what they need to succeed. Each man overcomes a significant obstacle in his current life to finish what they propose to do-perform a strip tease similar to the famous Chippendales, and earn some quick money to pay the bills, piling up after being unemployed for over a year. This outstanding cast and technical team create a must-see summer production, complete with a professional seven piece band to accompany the actors directed by Valerie Maze.

In McNally's adaptation, Jerry (Adrian Aguilar) strives to pay the child support for his budding teenage son Nathan (Hayden Hoffman), while his best friend Dave (Matthew Scott Campbell), does the dishes and vacuums at home for his wife. Malcolm (Harter Clingman) daily care gives his mother, wheelchair bound, and meets Ethan (Jackson Evans), who desperately needs friends. Malcolm and

Ethan connect and display a tender moment in the poetic song, "You Walk With Me." Then there's Howard (a lean Steve Koehler), the MBA graduate without a job, who sincerely wishes to give his wife everything she wants, and Noah embodies the "Big, Black Man," also the name of one stellar musical showpiece performed by Byron Glenn Willis and the boys, whose character supports several children.

The men clearly form the centerpiece to the story; however, the women supply immeasurable curves and warmth. Dave's wife Georgie, Brianna Borger, and Howard's wife Vicki, Maggie Carney, sing heartwarming numbers while they, too, try to understand the men in their lives. One great example sung by Carney explains her "Life With Harold." In an important cameo role, Peggy Roeder captures the essence of her character, the mature Jeanette, willingly attempting to shape these men into an semblance of a striptease show. All hilarious fun, especially when Roeder sings, "Jeanette's Show Biz Number."

Perhaps one song sung by the ensemble, including the equally talented Katherine Duffy, Erica Elam and Ashley Lanyon, a contemporary issue comes to light in the words of "The Goods." Here the "Boys" ogle girls in a magazine, their ideals of perfect woman who have the goods they need to catch a man's eye. Yet the six steel workers all prefer something different in their "10 rated" women. The "Girls" feast their eyes on the imperfect strippers and ridicule what physical features they don't have, or are less than "prime rated meat." This humorous ode relates what handsome and beauty means in modern culture.

While appreciating every aspect of *The Full Monty*, the audience realizes men struggle with concerns regarding their sexuality and sex appeal perhaps more than women, with their masculinity often on display, wrapped up in what they do and how they look. Ripped abs and tight touches become masculine objects of envy as do buxom chests, tiny waists or long legs for the feminine ideal. Or do they? If audiences remember any one thing from PPT'S laugh out loud and visually mesmerizing musical, please consider the bodies any of these men possess, in whatever shape or form, height or weight, are beautiful and valuable to the people who love them--as is who they are on the inside of their skin--a great father, loving husband, true friend, just as any member of the audience is to those people who love them.

Who these men, and of course, then the women, are in their personal relationships and on the job rates mores worthy a than how one looks when going "the full monty." And that phrase certainly refers to the original British slang term definition--indeed, go to PPT's entire everything that's necessary for a wonderful summer theatrical production, much more than merely eye candy for the audience. Go see *The Full Monty*, "the whole musical shebang" and thoroughly enjoy.

Peninsula Players presents The Full Monty through August 14 in Fish Creek for their 81st season. For information on special events, performance schedule or tickets, please call: 920.868-3287 or visit www.peninsulaplayers.com.