



Erin (Megan Long) and Paul (Justin Berkobien) celebrate their wedding in Noble Fool Theatricals' production of the musical comedy "Married Alive!" at Pheasant Run Resort & Spa in St. Charles.

## 'Married Alive!' a good match for Noble Fool

By Scott C. Morgan

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What a difference a change of venue can make.

In 2007, the musical "Married Alive!" made its Chicago-area debut at the Marriott Theatre in Lincolnshire. Featuring just a cast of four, "Married Alive!" didn't command the Marriott's almost 900-seat expanse the way most big musicals typically do there (even though the Marriott did spring for two grand pianos and a mechanized turntable for scenery).

Now "Married Alive!" is

**Location:** Noble Fool Theatricals at Pheasant Run Resort, 4051 E. Main St., St. Charles

**Showtimes:** 8 p.m. Thursdays and Fridays, 5 and 8:30 p.m. Saturdays, 2 p.m. Sundays; runs through Sunday, Sept. 20

**Running time:** Two hours and 10 minutes with intermission

**Tickets:** \$28-\$39; \$49-\$59 dinner packages

**Parking:** Adjacent lots

**Box office:** (630) 584-6342 or noblefool.org

**Rating:** For adults: lots of humor about married couples' sex lives

renewing its nuptials in the area courtesy of Noble Fool Theatricals at Pheasant Run Resort in St. Charles. In a smaller, 320-seat theater, "Married Alive!" makes for a much more enjoyable experience.

At Noble Fool, the show's eye-winking comedy and emotional look at marriage's ups and downs feel more focused and touching. But it also helps immensely for Noble Fool to have a stellar quartet of singing actors.

"Married Alive!" alternates its focus on the newlywed couple of Paul (Justin Berkobien) and Erin (Megan Long), with the veteran married duo of Ron (Matthew R. Jones) and Diane (Anne Gunn). It's a clever device used by playwright/lyricist Sean Grennan and composer Leah Okimoto to compare and contrast marriage in its first flushes of love with the more mature partnerships that develop through time.

Yet the show would have felt fresher if weren't for the existence of the four-character musical revue "I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change." That 1995 smash hit predates "Married Alive!" and demographically covers more ground on love and relationships. "Married Alive!" was

originally developed as a plotless revue, and occasionally the characters feel more like types instead of real people making a fully satisfying emotional journey.

**"Married Alive!"**  
★★★

"Married Alive!" also traffics in tired "Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus" stereotypes.

True, wives who talk non-stop and laconic husbands who can only relate to sports have become comic stereotypes for a reason (because they're partially based upon truth). Here and in other instances, though, it feels like the writers were pandering for easy laughs — particularly with the erectile-dysfunction medication sketch.

Yet Noble Fool's impressive cast more than makes up for whatever deficiencies there are in the material. Director/choreographer Rachel Rockwell has cast winning actors who have great comic timing and who all sing heavenly (so well that they could practically do without amplification).

Megan Long is hilarious as she closes off Act I by vocally wailing Erin's powerhouse ticking biological-clock song "Oh, Knocked Up" (presented here as a rousing gospel number). Costume

See **MARRIED** on page 26

## MARRIED from page 25

designer Elizabeth Flauto's accompanying puppet-filled sight gag in this number is also priceless.

Justin Berkobien shows off a lovely tenor voice for Paul's

reflective number "The Lucky One," which is all about how he lucked out marrying a woman who has become such a wonderful friend, wife and mother.

Broadway veteran and St. Charles resident Matthew R.

Jones is an amazing presence with his booming voice and the extra characterizations he takes on (Paul's disapproving father-in-law at a particularly uncomfortable Christmas gathering is a delight). Jones has a great partner in crime with Anne Gunn, who also hits all the right comic and dramatic notes (especially in

a scene when Diane expresses her disappointment at getting passed over for a job promotion).

Music director Valerie Maze and keyboardist Kevin Disch make beautiful off-stage music for the production, while Kevin Depinet's cream-colored set gets the job done (although some scene

changes could have been a tad snappier).

With Noble Fool, "Married Alive!" becomes a much cozier and more comfortable show the second time around. And though the show's expressions of marital love aren't always the freshest, audiences will find them reassuringly familiar and fun.

LABOR DAY WEEKEND