

THE SHOWBUZZ

ICT's 'I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change' is quietly comforting

By Sean McMullen
CORRESPONDENT

There is something quietly comforting about a show that knows exactly what it is.

International City Theatre's "I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change," with book and lyrics by Joe DiPietro and music by Jimmy Roberts, has never pretended to be anything other than a sharply observed, affectionately irreverent look at the battlefield otherwise known as modern love.

Under the direction of Barry Pearl, International City Theatre launches its 41st season with a production that feels both polished and refreshingly human.

First produced in 1995 and now the longest-running musical revue in Off-Broadway history, the show has endured because it taps into something universal. During one early run, an audience member reportedly blurted out, "This is my life!" That reaction still feels apt.

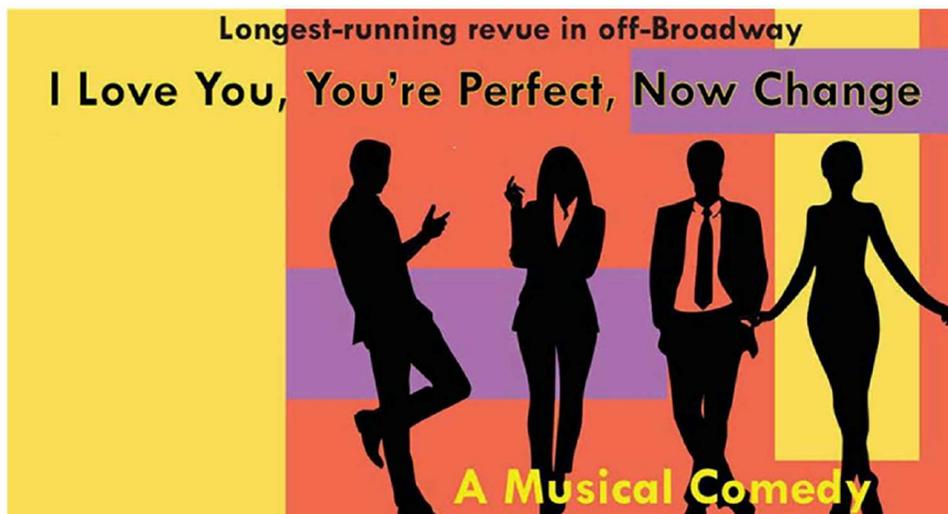
Whether you are navigating first dates, second marriages, in-laws, or the quiet negotiations of long-term partnership, there is likely a moment on ICT's stage that will make you laugh in recognition, or wince in it.

Pearl directs with a light but assured hand. The evening moves briskly, as it must, with four performers embodying more than 40 characters across a carousel of vignettes. There's no time for indulgence; the comedy lands because it's clean and specific.

Music director Daniel Gary Busby keeps Jimmy Roberts' score buoyant and nimble, while choreographer Becca Sweitzer adds crisp movement that enhances the storytelling without overwhelming the intimacy of the piece.

The quartet (Michael Deni, Will Riddle, Erika Schindele, and Whitney Kathleen Vigil) functions like a well oiled machine. Deni's earnestness can pivot into comic exasperation at a moment's notice. Riddle has a gift for understated physical comedy. Schindele brings warmth even to characters who might otherwise feel brittle. Vigil, meanwhile, has a vocal clarity that slices cleanly through the room and a comic timing that feels effortless.

The design team wisely avoids clutter. Set designer Stephen Gifford provides a flexible playing space that allows scenes to shift quickly. Lighting by Maren Taylor subtly underscores emotional turns, and Kim DeShazo's costumes help delineate the rapid-fire character changes with efficiency and wit. The result is a production



ICT's "I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change," will run from Feb. 18 to March 8. PHOTO COURTESY OF INTERNATIONAL CITY THEATRE

that trusts the material, and its actors, to carry the evening.

In a cultural moment when relationships are negotiated through apps, text threads, and endless commentary about what we 'deserve,' the show feels almost quaint in its simplicity. It reminds us that love has always been messy. It has always required compromise. It has always involved the dangerous, miraculous act of seeing, and being seen by, another person.

International City Theatre's Beverly O'Neill Theater, tucked inside the Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center, proves an ideal setting for this kind of communal recognition. Laughter ripples

IF YOU GO

Where: International City Theatre, Beverly O'Neill Theater, 330 E. Seaside Way.

When: Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays at 7:30 p.m.; Sundays at 2 p.m. Shows run through Sunday.

Cost: \$44-\$59.

Info: internationalcitytheatre.org.

across the audience in waves, not because the jokes are flashy, but because they are true. ICT's season opener doesn't reinvent the wheel. It doesn't try to. Instead, it offers something perhaps rarer: a shared evening of recognition. And sometimes, especially now, that is more than enough.