

Peanuts comedy in the Forbes Theater

Gregory Doyle, Feb 22 2010

This year's winter musical brought Charles M. Schulz's comic strip "Peanuts" to the stage of Forbes Theater. "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown!" was written as a musical comedy by Clark Gesner, with the scenes offering up the beloved characters in short vignettes based on strips first inked by Schulz in the 1950s and 60s.

Set in the elementary school, playground and baseball sandlot of Peanuts universe, the show samples each of the classic comic characters in their full satiric glory and neuroses-on-display.

Adam Shepherd '10 played the long-suffering and self-loathing Charlie Brown, delivering sighs of agony with distinct comic precision and eliciting more than a few groans of sympathy from the audience. Paige Newquist '10 was brilliant and sharp in her portrayal of kid curmudgeon and bullying beauty Lucy Van Pelt, while Nick Grunden '10 added a soft touch to her vulnerable and dependent brother Linus.

Crenshaw Meehan '10 gave splendid voice and stylistic vigor to Snoopy, Charlie Brown's equally sage and silly beagle. Rachel Shields '11 offered unbridled energy as the eager-to-please Sally Brown. Michael Amos '10 as Schroeder, Sarah Kemer '11 as Patty, Forrest Brown '11 as Shermy, Leah Weston '11 as Violet, Maggie Rogers '10 as Frieda, and Matthew Scapardine '11 as Pig Pen rounded out the rest of the core Peanuts gang and proved to be an excellent cast.

Though the story line of the musical is stitched together from classic comic strips, the musical numbers weave the bits together to frame the characters in a continuous exploration of personal emotions and social validity. From Charlie Brown's awkward musings about his life-long crush, the little red-haired girl, to Lucy's survey of her crabbiness, to Snoopy's fantastical battles as a World War I flying ace atop his Sopwith Camel doghouse, the jokes were free-flowing and rarely lost to any generational gap between the present day and their publication date a half-century ago.

Ann M. Taylor as stage director and Peter Hoopes as musical director brought this production to fine form, entertaining students, parents, faculty and alumni alike over two nights.