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## UA Theatre and Dance to premiere “The Philadelphia Story”

### Sonya Haines

When the curtains part on Valentine’s night, the audience of the Marian Gallaway Theatre will go back in time a little over 75 years as The University of Alabama’s theatre department performs “The Philadelphia Story” by Philip Barry.

The Philadelphia Story is a romantic comedy written in 1939. The main role of Tracy Lord was originally envisioned for Katherine Hepburn.

The show will feature sophomore Lily DiSilverio in the lead role of Tracy Lord. DiSilverio is a theatre and economics major.



“Everyone loves a good love triangle and we have a love rectangle,” DiSilverio said.

The show revolves around Lord, a divorcée who is preparing for her second wedding in the 1940s. The 24 hours before the wedding provide the audience a classic love story packed with slapstick humor, according to Matt Gabbard, a senior majoring in theatre. Gabbard plays a tabloid reporter assigned to the Lord wedding.

“There is a scene where Tracy and I are in the garden,” Gabbard said. “There is humming and we are talking about love and each other and it ends with this super melodramatic, romantic, mushy kiss, like center stage with all the lights on. It’s just a classic violin movie kiss scene and that is not something you get anymore, and it is just so much fun.”

The play has been in the works for the director Annie G. Levy since March 2016. The director and the cast have faced many trials in the development of the play.

Written in 1939, the text of the play featured some problematic language and ways of addressing women and minorities. Figuring out how to deal with those issues in an authentic way while being mindful to the fact that it is a comedy has been challenging, Levy said.

“The play is about what it means to figure out how to love and how to forgive past transgressions, and how we become truly ourselves,” said Kelley Schoger, movement director and assistant professor of acting and stage movement.

Different actors find various aspects of the play to be the most difficult. Trying to live in the 1940s time period has been the most difficult part for Gabbard.

“It was a different world back then, the way people sat and dressed was so different,” Gabbard said. “Learning how they talked, you can’t use words like ‘wow’ or ‘yeah.’ There are so many things that we do now that they would have never done back then and vice versa.”

For DiSilverio, getting the correct hair color has been the hardest part of the play. She went through four color processes to try to achieve the right shade of red.

Other members of the cast have found that the hardest part is simply keeping a straight face.

“It is so funny that there are scenes where you will actively see me cover my mouth or bite my cheek just because I can’t keep it together,” said Emily Haynes, a freshman majoring in musical theatre and accounting. Haynes plays Dinah Lord, Tracy’s little sister.

As a freshman in the department, this is Haynes’ first production at The University of Alabama.

“Getting to know all the cast and working with all these crazy, talented people has been my favorite part,” Haynes said. “It’s been great just having fun, making memories while building this world and creating this amazing piece.”

The show debuts on Feb. 14 in the Marian Galloway Theatre and will run through Feb. 19. Tickets are \$20 for adults, \$17 for faculty, staff and senior citizens and \$14 for students.

“Audiences will enjoy that nothing is too serious about the play and I think they will enjoy the bizarre whimsy of it,” Haynes said. “I can’t wait to see their reactions to it. We have run the show 30 times and all for people who have already seen it. I am interested to see if the audience is amused by things we don’t think are funny or vice versa. I’m interested how this show will exist outside of our own personal rehearsal bubble.”