

SAN FRANCISCO

by Richard Connema

An Enthusiastic Production of Cole Porter's *Something for the Boys*

42nd Street Moon

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The 42nd Street Moon Company is revisiting one of its earliest hits, the rarely produced *Something for the Boys* with music and lyrics by Cole Porter and book by Dorothy Fields. The company, under the direction of Daniel Witzke, performs the energetic musical with vim and vigor.

Something for the Boys was presented by 42nd Street Moon in 1993 and was so popular that a complete cast recording was issued at that time. It is a perfect example of the sort of musical comedy entertainment that was occurring in 1943 as pure escapist fare. Artistic Director Greg MacKellan says it best: "It's a first rate example of an 'old-school' musical with songs, dances, sassy lyrics and a wisecrack-laden book."

The score for this wacky farce is not one of Porter's most outstanding and consists mainly of formula ballads, swing tunes of the era, and even a representative beguine, "Leader of a Big Time Band." The only song from the score that became popular was "Hey, Good Lookin'" (which I actually sang when I was a senior in a high school revue in 1944).

The plot is silly and the audience sees the Hollywood Canteen in 1943 where they are presenting a USO show. The show within a show mostly takes place around Kelly Field, San Antonio, and it centers on the misadventures of three distant cousins. Informed that they are partial heirs to an estate in Texas, they congregate on this property, which has become the site of military drills.

The cousins discover that the sprawling Texas mansion they've inherited is not quite the idyllic manor they thought it was, so they decide the crumbling estate should be converted into a boarding house for the wives of soldiers at the nearby military base.

One of the cousins, wartime machinist Blossom Hart (Ethel Merman played the role in the 1943 production), unintentionally becomes a human radio receiver when a chemical used on an assembly line becomes stuck in her teeth. Heather Orth portrays Blossom Hart and she never once copies



Dyan McBride, Heather Orth, AeJay Mitchell, Tyler McKenna, and Brian Herndon

Ethel Merman, but her character still has the nerve and sass, along with a clear voice all her own that belts out with warmth and color. Tyler McKenna is excellent, pleasantly underplaying Rocky, and singing with old-fashioned flair "Could It Be You?" Both are delightful singing "Hey, Good Lookin'."

Dyan McBride gives a grand performance as Chiquita. She is a hoot singing "By the Mississinewa." Eliza Leoni grimaces and seethes very well as Melanie. Brian Herndon is entertaining with some very fast zingers as Harry Hart. His timing and abilities as an actor-singer are evident. Nikita Burshteyn brings zeal, zest and zip to the proceedings as fast-talking Roger Calhoun. Abby Sammons as Mary Francis gives a heartfelt rendition of "I'm In Love with a Soldier Boy."

Abby Sammons and Eliza Leoni along with Victoria Stewart Davis play the Banner sisters. They sound a little like a good imitation of the Andrews Sisters singing "See That You're Born in Texas" and "The Leader of a Big Time Band." AeJay Mitchell, Andrew Perez, Samuel Rabinowitz, and Stephen Vaught are commendable in their roles.

Costumes by Felicia Lilienthal are authentic period 1940s dress and Bert van Aalsburg's set looks like an accurate USO club of the '40s. Daniel Witzke's direction is fast paced while Staci Arriaga's dances are strictly in the '40s mode. Dave Dobrusky along with Nick Di Scala on woodwinds nicely back up the singers, but there were times that Di Scala tended to drown out Abby Sammons singing "I'm In Love with a Solder Boy" at the performance I attended.

Something For the Boys plays through December 14th, 2014, at the Eureka Theatre, 215 Jackson Street, San Francisco. For tickets call 415-255-8207 or visit www.42ndStMoon.org. Next up at 42nd Street Moon is Charles Strouse, Richard Maltby Jr., and Arthur Laurents' *Nick and Nora*.

Photo: David Allen

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