



Courtesy of Altar Boyz

"Altar Boyz" will be at Pheasant Run until July.

Beacon News 5/8/09

NOBLE FOOL PRESENTS HEAVENLY SEND-UP IN 'ALTAR BOYZ'

By Randall G. Mielke

For GO

For director John Gawlik and the cast of "Altar Boyz," which is being presented by the Noble Fool Theatricals at Pheasant Run Resort & Spa to July 12, being funny is sometimes a matter of playing characters in a straightforward manner.

"Altar Boyz" is the story of a Christian boy band in the final performance of its "Raise the Praise" tour. While the boys have hopes of making it big in New York, the band members also are determined to save souls and raise spirits in this theatrical spoof of the boy band industry.

"The idea is that the band members are unaware that any of this is funny," said Gawlik, who also is the Noble Fool Theatricals artistic director. "They display a sense of innocence and naivety. A rule of comedy is that you can get away with a lot of things if you play it straight."

Conceived by Marc Kesler and Ken Davenport, with a book by Kevin Del Aguila and music and lyrics by Gary Adler and Michael Patrick Walker, "Altar Boyz" first premiered in 2004 at the New York Musical Theatre Festival. In the spring of 2005, it transferred to off-Broadway's New World Stages, where it is still running. "Altar Boyz" played

"ALTAR BOYZ"

When: 8 p.m. on Thursdays and Fridays; 5 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. on Saturdays; and 2 p.m. on Sundays through Sunday, July 12. Matinee performances at 2 p.m. May 14 and 28. There are no performances on June 27 and 28 and July 4.

Where: Pheasant Run Resort & Spa, 4051 E. Main St., St. Charles

How Much: \$28 on Thursday and Fridays; \$39 on Saturdays and Sundays

Call: 630-584-6342, or visit www.ticketmaster.com

FYI: The show is best suited for ages 12 and up.

in the Chicago area with a successful run at Drury Lane Water Tower Place in 2006.

The show is presented as a concert by the five-member group the Altar Boyz and their band. The members of the group address the audience directly and refer to the venue and location in which the performance is taking place. The Altar Boyz perform several songs, with choreographed dancing in the style of boy bands, and present several scenes concerning the group and its origins, as well as some background on each member.

"They talk about their lives," Gawlik said. "They welcome everyone to the show, then go into 'People often ask how we got together.' So they do a play within a play."

The show pokes fun at boy bands that take themselves too seriously.

"The writers have nailed the concept of boy bands, parodying the likes of New Kids on the Block, Backstreet Boys and even Menudo and

The Monkees," Gawlik said. "While these boys are devoted in their beliefs, they sometimes take their faith too far in the way a typical boy band can be over-the-top in its sweetness or attitude. This is where the humor and parody is so wonderfully displayed."

Gawlik believes the show appeals to people on several levels.

"The music and characters completely win you over," he said. "Songs like 'I Believe' and 'Everybody Fits' are inspiring, but told in a pop style. One line in the song 'Calling,' is 'Jesus called me on my cell phone.' It is about being connected in a technological society.

"Also, there is a message," he continued. "One of the messages of the show is to 'Love everybody for who they are.'"

Gawlik finds great satisfaction seeing the show finally coming to fruition.

"Everyone comes together as a team," he said. "When all the talents are working together, that is satisfying."