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Skylight Opera presents an old-time double feature



Katherine Bieh

Norman Moses plays Groucho, Ray Jivoff is Harpo and Benjamin Howes is Chico Marx in the latter half of "A Day in Hollywood, A Night in the Ukraine."

By Jim Higgins of the Journal Sentinel

Posted: **March 8, 2010** | (0) COMMENTS

The Skylight Opera Theatre loves to put on a high-spirited, show-bizzy kind of show.

In fact, it loves that so much, the company's letting loose this week with the war cry of Ernie Banks:

"Let's play two!"

With "A Day in Hollywood, A Night in the Ukraine," which opens Friday, the Skylight presents an old-fashioned double feature of old-fashioned musical comedy entertainment.

In act one, "A Day in Hollywood," female and male ushers from the famed [Grauman's Chinese Theater](#) in Hollywood sing and dance a revue of '30s movie entertainment.

That includes, for example, a medley of songs written by [Richard Whiting](#), including "On the Good Ship Lollipop" and "Ain't We Got Fun."

Another number, "Famous Feet," alludes to many stars who've made their fame concrete by impressing their footprints in the [Hollywood Walk of Fame](#).

Director Pam Kriger is drawing on her extensive hoofing experience for the first act's cheekiest number, "Doin' the Production Code," a tap-dance routine that salutes and mocks the infamous [Motion Picture Production Code](#), Hollywood's self-censorship guidelines, which preceded the current film rating system.

The finale of act one, said music director James Valcq, is like a movie trailer that sets up "A Night in the Ukraine," maybe the best Marx Brothers show that never starred Groucho and company. It's loosely based on Chekhov's one-act play "The Bear" - very loosely based, said Valcq, raising his eyebrows for humorous emphasis. He quoted a line from somewhere in the Marxian corpus: "Well that's a plot, now let's get on with the jokes."

Yet, Kriger said, "A Night in the Ukraine" is a better constructed show in one act than many of the Marx Brothers' real productions, which were frequently cobbled together and improvised out of bits of their stage business. The show's creators cleverly came up with bits that the Marx Brothers could have done, or actually did, she said.

Norman Moses and Ray Jivoff are playing the Groucho and Harpo roles for the fourth time in a show. "That experience together is good. They are used to each other's timing and movements," Kriger said.

IF YOU GO

What: Skylight Opera Theatre's "A Day in Hollywood, A Night in the Ukraine"

When: Opens 7:30 p.m. Friday; through April 4

Where: Broadway Theatre Center, 158 N. Broadway

Tickets: \$20-\$62; call (414) 291-7800 or visit www.skylightopera.com

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