

An Well-Meaning Shipwreck

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Gilligan's Island: The Musical

Book by **Sherwood** and **Lloyd J. Schwartz**, Music and Lyrics by **Hope** and
Laurence Juber

Directed by **Gerry Cullity** and **Laurie Cullity**

Desert Stages Theater, Scottsdale

(480) 483-1664

January 14th, 2005 - Ongoing

7:30 pm Curtain for Evenings, 6:00 pm on Sundays

\$20.00 - \$25.00

Check your brain at the door, it's **Sherwood Schwartz'** slight sitcom brought to life and filled with song, *Gilligan's Island: The Musical*. Camp can be fun, as long as there's some kind of tongue-in-cheek attitude attached. However, the only cheekiness that comes from this musical is the inclusion of potential amorous relationships between Gilligan and Mary Ann and the Professor and Ginger. The show as mounted by **Gerry** and **Laurie Cullity** at **Desert Stages** is a paean to these shipwrecked stereotypes that is so earnestly presented and reverently performed that it *almost* survives its absolute lameness.

Sit right back and you'll hear a tale, a tale of a fateful trip. Everyone's here: the klutzy Gilligan (**Nick Lorenzini**), the overwrought Skipper (**Russ Devan/Mike Ives**), spoiled Thurston Howell III (**Gerry Cullity**) and his wife Lovey (**Barbara McBain/Sue Sisley**), sexy movie star Ginger (**Juel Mesnard/Natalie Sayer**), the professor (**Jim Carmody/Dominic Kidwell**) and Mary Ann (**Shelley Phetteplace/Lauren Rohrich**). An alien (**Myles Vann**) drops in for a few cameos.

Sherwood and **Lloyd J. Schwartz**' script begins with their initial shipwreck and ambles through a few very familiar plot twists. **Hope** and **Laurence Juber**'s songs are pleasant and dissolve like cotton candy once they're spun. The substance of this evening depends on your love of the original series. You need to invest a lot to get anything from this.

That's not to say that the performances don't try to rise above the mind-numbingly mundane offering. Some of the actors are quite impressive. Devan's Skipper, Cullity's Thurston and McBain's Lovey are strong. Devan has Alan Hale Jr.'s movements and attitude down perfectly, and he's a strong singer. McBain is an even better version of Lovey than the one that Natalie Schafer offered. Cullity does not offer an imitation as much as a clever reinterpretation of Jim Backus' sublime creation. When he and McBain work off each other, they are perfectly timed. Rohrich is a pleasant and sweet singing Mary Ann. Vann acts as he can through a giant rubber alien head and gloves.

Flaws in other performances are evident. Lorenzini is like Gilligan on crack, acting more like Crispin Glover than Bob Denver. It's not a pretty sight. Kidwell does what he can, but he's about as much the Professor as Danny Partridge. Worst of all is Sayer, who is completely miscast as Ginger and who plies the wares of the movie star like a streetwalker. Any attempt at sex appeal is laughably overt and her voice is all over the map.

The direction is everything required for this over-the-top trip. The technical elements are strong. The canned music is as cheesy as the script.

On several occasions when I stopped thinking, this evening offered some chortles. If you're a Gilligan fanatic, you'll have a great time. However, like myself, if you ever found the cardboard characters and their brainlessly implausible situations a waste of time, you might want to avoid this offering.

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