

'Tuna' hits home

Players show makes fun of small town Texas

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FEATURES EDITOR

If you've lived in small-town Texas for any stretch of time, you'll get "Greater Tuna." The show itself is like a big inside joke, silly to some, too real for the rest of us.

The Wimberley Players opened the show last weekend, directed by Aaron Johnson. While the show itself is not a mind-blowing display of literary prowess, it's an ode to those country folk in the heart of America, and everyone else who thinks they're as dumb as rocks. The two-person cast reflects this in an unexpected way: The variety of characters isn't really that many at all. They all resemble each other in one way or another, and probably because half of them are related.

Will Mercer and R. Michael Clinkscales (both featured most recently in the "Young Frankenstein Musical") play the whole cast of characters.

The town of Tuna, Texas listens to OKKK radio, hosted by Thurston Wheelis (Mercer) and Arles Struvie (Clinkscales). The two talk about what's going on at the station, allow guests to call in to report local gossip and maybe report some news.

The truly impressive feat is the split-second wardrobe changes. We see a variety of characters during radio



PHOTOS COURTESY TOM BROWN

Arles Struvie, played by R. Michael Clinkscales (left) and Thurston Wheelis, played by Will Mercer, read the "news" on their radio show on station OKKK.

program alone, like Didi Snavelly, the local gun shop owner, and her husband, R.R. Snavelly, who claims he saw a U.F.O. that looks like a chimichanga.

Clinkscales or Mercer will go offstage and change costumes in a matter of seconds, and reappear as the next character. Even with the production crew helping them in and out of wardrobe changes, the transformation is unbe-

(played by Mercer).

Pearl, Bertha's aunt, loves her chickens, and, as the local Humane Society advocate Petey Fisk (Clinkscales) says, is addicted to killing dogs. She finds a poodle around her yard and immediately pegs it as an "egg sucker," and goes to feed it one of her "bitter pills." Unfortunately, Bertha's husband's prize \$2,000 dog Ripper snatches it before the poodle. Ripper dies. To instead make it look like the dog was hit by a car, she employs Bertha's son Stanley to drag the dog out to the street to run it over.

It's moments like this that make the play darkly hilarious. You can't help but laugh, but you'll feel guilty doing so. Like when Didi Snavelly's commercial comes on the air, poking light at guns ("If we can't kill it, it's immortal!").

The set of the play is delightfully simple. The people and wardrobe take the show, but the backdrop of Tuna, TX feels like home. The other few items on set is an old-time radio and a couple tables and telephone, and it's all the characters need to bring Tuna to life. The dogs are imaginary as are other items like Stanley's truck or the judge's coffin. Their absence doesn't leave a hole for the audience but adds something to the air of simplicity.

While Clinkscales nails his roles as Petey Fisk, the Bumiller boys and Arles Struvie, his portrayal of the female characters doesn't quite match up. Unlike Mercer's female characters, his are more eccentric, but also a bit over the top, if not obnoxious. Vera Carp is probably the least-believable of the characters, colored brightly in pink with neat bright-blond hair, but with a loud, manly voice and exaggerated expressions that distract from the already-eccentric character.

But all the characters strike a chord with small-town Texas, like when Pearl has to go visit the recently-deceased judge at the funeral home to gloat over his dead body. Or Petey Fisk pushes little Jody Bumiller to take yet another dog home. Or Charlene Bumiller, who only dreams of being a cheerleader, but has been turned down every time. Or Thurston and Arles, whose morning show makes everything better, or more specifically, OK-K-K.

"Greater Tuna" will run Fridays and Saturdays at 7:30 p.m. and Sundays at 2:30 until May 17 at the Wimberley Playhouse.

lievably fast.

Mercer brings to life Pearl Burras and Bertha Bumiller, both with a similar airy drawl, posture and, like most of the characters, a simple small-town view of the world. Bertha is visited by Houston reporter Chad Hartford (Clinkscales, of course), who asks about her involvement with the local chapter of the KKK. "I'm just glad he didn't ask me about my family," Bertha says after the reporter leaves, shaking her head, hand over her heart. "I'm just really glad that reporter didn't ask any questions about my family."

Her family is peculiar, with a rejected cheerleader daughter, son straight out of reform school, a dog-collecting youngest son (all played by Clinkscales) and, on a darker note, an unfaithful husband



Pearl Burras (Mercer) and Vera Carp (Clinkscales) visit the coffin of the recently-deceased judge.



Bertha Bumiller (Mercer) hugs son Jody (Clinkscales) who is overjoyed when he's allowed to keep yet another dog.

