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Theater review: 'Bright Star' at SART

Posted on June 3, 2019 by Kai Elijah Hamilton



SOUTHERN CHARM: The cast of 'Bright Star', making its Western North Carolina debut, is ready to entertain with song and story. Photo by Ryan Phillips

The Blue Ridge Mountains have much to tell us, and their rich history serves as the inspiration for Bright Star, written by Steve Martin and Edie Brickell.

It's 1923 in the small Southern town of Zebulon. A romance blossoms when spirited Alice Murphy (played by Chelsey Lee Mirheli) falls for the handsome Jimmy Ray Dobbs (Jason Watson).

Famed actor Martin (Planes, Trains, and Automobiles, Parenthood, Father of the Bride) has been a longtime supporter of this region's music (so much so that he's played banjo and recorded with local outfit Steep Canyon Rangers).

The production starts off with a powerful burst of potential. An eerie light finds Mirheli at the side of the stage, and she sings one of the show's best songs, "If You Knew My Story."

With such an amazing voice, it's no wonder that Mirheli sang backup for Dolly Parton. Equally impressive is her ability to morph in flashbacks from a young teenager to an adult editor of The Asheville Southern Journal.

It's at that newspaper that Alice meets Billy Cane (Maximilian Koger), a promising new writer who has just returned from World War II.

Amanda Sayles helms a wonderfully energetic cast with her smooth, fast-paced direction. There are times, though, when the drama just doesn't connect as strongly as it should.

With a thumping beat, the terrific live band is reason enough to see Bright Star. The musicians remain omnipresent, staged on a cabin porch below impeccably constructed railroad tracks by set designer Jeff Webber.

WHAT: Bright Star WHERE: SART, 44 College St., Mars Hill, sartplays.com WHEN: Through Sunday, June 16. Thursdays-Saturdays at 7:30 p.m., Saturdays and Sundays at 2:30 p.m. \$18-\$34

6879 Views ARTS THEATER AMANDA SAYLES, ANTHONY ROMEO, BRIGHT STAR, CHELSEY LEE MIRHELI, DOLLY PARTON, EDIE BRICKELL, JASON WATSON, JEFF WEBBER, MAXIMILLIAN KOGER, PERFORMING ARTS, PLAYS, SART, SOUTHERN APPALACHIAN REPERTORY THEATRE, STEEP CANYON RANGERS, STEVE MARTIN, THEATER REVIEW, THEATRE REVIEW, TIMOTHY WILDS



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2 thoughts on "Theater review: 'Bright Star' at SART"

- Comments by Gary James and Suzanne Goodman regarding the theater review.

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