

'I Do! I Do!' weds bad, good sides of marriage

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Ladies in the audience were atwitter throughout the Live Theatre Workshop production of the romantic musical "I Do, I Do" by Tom Jones and Harvey Schmidt. The show details the 50-year arc of a traditional marriage. The kind where father knows best and mother manipulates him with her cleverness. The story hasn't aged well during the past 40 years of feminism where every marriage comes with two pairs of pants.

Michael Martinez and Molly Holleran play the married couple, doing scenes from their life together. There are no other cast members as they progress through the nervous ecstasy of their wedding night to the smoothly worn expectations of each other a half-century later.

This is a marriage taken directly from the first half of the 20th century. The kind that encourages couples struggling

GRADE B through their 15th wedding anniversary to hang in there, to resist the temptation of getting a divorce and starting over with someone else. "I Do, I Do" ran on Broadway in the mid-1960s, a buoyant antidote to the emerging youth culture of sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll.

This is exactly the sweet and sentimental message Martinez and Holleran present with winning honesty. Missie Scheffman as director plays it straight, as if people still have lives like this. The costumes by Peg Peterson do imply an earlier time in history, as does the four poster bed that dominates the stage. In Jan de Hartog's 1951 comedy "The Four Poster," on which the musical is based, the wedding was held in 1895.

In the script are references to gaslight and to live-in servants. Martinez as Michael makes several mentions of his successful career writing romance novels. Halloran as Agnes is a stay-at-home mom raising two children — a boy and a girl. Toward the end of the musical, both Michael and Agnes are looking forward to

relaxing in their golden years. Agnes gets a big laugh by sighing she can finally stop wearing a girdle.

Seen in today's cultural stew of changing societal roles, one realizes this married couple stayed together by working as a team. They complemented each other's talents, believing what they gained in the marriage meant more than what they gave up as individuals living parallel lives in pursuit of their own careers.

Martinez portrays Michael as a guy brimming over with optimism. In his first leading role at LTW, he projects a winning warmth that would be an asset to any romantic comedy. When he smiles we believe him. Though he isn't as successful catching the darker tones of Michael's character.

Halloran gives Agnes a practical nature. She wants a life of romance and excitement, even as she knows that when the party's over she'll be the one stuck with cleaning up. There will be no chance to simply ride off into the sunset.

The singing voices of these two are certainly up to the task. With piano accompaniment by Aryo Wicaksano, they sing in natural unforced styles that feel spontaneous. The song list includes "My Cup Runneth Over," a syrupy ballad that found an audience in 1967 when most everyone else was rocking out in San Francisco.

Most of the time, watching "I Do, I Do" does feel like leafing through somebody else's old family photo album. We look and wonder "Did people actually live like that?"

Probably not, but babies born in wonder do turn into adolescents full of noise and resentment. Holding the family together is the parents' responsibility. Underneath the rose-colored entertainment of this musical's songs and stories is the certainty that it isn't just the children who will have to do a lot of growing up.

IF YOU

What: Live Theatre Workshop presents "I Do! I Do!" by Tom Jones and Harvey Schmidt
When: 7:30 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays, 3 p.m. Sundays through Aug. 24
Where: 5317 E. Speedway Blvd.
Price: \$16-\$19
Info: 327-4242, www.livetheatreworkshop.org

Michael Martinez and **Molly Holleran** portray a married couple in Live Theatre Workshop's "I Do! I Do!"

Photo courtesy of Live Theatre Workshop

