

Comedic chemistry among BC3 actors a laughing matter in “Barely Heirs”

Hold on to your seat, technical director says of innuendo-filled play

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(Butler, PA) Tyler Pollock, voice rising, arms flailing, oscillates to his primary character’s next impersonation as fellow “Barely Heirs” cast member Sydney Selfridge successfully stymies her laughter and technical director Alyssa Martin does not.

It’s an early afternoon rehearsal, among the first without the actors clutching scripts, and Martin – seated between director Larry Stock and producer Mike Beck at a table at the fore of the Succop Theater stage – finds Pollock’s gestures and intonations every bit as hilarious as when rehearsals began in January.



Tyler Pollock, left, of Karns City, as Tom; and Sydney Selfridge, of Saxonsburg, as Jane, rehearse Thursday, April 13, 2017, for “Barely Heirs,” a 2009 David Lassig comedy. The Pioneer Players, BC3’s theater group, will present the comedy April 27-29 in the Succop Theater on main campus.

“I can’t stop laughing, and I shouldn’t be,” Martin says. “But it’s really hard not to because it’s truly funny.”

The Pioneer Players, Butler County Community College’s theater group, will present the 2009 David Lassig play at 7:30 p.m. April 27-29 in the Succop Theater on main campus. The farcical comedy based on deception, a sequence of lies and innuendo reminds Stock of television’s golden era.

“Definitely a comic romp,” says Stock, also director of BC3’s Cultural Center. “Very similar to the ‘I Love Lucy’ days. I see Lucy and Ethel in the two lead characters.”

That would be Selfridge, who as Jane – a single woman – would receive an inheritance from her late uncle only after being married for six months; and Pollock, who as Tom pretends to be Jane’s husband and, to perpetuate the ruse, finds he must pose as a nurse, an interior decorator and the brother of a pool boy.

“We are all naturally funny”

“It just depends who I am talking to,” says Pollock, 20, a sophomore communications major from Karns City and veteran of 10 musicals. “Certain people believe that I am someone else and

we have to lie our way into money. It's interesting because I play characters within my character. It's different. I feel pretty confident about the comedy that I bring to the character."

Adds Selfridge, 19, a freshman communications major from Saxonburg during the 15 percent of the time she is not on stage: "The cast is so dynamic, and we are all naturally funny."

Gabby Lisella, 20, of Harmony, a sophomore theater major, portrays Claire, Tom's wife; William "Lucas" Franklin, 18, of Freeport, a freshman psychology major, plays Paul, a hopeless romantic and Jane's ex-boyfriend; Shawn Covington, 19, a freshman English major from Karns City, portrays Richard, a police officer who repeatedly visits unannounced; and Carly McDonald, 20, of Cranberry Township, a sophomore early childhood education major, plays Jane's mother, Betty.

Jacob Hetrick, 21, of West Sunbury, a sophomore English major, portrays William, the attorney representing Jane's late uncle and against whom the deceptiveness is targeted.

Actor: Don't miss our "chemistry"

"You have to breathe some life into the character," says Hetrick, who defers to opinions of cast members who say his character is as humorous as Pollock's. "I have to go with (the character of) Tom. He is just hilarious and Tyler does an excellent job with him. He gets in to all sorts of shenanigans. There are several points where he cross-dresses. One time he is a nurse. Another time he is an interior decorator. He just puts on these various personas throughout the play that Jane forces him into."

Adding depth to his characters-within-his-character are "jokes inside of jokes," Pollock says. "The chemistry between the seven of us in the play is something people are not going to want to miss. We are all playing off of each other. It is hard to pull off a comedy for a lot of people, but I think this particular cast is doing a very good job with that."

"It is full of laugh lines"

Jane is awaiting a visit from her late uncle's attorney to sign documents and receive a portion of the estate. But will Tom be on time for the meeting? Will his wife, Claire, or the pool boy, or officer Richard, or her mother, Betty, expose the charade? Can Tom pull off his masquerades as a female nurse and female interior decorator and brother of the pool boy to sustain the chicanery?

"It's just funny how his character has to adapt to all these things that he is being forced to do," Franklin says.

One lie, Lisella says, "builds off another and builds off another. And then it gets so out of hand."

Martin, 20, a sophomore fine arts major from Kittanning, says the two-act, two-hour comedy is "one of the funniest shows I have ever had the pleasure of watching grow, as well as just watching it in general. It is full of laugh lines that literally have you falling off your seat at every single moment."

“Barely Heirs” is not an easy play to stage, Selfridge and Martin say.

“Comedy is so hard. Especially this one,” Selfridge says. “Everything else I have done has been sort of a drama. Comedies are difficult because there are so many interjections. Your lines are shorter, which sounds like it would be easier. But it’s not. Everything has to be timed perfectly.”

Show became “something that is just amazing”

Unlike drama, Martin says, “comedy, especially one that is set up as this show is, is very hard to execute properly. This has turned into something that is just amazing. This is something that we thought we could knock out of the park.”

Tickets for “Barely Heirs” are available through the Succop Theater Box Office at (724) 284-8505 or on-line at bc3.edu/succop-theater. Reserve seat tickets are \$10. Student tickets are \$8.