

Capital Playhouse's musical revue hits the right notes

By Molly Gilmore for The Olympian
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If Olympia hasn't hosted a lot of productions of Rodgers and Hammerstein musicals, there's good reason for that.

"They typically only do epics," said Jeff Kingsbury, artistic director of Capital Playhouse.

But tonight, Capital Playhouse will be alive with sounds from "The Sound of Music" and "South Pacific" — along with many lesser-known Rodgers and Hammerstein tunes.

But Kingsbury said even the familiar tunes seem fresh when presented in a new context, called "A Grand Night for Singing."

"There are lots of moments in the show where audience members will wonder what the next number is, and then it will all of a sudden be 'Something Wonderful' from 'The King and I.'"

"The verse starts going, and people will have that 'I love that number' moment."

The show is a revue, but the numbers are presented with a loose connecting thread of relationships among the characters, three women and two men.

"It has something of a storyline, albeit loose, that helps to carry the momentum," Kingsbury said.

"It's really fun. I've had a ball working on the show."

Stephen Holden wrote in a New York Times review of the Broadway production, which was nominated for two Tony awards: "The songs flow together in a sequence that treats them as lighthearted extensions of one another.



People are familiar with ‘Surrey With the Fringe on Top,’ but they haven’t seen it quite this way.”

The Times review, in fact, was headlined: “New image for Rodgers and Hammerstein: hip.”

The show includes numbers from lesser-known Rodgers and Hammerstein collaborations such as “Cinderella,” “State Fair” and “Pipe Dreams.”

“These songs were a beautifully arranged introduction to their music, and there was not a dull moment in the revue,” Richard Connema wrote in a Talkin’ Broadway review of a San Francisco production.

Although Connema speculated that every regional theater company had put on a production of the show since its Broadway run in 1993, Capital Playhouse hadn’t done it until now.

“It’s a wonderful show,” Kingsbury said. “We should have done it before now.”

And if audiences like it, the show could pave the way for more Rodgers and Hammerstein — on a smaller scale.

“There’s a really interesting treatment of ‘Carousel’ out there that I’m looking at,” he said. “And there is a version of ‘South Pacific.’ ”