

Stage Right offers the world premiere of ‘Mama Won’t Fly’

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By Brad Meyer Houston Community Newspapers



Photo by Brad Meyer, Courier of Montgomery County

The opening night of any theatrical production is a chaotic flurry of action and anxiety – especially when it’s the world premiere of a new play and the internationally famous playwrights will be in the audience.

The Stage Right premiere of the Southern-style comedy “Mama Won’t Fly” takes the stage tonight at 8 at the Crighton Theatre, located at 234 N. Main Street in Conroe. Among those anxious to see the comedy are playwrights Jesse Jones, Nicholas Hope and Jamie Wooten.

“We’re very excited to have the opportunity to have the world premiere of ‘Mama Won’t Fly,’” said Carolyn Wong, veteran director and founder of Stage Right. “It’s an honor to have the playwrights here for the opening, but it’s a bit intimidating too.”

Wong acknowledged it is unusual for a theater company with less than five years of experience to be chosen to debut a new production. In the process of producing multiple Jones-Hope-Wooten comedies over the years, a favorable relationship developed between Stage Right and the authors.

Past plays include the trilogy of the Futrelle sisters of the mythical small town of Fayro in Texas: “Dearly Beloved,” “Christmas Belles” and Southern Hospitality. All feature a unique brand of Southern humor Wong said appeals to local audiences.

Local support is how the playwrights discovered Stage Right.

“We have relatives in the (Conroe) area who enjoyed Stage Right’s production of our plays and were very complimentary about the organization and the Crighton Theatre,” said Jesse Jones, part of the trio of comedic writers responsible for nine successful plays performed across the country and around the world. “As we learned more about them, we became very keen on Stage Right.”

The successful writing team of Jones, Hope and Wooten have a wealth of experience in writing for movies, television and the stage. More than 19,000 productions of their plays have been produced and seen by more than 2.5 million people.

In March 2010, Jones, Hope and Wooten began a tour of Texas, meeting with theatrical companies that had produced previous comedies by the trio. The interaction with Stage Right worked out well and the group was offered the opportunity to present the world premiere of “Mama Don’t Fly.”

“It’s a whole new group of characters, but it’s fast-paced and very funny,” said Wong. “The script is peppered with fantastic one-liners. It’s a challenge for the actors to stay in character and not start laughing themselves.”

The storyline focuses on Savannah Sprunt Fairchild Honeycutt who has to get her mother, Norleen Strunt, portrayed by local actress Martha Davis, from Alabama to California in time for her brother’s wedding – but mama won’t fly. With only four days to make the cross-country trip, the women, along with future daughter-in-law, set out in mama’s vintage sedan.

But problems arise and comedy ensues. Mama’s car is stolen and the trio of women endure a series of hilarious misadventures along the way.

One unique feature of the play is the lack of an elaborate set. Wong said the playwrights were very specific amount minimal set design to focus the action on the actors, not the set. And considering the rapid changes in scenes and settings, it’s a challenge for the stage crews to keep up with the action.

“It’s a lot of work,” confirmed Micheal Raabe, one of the set crew responsible to moving sets and props on stage during the performance. “We’ll be busy the whole night.”

The Stage Right production of the comedy “Mama Won’t Fly” opens this evening at 8 at the Crighton Theatre and runs through Sept. 25. For tickets and information, visit www.stage-right.org or call 936-441-7469.