

Farce 'The Play That Goes Wrong' a right fit for Roxy's Downtown, director says

BY DAVID BURKE
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Let's see if we can keep this article from going wrong.

Roxy's Downtown artistic director Rick Bumgardner is playing an actor and a director in "The Murder at Haversham Manor," the show-within-a-show that's at the center of "The Play That Goes Wrong," opening this weekend and continuing through Jan. 28.

The original actor cast as the director-performer suffered a broken hip in a car accident recently, Bumgardner said, and she stepped in.

"The cool thing is that I'm

intimately familiar with the show and all the characters, so knowing what I want this character to be has not been difficult at all for me to bring about," he said. "It's just being able to balance both those jobs."

As given away by the title, "The Play That Goes Wrong" brings Murphy's Law to the stage, in a production that premiered in London in 2012, and has played off-Broadway since 2019, as well as being popular in professional and amateur theaters across the country.

It follows the Cornley University Drama Society's newest production, a 1920s whodunit that turns disastrous thanks to a

troupe of accident-prone thespians.

"It is an incredibly funny farce, which our audience likes a great deal if we aren't doing musicals," Bumgardner said. "It presents acting challenges and it's a tour de force for incredibly talented people."

Among the eight-member cast is Keley Mohr, who plays Sandra, a dancer. Mohr said she watched a YouTube link that Bumgardner sent her of the show and was immediately hooked.

"Automatically I knew it was something I wanted to do," she said. "It was challenging, it was hilarious, and he specifically cast a dancer, and I'm a dance teach-

er."

She and her older children attended one of the performances off-Broadway during Thanksgiving break.

"We were blown away," she said. "We said our faces hurt from laughing for two hours straight."

Like Bumgardner, Lyle Valentine also has to play double duty, performing as well as being technical director.

"Imagine having to build a set only for it to go completely improper," he said. "Building something so it can go wrong the right way has been a real challenge and a lot of fun."

As an actor, he said, the big-

gest challenge was not anticipating what would be going wrong next.

"We have to look just as surprised as the audience is," Valentine said.

While the show-within-a-show concept has an obvious appeal for those who have been in productions, Bumgardner said it can draw non-theater types as well.

"They're gonna like it better than theater people, probably," he said. "They get a look into the inner workings, the goings-on on the stage and behind the scenes."

'THE PLAY THAT GOES WRONG'

When: Through Jan. 28; performances at 8 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays and 2 p.m. Saturdays

Where: Roxy's Downtown, 412 1/2 W. Douglas

Tickets: \$35, from roxys-downtown.com or 265-4400