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**O N S T A G E**



Samantha Dubina, left, Danielle Plisz, Courtney Rioux and Meredith Freyre star in Noble Fool Theatricals' "The Taffetas" at Pheasant Run Resort in St. Charles.

**Classy classics**

By **Scott C. Morgan**  
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"The Taffetas" is perky and squeaky-clean. So much so that it feels like it was created specifically to satisfy curmudgeons who complain about the low morals and crass language in other types of modern-day entertainment.

Heavenly harmonies shine in nostalgic musical 'Taffetas'

"The Taffetas" keeps up its cleanliness essentially as a jukebox

musical revue, the kind that strings together pop hits of the 1950s with the slightest of plots (a crowd-pleasing formula also proven by the off-Broadway megahit "Forever Plaid").

I'm no big fan of shows like these, which find success largely by tapping into people's nostalgia for pre-existing songs, fashions and pop-culture references of a bygone era rather than by doing the hard work of creating an original story and musical score from scratch. Yet, even I was hard-pressed not to crack a few smiles and chuckle a bit at Noble Fool Theatricals' classy take on "The Taffetas."

The plot (of which there isn't a

**"The Taffetas"**  
★★★

lot) focuses on four singing sisters from Muncie, Ind., who call their girl group The Taffetas (think The Fontane Sisters or The Chordettes). They're appearing for the first time on live national TV in 1956 via the soon-to-be defunct DuMont Network. If everything goes well for tonight's performance, The Taffetas have the chance to perform on "The Ed Sullivan Show" (but only if Mr. Sullivan likes what he sees).

In other shows, such high stakes and stress would prompt the sisters to suffer comical mishaps or face up to simmering sibling conflicts. But

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**THE 3**

**Go, go, go 'Joseph'**

Twenty-four years after its Marriott Theatre premiere, "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat" returns to Lincolnshire. The Bible story-inspired musical stars Max Quinlan as the young man first enslaved, then imprisoned, who is sustained by his faith and ultimately rewarded for it. Marriott veteran Marc Robin directs.

Previews begin Wednesday, Feb. 18, at 10 Marriott Drive, Lincolnshire. Opens Feb. 25. (847) 634-0200 or marriotttheatre.com.

**Janus walks through 'Oedipus'**

Janus Theatre stages Sophocles' tragedy "Oedipus Rex" — about a man's inability to escape his destiny — promenade style, meaning audience members inhabit the performance space alongside the actors. Janus co-founder Sean Hargadon directs.

Opens Friday, Feb. 13, at the eighth floor of the Elgin Art Showcase, 164 Division St., Elgin. (847) 841-1713 or janustheatre.wordpress.com.

**Guthrie at the MAC**

Prince Hal, the undisciplined royal in "Henry IV Parts 1 and 2" comes into his own as England's sovereign in Shakespeare's "Henry V," dispatching his enemies, conquering France and claiming his queen. The Guthrie Theater and The Acting Company bring their co-production to the McAninch Arts Center for one performance.

Preshow talk at 6 p.m., curtain at 7 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 15, at the MAC at College of DuPage, 425 Fawell Blvd., Glen Ellyn. (630) 942-4000 or atthamac.org.

— Barbara Vitello

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"The Taffetas" author Rick Lewis seems to be more content to just highlight the music and gently rib the perceived purity of 1950s America before feminism came to the fore (for example, most of the girls cite first lady Mamie Eisenhower as their most revered female role model in history).

Noble Fool's "Taffetas" creative team fully embraces the show's modest dramatic aspirations and simple content for what it is: a revue that succeeds on charm and solid musical performances.

In that department, Noble Fool has come up trumps with the splendid casting of Samantha Dubina (playing the dark brunette Donna in pink and red), Meredith Freyre (playing the blond Cheryl in green), Danielle Plisz (playing the auburn Kaye in violet) and Courtney Rioux (playing the brunette Peggy in blue).

These talented women each shine vocally by themselves and harmonize heavenly together on songs ranging from "Mr. Sandman" to "Where the Boys Are." They also expertly flesh out what little character traits they are given, winning laughs for practically all their punch lines and nonstop perkiness (Dubina is particularly a riot as the most boy-crazy of the bunch).

Supporting these ladies is the strong backing trio of Phil Martin on percussion, Adam Colclesser on bass and music director Peter Storms on piano.

Director/choreographer Kevin Bellie keeps everything up at a buoyant and joyous pace. Bellie also gets

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Times: 8 p.m. Thursdays and Fridays, 5 and 8:30 p.m. Saturdays, 2 p.m. Sundays and select Thursdays; through April 11

Running time: 90 minutes with intermission

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

Parking: adjacent lots

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

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**TAFFETAS** from page 30

show's winking tone just right, which both celebrates the 1950s while subtly commenting on the narrow expectations for women of the era.

That dichotomy also translates in the show's clever designs. Costumer Kimberly G. Morris creates lovely wholesome 1950s finery for daytime in Act I and elegant evening wear for Act II.

Set designer Dan P. Conley highlights the jukebox nature of the show by creating an abstracted turntable on stage and employing a streaming bubble effect to suggest "The Lawrence Welk Show" (where an act like *The Taffetas* would feel right at home).

There's nothing really wrong with providing a perfectly pleasant experience, which is exactly what Noble Fool does with "The Taffetas." So don't go expecting much conflict or drama. "The Taffetas" remains content to allow audiences to revel in the nostalgic haze of a seemingly more simple era.

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