

## **The Drowsy Chaperone: a lively musical**

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The Martlet

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A farcical comedy that had the crowd laughing even before the lights came up, *The Drowsy Chaperone* is a must-see spoof on 1920s Broadway musicals with romance, prohibition, spit-takes and gangsters.

Even if some viewers do not get the references to '20s musicals, the ingenious writing by Bob Martin and Don McKellar plus the hammy acting of the Langham Court Theatre cast creates laughter in almost every line.

Kyle Kushnir narrates as the Man in Chair, keeping the laughter going from his very first line and gleeful chuckle. The show begins in the Man in Chair's modern apartment; the characters of *The Drowsy Chaperone* come to life around him.

*The Drowsy Chaperone* follows the whirlwind romance of a successful showgirl (Alison Roberts) who is giving up the stage for the man she believes to be her true love (Dylan Northover). Of course, the transition does not go smoothly, as a producer (Cam Culham) attempts to break off the wedding, helped along by two witty gangsters (Lindsay Robinson and Jeffrey Stephen). A ditzy showgirl (Linda O'Connor) tries to steal the spotlight, a Latin lover (Alf Small) tries to seduce the bride, and the drowsy chaperone (Karen Lee Pickett) turns out to be a horrible chaperone. The fun keeps going with the forgetful Mrs. Tootingdale (Sue Wilkey), who owns the estate the wedding is to take place at, and her unforgettable underling (Alan Penty). To top it off, the best man (Cameron Northover) runs around, coming up with not-so-brilliant ideas.

At the Jan. 18 performance, there were only a couple, hardly noticeable verbal stumbles and one minor wardrobe malfunction when an earring fell during a dance. It was smoothly retrieved without so much as a pause in the choreography.

The set, designed by Bill Adams, works perfectly as the modern-day apartment of the Man in Chair, and yet somehow shifts smoothly into the stage for roaring '20s hijinks. Lighting by Karrie Wolfe, who worked on the original production in the Toronto Fringe Festival, flows easily throughout the scenes, helping the shift between modernity and yesteryear flawlessly.

*The Drowsy Chaperone* began as a sketch at a stag party for Toronto actors Bob Martin and Janet Van De Graaff. After some reworking, they put it into the Toronto Fringe Festival. The show debuted in 1998 at The Rivoli Theatre in Toronto, opening on Broadway in 2006. The show was nominated for 13 Tony Awards, winning in five categories.

Because of the wonderful reactions at Langham Court Theatre, *The Drowsy Chaperone* will be performed until Feb. 11 (it was originally scheduled to end on Feb. 4). Not even the snow could stop the crowd on opening night. They gave a well-deserved standing ovation at the end. This is one show you should definitely take the 90 minutes to see.