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the matchmaker play 311.(Photo by: Courtesy)

The power of love

By DOV
PREMINGER
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JEST presents Thornton Wilder's tale of a matchmaker who wants the man she's supposed to set up with another woman.

If you watch *Sex and the City* or *Serugim*, you may want to take a look at The Jerusalem English Speaking Theater's (JEST) latest production, a rendition of Thornton Wilder's endearing comedy *The Matchmaker*.

Originally set in the 1890s, director Erika Hughes decided to set the play in the 1960s to give it a fresh look. Regarding what type of audience might enjoy the play, Hughes says "people in their thirties, forties, and fifties from the United States are [the typical] audience. There's a good chance they would know Thornton Wilder's work. But there are 18 year olds and 22 year olds [in the cast]. A theme [in the play] is young people striking out on their own." Hughes hopes to see a younger crowd in attendance as well.

Explaining why she chose to direct *The Matchmaker*, Hughes says, "This is a classic American play. Thornton Wilder is one of the great American playwrights. He's the only playwright as far as I know to have won the Pulitzer Prize for both fiction and drama."

The Matchmaker, which inspired the well-known Broadway musical *Hello, Dolly!*, centers around the spirited Dolly Levi, a young widow who makes ends meet through matchmaking. When Dolly realizes she wants to marry one of her clients, she has to fix things so that he will propose to her. Her client is the stuffy Horace Vandergelder, himself a widower. Dolly's presence and antics begin to clear out the cobwebs from his life and help him embrace the adventures of new love. Dolly has the same effect on other people connected to Mr. Vandergelder, including Irene, the hat shop owner who was meant to be his match. JEST says to be ready for mix-ups, laughter, and some groovy feelings as Dolly's *joie de vivre* opens the characters and the audience to love and adventure.

Lead actress Eliana Aaron says that "playing Dolly Levi is really a stage role that I relish. I was really excited about it. It's a dream role on the stage. She's so funny, and such a busybody. A character that is so comical and yet loving, everyone really likes her. I think it's going to be very well received. I think we're going to leave people in tears. I've done my parts in front of my kids, and they can't stop laughing."

The Matchmaker starts this Thursday and runs through April 28 at Ramat Rachel Theater, Jerusalem. For more info visit www.jest-theatre.org.



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