

Life

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'Bye Bye' has its high points

RON COWAN
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It's hard to watch "Bye Bye Birdie" and not think of the actors who have inhabited the parts before, especially Dick Van Dyke, who starred in the 1960 stage hit and the 1963 movie.

But Chemeketa Community College's production, which opened Thursday, manages to charm on its own, even amid rough spots and some lagging scene changes.

This is an infectiously likable, mildly satirical musical about our obsession with fame and the dysfunction in parent-child relationships, set at a still-innocent time in American history.

Directed by Ted Desel, Chemeketa's production is hampered by its lack of offstage set storage space and minimal budget, but it has strong voices and often rousing ensemble pieces.

The costumes by Kathryn M. Bennett are colorful, and the cast of 33, with many fresh, young faces, is energetic and talented.

The story focuses on mother-dominated talent agent Albert Peterson (Blair Loving) and his girlfriend/secretary, Rosie Alvarez (Emily Eikleberry), who wants to wean him from his overbearing mother, Mae (Ruby Sue Whittley).

Albert's immediate problem is the pending induction of rock-star client Conrad Birdie (Barry Murphy) into the Army.

Clever Rosie comes up with the publicity scheme — stage "one last kiss" with a devoted Birdie fan and put it on "The Ed Sullivan Show."

The lucky girl is Kim MacAfee (Tia Luber). Predictably, things don't go as expected.

The score, including "The Telephone Hour" and "Kids" is hard to resist, and performers such as sweet-voiced Luber and Carissa Stanley as Ursula Merkle are thoroughly pleasing.

Randy Boyd's Harry MacAfee, Kim's dad, is suitable, irascible and strong-voiced, with Loving, Eikleberry and Murphy all scoring in their own way.

Always worth a mention is choreographer Dee Montgomery Smith.

Her dances are athletic, and her performance as showbiz-wannabe Gloria Rasputin is short but deliciously funny.

Ron Cowan can be reached at (503) 399-6728.

'Bye Bye Birdie'

When: 7:30 tonight and Thursday through May 22, with a 2 p.m. May 22 matinee; Thursday's performance signed for deaf and hearing impaired

Where: Building 6 Auditorium, Chemeketa Community College, 4000 Lancaster Drive NE, Salem

Cost: \$12 adults, \$9 seniors and students

Call: (503) 399-5131

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