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Oak Park Off-Stage Couple are On-Stage Lovers in Fox Valley Rep's "They're Playing Our Song"



By Audra Sybert Today at 12:18 p.m.



Michael Mahler and Dara Cameron in

Married Oak Park Residents Michael Mahler and Dara Cameron Tell Story of Real Life Lovers in Fox Valley Rep's Musical Comedy August 18 – October 9, 2011

August 2011, St. Charles, IL – Fox Valley Repertory's fall Broadway musical by Neil Simon about the real life romance of Marvin Hamlisch and Carole Bayer Singer is ready to be performed by award-winning Chicago actor Michael Mahler and wife Dara Cameron, both residents of Oak Park. Directed by Jonathan Berry, hailed as "one of Chicago's most talented young directors" by Chicago Tribune, performances will take place at the Pheasant Run Resort Mainstage (4051 E. Main St., St. Charles, IL; box office 630-584-6342).

They're Playing Our Song will preview Thursday, August 18 through Friday, August 26, 2011. The show will open Saturday evening, August 27, 2011 and continue through Sunday, October 9, 2011.

Tickets are priced at \$29 on Fridays (and limited Thursday performances), and at \$39 on Saturdays and Sundays. Dinner show packages are available from \$49. Group rates and overnight packages are also available.

When an award-winning, straight-laced composer teams up with a quirky, aspiring lyricist, it's far from a match made in musical heaven. But when an unexpected romance builds between them, they hilariously struggle to find harmony. Neil Simon's romantic musical will leave a smile on your face and a song in your heart.

Cameron, originally from Naperville, believes the relationship of the two main characters is similar to her own marriage. "Sonia has a line about the look Vernon gets on his face when he's looking for the first few bars of a song. I'm constantly looking over at Michael and catching him completely zoned out," she jokes. Mahler adds, "There's also a part where Vernon absent-mindedly 'plays piano' on Sonia's back while they're dancing. I've been known to do that."

The show originally opened at the Ahmanson Theatre in December 1978, then headed to Broadway, where it ran for over 1,000 performances in 2 1/2 years. The musical is based on the real-life, romantic relationship of the show's composer, Marvin Hamlisch, and lyricist, Carole Bayer Sager.

However, the story is relatable for all couples, both musical and non-musical. Mahler believes that "all relationships have give and take...I think that's what the play is really about. People don't have to be writers or composers to understand these two characters." Cameron teases, "Anybody who frequently gets annoyed with her partner will be able to relate to us."

The cast of They're Playing Our Song features (in alphabetical order): Naperville native and Oak Park resident Dara Cameron, Hoffman Estates native Rodrigo Cruz, Madeline Duffy-Feins, Oak Park resident Michael Mahler, Leah Morrow, Doug Pawlik, Sara Sevigny, and

Matthew Sherbach (previously in FVR's *Around the World in 80 Days*). The three-piece band includes Music Director Ken Jones of Wayne, Justin Akira Kono, and Taylor Brysiewics.

Similar to his character, Mahler is a composer and lyricist in real life, with credits such as *How Can You Run with a Shell on Your Back?* (with Alan Schmuckler), *Knute Rockne: All-American* (with David H. Bell and Buddy Farmer), and others. He has performed at Fox Valley Rep once before in *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, and although this is Cameron's debut with Fox Valley Rep, both have performed at numerous Chicago theaters. Since their days at Northwestern University, where they met as members of an a cappella group, the two have appeared together once before in *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* at Theatre at the Center.

"Watching two people who you know are meant for each other but always seem to find a way to ruin it is what this charming musical is all about," says Artistic Director John Gawlik. "With the stellar cast of the award-winning Michael Mahler alongside wife Dara Cameron, this will give the show an element of realness to it. And having Jonathan Berry direct this show is really exciting for us."

They're Playing Our Song opens on Thursday, August 18, 2011 and runs through Sunday, October 9, 2011. Show times are Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m.; Sundays at 2 p.m. Thursday performances are available on August 18 and 25 at 8pm; and September 1, 15 and October 6 at 2pm. The show is rated PG.

This program is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency, and is sponsored in part by the Daily Herald and Dupage Airport.

Pheasant Run Resort is located at 4051 E. Main St., St. Charles, IL. For tickets, call the Pheasant Run Box Office at 630-584-6342, or visit www.ticketmaster.com. Additional performance information may be obtained at www.foxvalleyrep.org.