

Langham Court gets drowsy

By Mary Ellen Green - Monday Magazine

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Langham Court Theatre is bringing one of Canada's biggest musical comedy sensations to Victoria for its Vancouver Island debut. The Drowsy Chaperone, opening Jan. 19, is a multiple Tony Award winner that garnered praise from Broadway critics and even did a stint on London's West End.

Directed by Langham veteran Roger Carr (The Laramie Project, The History Boys), with musical direction by Donna Williams and choreography by leading Canadian producer, director and choreographer — and Langham newcomer — Jacques Lemay (artistic director of the opening ceremonies for the 1988 Calgary Olympics, producer and director of the 1994 XV Victoria Commonwealth Games and founder of the Canadian College of Performing Arts in Oak Bay), The Drowsy Chaperone promises to be a crowd pleaser.

With a cast of 17, plus three musicians (including Stephanie Sartore who plays Trix also accompanying on piano), Carr has his hands, and Langham's small stage, full.

"Space is definitely an issue. We're not the McPherson or the Royal, and we have musicians on stage the whole time," says Carr.

"As a director, you have a responsibility to give the audience what they're looking for, but one of the great things about this play is that very few people know much about it."

Set in 1928, The Drowsy Chaperone will take the audience back to the golden age of musical theatre.

"The costumes are a monster. The play is initially set in modern times, in the apartment of a recluse, the Man in Chair, then we move quickly into his imagination where we see a 1928 musical. We have an amazing costume team who keep telling me the number of costumes and accessories, and we're up over 150 now. They've built a lot of the stuff themselves."

Lighting designer, Kerry Wolfe did lighting on the play during its sold-out run at the 1999 Toronto Fringe Festival.

This 90-minute, one-act play features an all star cast and Carr says it will deliver what audiences are looking for in a musical comedy.

"It's fun from beginning to end. You don't have to leave the theatre and do an analysis. You don't have to leave and think you've been cajoled into cheap laughter, it's just a delightful play that takes you to another world and helps you escape from the dreary horrors of the real world... The theme of the play comes from the words of the Man in Chair himself, 'It's just fun.' And that's exactly what it is," says Carr. Don't wait to buy your tickets. One week before opening, the first five performances were already sold out. M