

'I Do, I Do!' does, does at dinner theater

I Do! I Do!, currently at the Colonnades Dinner Theater, is a good show, perhaps even a very good show, that lacks the bit of maturing needed to make it a production as good as past offerings.

Blessed with a fine set, good accompaniment, proper blocking, and an improved dinner menu, the show needs only a bit more from its leading pair, Roger Stephens and Sandy Phillips Valdez, to become a first-rate job.

Stephens sings the role of Michael, the not-quite-sure-of-himself groom, in an endearing, though not wholly satisfactory, manner. His Michael is a bumbling, slightly pudgy young man who wears outlandish boxer shorts and starched nightcaps, and who is distinctly ill-at-ease with his new bride on the wedding night. As time goes by he becomes a successful writer of romantic novels, and exemplar of the pompous arse who carries on with other women, only to realize that he can only be happy with his wife.

Stephens is noticeably uncomfortable in places, especially in the first act, where his movements are distinctly awkward, but his face more than makes up for this fleeting ineptness. He manages to radiate, even into old age, a cheerful innocence that captivates the audience just as it must have charmed his bride, Agnes.

Longs for excitement

As Agnes, Sandy Valdez offers the portrait of a woman who is by choice a

good and dutiful mother and housewife, but who longs for excitement to salvage her life from blandness. When Michael reveals to her that he is in love with another woman, she becomes a hard glowing point of incandescent fury, resolving to play Michael's game as well, stepping out for a bit of fun on her own account, which shocks her husband.

Valdez carries herself well on stage and seems to put a bit more life into her role. One can, for instance, see her in a wide assortment of mental postures, where it is hard to imagine Michael being anything but fairly pleased with himself, puzzled and perhaps annoyed by his occasionally uppity wife.

David Ware omelet

One area where both Stephens and Valdez need more work is in their singing, in which generally fine performances run into slight difficulties. Stephens' problem lies in his low-volume numbers, where he has a hard time retaining a constant pitch and texture. Once he is given an opportunity to add volume, his voice sounds out like the magnificent instrument it is.

Low volume

Valdez, on the other hand, has

difficulty hitting the opening note of "Nobody's Perfect," but is more at ease with low volume. Her voice is not as full as Stephens', but it carries excellently and provides a needed sharpness.

These problems should iron themselves out nicely as the show's run progresses, as should Stephens' stage discomfiture, leaving a pair of crystalline performances.

Standards of service are up to the high standards set by past Colonnades presentations, as is the lavish dinner. Prepared with a Spanish motif, the meal features a respectable gazpacho, a paella that thankfully is made with prawns rather than with full-sized shrimps (as has been done elsewhere), and finally, a dessert that can be praised rather than saved as a reward for a pesky Doberman pinscher.

Also deserving thanks are the show's accompanist, Linda Laessle, who manages, like so few accompanists that I have heard, to provide enough volume to be heard without overpowering; and Don Yanik, whose set design is a model of elegant utility and nice finish.

My compliments to director Mike Dobbins and assistant director Robert Thurber, who have obviously put a great deal into this production. If their cast will "go the extra mile" with them to put the final cleanup on their roles, *I Do! I Do!* will be a presentation well worth seeing.

Go for the Gusto. Or don't go at all.



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