



KEVIN KLINE (left) and Tom Selleck star in "In & Out," a Frank Oz comedy that adds humor to the problem of discovering one's sexuality. PHOTO COURTESY OF PARAMOUNT PICTURES

Comedy shines 'In & Out'

BY GERRY BELTZ
Film Critic

Movie Review

A little bit goes a long way in "In & Out." Director Frank Oz bounces back from the incredibly average "The Indian In The Cupboard," and scores another hit to add to previous successes such as "Dirty Rotten Scoundrels" and "What About Bob?"

One of Oz's gifts for success is tapping the right talent for the right job, and placing Kevin Kline in the role of a small-town English and drama teacher is the big, red bow on a wonderful overall film.

Although the subject of homosexuality isn't one that is often followed by fits of uncontrollable laughter, Oz helps the film slip through the choking grasp of reality by making virtually every character a caricature of itself.

Howard Brackett (Kline) finds his life turning upside down and inside out when a former student (Matt Dillon) makes the announcement during his Oscar-acceptance speech that Howard is gay.

This comes as a complete surprise to everyone in town — including Howard, who is getting married in just a few days.

That's just the beginning of Howard's roller-coaster ride — a bloodthirsty journalist (Tom

Selleck) is after Howard and "the truth," Howard's students begin to notice "things" about his everyday behavior and eventually even Howard begins to doubt himself, partially because he and his bride-to-be, Elizabeth (Joan Cusack), have never been physically intimate during their three-year engagement.

The entire movie isn't all laughs and guffaws, of course. Howard's employment comes into question, and several misconceptions about homosexuality are brought out during the film.

Although too comedic to make any serious political statements, "In & Out" is a film with a very firmly based opinion. It manages to drive the point home gently and even lets the stupid humans learn a thing or two before the movie is finished.

Kline is absolutely fabulous, whether he's playing an introspective thinker or cutting a rug to "I Will Survive," and he more than makes up for appearing in the lethally boring "Fierce Creatures."

Cusack is also a blast as Howard's uptight fiancée, who doesn't know who or what to believe. Between "In & Out" and "Grosse Pointe Blank," Cusack has once again proven she is one of Hollywood's most underrated performers, and should be tapped more often.

The Facts

Title: "In and Out"
Stars: Kevin Kline, Joan Cusack, Tom Selleck, Matt Dillon
Director: Frank Oz
Rating: PG-13 (language, adult situation)
Grade: B+
Five Words: How a surprise affects reality.

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Selleck actually gives one of the best performances of the movie underplaying the scoop-hungry reporter Peter. His take on tabloid-type reporters, actually sidesteps the norm and adds a dimension to the exchanges between Howard and him.

As with several Oz films, the movie does have a few unexpected twists and turns, so make sure you pee and get your popcorn before "In & Out" begins.

Overall, "In & Out" is a wonderful gem of a flick: great performances, good script (though the pacing was a bit off) and a gentle blend of drama and side-splitting laughter.

(Critic's note: At the beginning, while the Best Actor nominees are being read, pay attention to the movie title associated with the actor in question. That in itself is a riot.)

Check out "In & Out."

Legendary female icons meet face to face in western opera

BY LIZA HOLTMEIER
Senior Reporter

Theater

Calamity Jane and Annie Oakley star side by side in an opera this weekend.

Heartland Opera Theater, the professional touring ensemble of Opera Omaha, opens its season with "Opera Goes West" at the Omaha Children's Museum Saturday.

Jane Hill, Opera Omaha's executive director, and Hal France, artistic director and principal conductor, created the production hoping to expand knowledge of the history of Nebraska and westward expansion.

The show features the characters Ms. Patti, Calamity Jane, Horace Tabor and Annie Oakley, together on a magical train, the "Way Back Engine." The train transports them from the 19th century to current-day Omaha.

The group attempts to make

the best of the situation with popular Old West and modern song. Nebraska's history plays a significant role in the production, and characters refer to Chief Sitting Bull, the railroads and Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. Friendships between the characters soon form, but the train forces them to return to the Old West.

"There's a really neat scene with Annie Oakley and Calamity Jane," said Liesl Jeffrey, marketing coordinator. "It's the whole 'Anything You Can Do, I Can Do Better,' and shows what would have happened if these two legends had met."

In addition to its focus on history, the opera focuses on the role of the arts in westward expansion.

"When settlers moved their families west in the 1880s, they also brought their culture and

"There's a really neat scene with Annie Oakley and Calamity Jane."

LIESL JEFFREY
marketing coordinator

arts, including opera," France said. "Singers such as Adelina Patti toured the country, performing at opera houses such as Boyd's Opera House in Omaha."

The opera will feature Heartland Opera Theater Soprano Anne DeVries as opera legend Adelina Patti. She will perform popular opera songs from the 1880s, with a medley of arias, opera medleys for solo voices and instrumental accompaniment.

"Opera Goes West" starts at 11 a.m. Saturday and is free with museum admission.

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