

Backstage Pass

INSIGHTS ON STAGE, SCREEN AND BEYOND



Submitted photo

"9 to 5 the Musical" offers a look out of 1980 at The Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center.

Studio Theatre Puts On Colorful Production of '9 to 5'

By **LIZ COUGHLIN** | *Daily Sun Staff Writer*

On Thursday night, the stage at The Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center was adorned - not with instruments and microphones, but with swivel chairs, typewriters and landline phones straight out of 1980. The Studio Theatre Tierra del Sol is running "9 to 5 the musical" at The Sharon, a temporary venue for the duration of the season that allows for social distancing in the audience. With the ringing of alarm clocks, the curtains parted to reveal a lineup of the cast before panels of dazzling multicolored lights.

And with a rendition of the namesake song, the show came to life.

The story follows Violet Newstead (Whitney Morse) Judy Bernly (Sara DelBeato) and Doralee Rhodes (Lauren Echausse), who are attempting to navigate office life with a "sexist, egotistical, lying, hypocritical bigot of a boss," Franklin Hart Jr. (Jason Bowen).

Office secretary Violet welcomes new employee Judy to the office. She is fresh out of a divorce and hopes for a fresh start at her first job.

Though Doralee is at first the office outcast because everyone thinks she is sleeping with the boss, the women soon bond over their mutual dislike of Hart.

One day after work, they fantasize about all the ways they could get even with him - beating him at his own game by seducing and killing him as in a noir, hog-tying and branding him like a rodeo beast, giving him a magic potion to make him disappear like in a fairy tale and the ensuing scenes work perfectly on the stage.

Later at work, Violet panics when she accidentally sprinkles rat poison instead of "skinny and sweet" in Hart's coffee. When he finds out, Hart takes advantage by making yet another pass at Doralee, who has had enough.

The women take Hart hostage, and in an impressive feat, suspend him over his bed

with a garage door opener.

With desks that rotated and moved around, the office space easily transformed scene to scene. Completing the set were layers of light panels, which added dimension and responded in time to the timbre of the music, from different shades of blue during a somber solo, to multicolored lights accompanying triumphant chorus scenes.

Additionally, the cast, including Echausse, who perfectly captured Dolly Parton's charismatic mannerisms and accent, added color to the show.

"I saw the movie and thought they hit the target with the movie in their selection of characters. I think they did a good job with it," said Lois Gardella, of the Village of DeSoto.

While Hart is still captive, the women take charge of the office, making changes for the better.

"We were talking about how we were in that era with whiteout and typewriters, so we can relate to a lot of it," said Karen Walz, of the Village of Sanibel.

"9 to 5" took the audience back to that time, and the message of the struggle to shatter the glass ceiling still resonates.

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