

# SHE LOVES ME

A REVIEW BY Bob Rubin for TSP News

Being at my peak in the 60's, and given this review assignment, the first thing that popped into my head was the Beatles' song, "She Loves You, Yeh, Yeh, Yeh". This musical has nothing to do with that, exactly. Well, maybe a little. The Beatles' song is about a gentleman lacking in self-confidence, being assured that the woman of his dreams does, in fact, love him. This basic story is an evolution that started with a Hungarian play from 1937 called, "Parfumerie". It was adapted into a 1940 play called "Little Shop Around The corner" starring Jimmy Stewart and Margaret Sullivan. From there it became "In The Good Old Summertime" starring Judy Garland and Van Johnson. It finally evolved into Block and Harnick's 1963 "She Loves You". And then came, probably, the most famous (to us) iteration in the form of "You've Got Mail" starring Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan.

As the original 1937 version, this musical does take place in a perfume shop. Amalia Balash and Georg Nowack, two of the employees there are at odds with each other. Unknown to each, both are members of a lonely-hearts club, writing "Pen Pal" type letters seeking "Mr/Ms. Right". And just when, after an exchange of many letters, each of them has plans to really meet in person, Mr. Maraczak, their boss, decides all need to stay late to put up the Christmas decorations. We don't want to spoil the predictable ending but getting there is a fun ride. A terrific five-piece orchestra is right on stage, and it is quite charming how the actors enter and leave the stage right through them. They become an integral part of the production. One scene takes place at the "Imperial Café" where the "letter writers" are to meet. Unknown to them this is a "romance" restaurant where couples come to play and not be seen. This is conveyed using silhouettes accompanied by some frantic musical orchestration. I really liked this

creative approach versus the Broadway version, that played it straight and could not portray the eroticism as well as the silhouettes.

It always amazes me how the Citadel, a neighborhood theater using a small stage, can put on such a sophisticated and effective productions. And where do they find these talented actors? Hannah Louise Fernandez, who played Amalia Balash, was not only amazing actress with a very expressive face, but had a beautiful operatic voice. Travis Ascione, who played Georg Nowack, did a terrific job. Also, Jeffrey Charles who played Steven Kodaly was a standout. The direction, the music, and the entire cast get a “Yeh, Yeh” but Scott and Ellen Phelps, the Artistic and Managing Directors, get a Yeh Yeh Yeh (three of them) for this splendid production!

“She Love Me” plays through December 17 at The Citadel Theater, 300 S. Waukegan Rd., Lake Forest, IL  
A final note...they should charge more for their tickets!