

SMALL TOWN MUSICAL

This San Luis Obispo Little Theatre production of 'The Music Man' is fun and well-acted

BY DEBBY NICKLAS
Special to the Tribune

The iconic and critically acclaimed musical "The Music Man" marches into the San Luis Obispo Little Theatre this spring with plenty of hit songs and high-stepping dance routines.

Directed and choreographed by Zach Johnson, this elaborate production — which is set in 1912 in the fictional town of River City, Iowa — is done well with a sizable ensemble cast, period costumes and complex musical numbers.

"The Music Man" was written by native Iowan Meredith Willson as a tribute to small-town America.

In 1957, the Broadway show won five Tony Awards, including best musical, and the first-ever Grammy Award for best original cast album. In 1962, "The Music Man" was made into film starring Robert Preston and Shirley Jones, which became an instant classic.

"The Music Man" opens with several traveling salesmen in a railway coach complaining about a con man named Professor Harold Hill (Chad Stevens) who is giving "sales" a bad name throughout the Midwest. In this cleverly executed scene, the cast sings "Rock Island" perched on train seats on rollers.

The famous song "Trouble," sung by Harold to the residents of River City, sets the stage for the deceit and distrust about to unfold.

Harold has come to River City to fool the townspeople into buying band instruments and uniforms for their children. He vows to teach the children how to play even though he has no musical talent. His real plan is to take their money and then skip town with the cash.

Harold becomes acquainted with uptight River City librarian and piano teacher Marian Paroo (skillfully acted by Lacy McNamara, who is also the show's musical director).

At first, Marian dislikes Harold. But she soon gets a glimpse of his good side when he helps her younger brother,



DANIELLE DUTRO MCNAMARA PHOTOGRAPHY

The ensemble cast of San Luis Obispo Little Theatre's 'The Music Man.'

THE MUSIC MAN

7 p.m. tonight, Friday and Saturday; 2 p.m. •

Saturday and Sunday; through June 14

San Luis Obispo Little Theatre, 888 Morro St.
San Luis Obispo

\$29

786-2440 or www.slolittletheatre.org

er, Winthrop (Andrew Miklas, impressive), come out of his shell.

She and Harold gradually fall in love.

With his charm and wit, fast-talking Harold is able to convince most of the townspeople to invest in the band. But not everyone falls for his con game.

Pompous Mayor George Shinn (Jamie Foster in an over-the-top performance) has doubts about Harold and demands his credentials.

The mayor's wife, Eulalie Shinn (Kate Kravets, hilarious), struts around like a peacock.

She leads the town's high society women in the musical number "Pick-A-Little," which is a showstopper. Her adorable youngest daughter, Gracie

Shinn (7-year-old Mary Kate Fidopistis), lights up the stage with her beaming smile and budding talent.

The show also features a comical and talented barbershop quartet (Brett Boyle, Nathan Lahr, Rick Ridge and David Melld, who is also the show's set designer) that sings several popular songs such as "Goodnight Ladies."

There is a host of endearing cast members in "The Music Man" who bring much enthusiasm to the production, including the many loveable and gifted child actors who steal the show.

Linfield's minimal set design allows room for the oversized musical productions while dutifully reflecting the many small-town settings such as River City High School, Madison Library and Town Center.

Costume designer Keith Wetzel captures the early 1900s with lots of bright colors and charm. Pam Hester does an excellent job as stage manager, meanwhile, with the number of ambitious scene changes.

"The Music Man" makes us remember and value the beauty of our nation's small towns through an engaging mixture of romance, laughter, and the thrill of marching bands.