LIVE MUSIC LISTINGS

Thursday, April 30

- Todd Snider, Cheatham Street - 10 p.m.
- Mandy Rowden, Riley's Tavern - 9 p.m.
- Erickson, Triple Crown - 6 p.m.
- Henry + The Invisibles, The Deer, Triple Crown - 10 p.m.
- Asleep at the Wheel - CD Release, Gruene Hall in Gruene - 8 p.m.
- Rogers & Lowery, Inoz in Wimberley - 12 p.m.
- Bob Cheevers, Cypress Creek Cafe in Wimberley - 8 p.m.
- Bob Slaughter, Linda's Fine Foods in Wimberley - 6:30 p.m.

Friday, May 1

- Todd Snider, Cheatham Street - 10 p.m.

- Mark Jungers, Triple Crown - 6 p.m.
- Lesser Antilles, Talk Radio, Drive on, Mak, For Elise, Triple Crown - 9 p.m.
- Big John Mills, Riley's Tavern - 9 p.m.
- Slim Bawb, Inoz in Wimberley - 7 p.m.
- Kim Meeks & Her Bad Habits, Cypress Creek Cafe in Wimberley - 8:30 p.m.
- Neal Ford, Linda's Fine Foods in Wimberley - 7 p.m.

Saturday, May 2

- Todd Snider, Cheatham Street - 10 p.m.
- Deuce Coupe, Riley's Tavern - 4 p.m.
- The Real Hands, Mon Freres Amigos, The Shady Rest Band, Broke Folks, Triple Crown - 9 p.m.
- Uncle Fud, Inoz in Wimberley - 12 p.m.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Price Senior Center Tea Room Lunch

WHEN: Monday-Thursday 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.
WHERE: Price Senior Center, 222 W. San Antonio St.
INFO: For menu or reservations call (512) 392-3114.

Centro Cultural Hispano de San Marcos Tutoring

WHEN: Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.
WHERE: 211 Lee St.
WHO: SMCISD third through sixth grade.
INFO: (512) 878-0640

Overdrive eBook Help

WHEN: April 30, 9-10 a.m.
WHERE: San Marcos Public Library
WHO: For those interested in accessing the library's eBook collection.
INFO: Contact (512) 393-8200

Wild Texas Teas

WHEN: April 30 at 7 p.m.
WHERE: San Marcos Public Library
WHO: For tea enthusiasts and those looking to make their own herbal blends
INFO: Contact (512) 393-8200

6th Annual 'A Night of Hope' Charity Event and Silent Auction

WHEN: April 30 from 5:30-9 p.m.
WHERE: Three Dudes Winery at 125 Old Martindale Road
WHO: Hosted by Greater San Marcos Youth Council. New Orleans themed dinner by Chef Bryant Currie, silent auction, bucket drop raffle and live music by DaHeBeGeBees.
INFO: www.gsmc.org or call (512) 754-0500 for ticket information

Gruene Hall 40th Anniversary

WHEN: April 30 from 4-6 p.m.
WHERE: Gruene Hall, 1281 Gruene Road in New Braunfels
WHO: Gruene Hall will celebrate Pat Molak and Mary Jane Nalley's 40 years of ownership and operation. Texas-style reception emceed by Asleep at the Wheel's Ray Benson: One of the Halls very first nationally booked acts.
INFO: Contact Katie Molak at katie@gruenetexas.com

Heart of Texas Chorus Weekly Meeting

WHEN: Thursdays from 7-9:30 p.m.
WHERE: Choir Room at San Marcos High School
WHO: Visitors always welcome.
INFO: (866) 801-4238 or www.hotchorus.org

Free Community Line Dance Classes

WHEN: Every Thursday from 1:30-2:30 p.m.
WHERE: First Methodist Church at 129 W Hutchison
WHO: Open to all ages (above 4). Learn a variety of dances. No experience necessary. Wear comfortable clothes and shoes. Walk-ins welcome.
INFO: Contact Carrie Standlee at (218) 770-7817 or carrie_standlee@yahoo.com

Centro Spring Classes - Piano Lessons

WHEN: Thursdays and Friday from 4-6 p.m. and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to noon
WHERE: Centro Cultural Hispano de San Marcos, 211 Lee Street
WHO: Open to all ages. Scholarships available, priority to low income, underprivileged children.
INFO: Call (512) 878-0640 or email centro@sanmarco-centro.org

Martindale Farmers Market

WHEN: Fridays, 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.
WHERE: Downtown Martindale, on Main Street in front of courthouse.
WHO: The public is welcome, free entry for vendors. To sign up for market, contact Rose at blooming9@gmail.com.
INFO: For more INFO call (512) 212-0399 or visit www.martindalemarket.org.

Storytime

WHEN: May 1
WHERE: San Marcos Public Library
WHO: For babies 0 to 2 at 10 a.m. and children 3 to 6 at 11 a.m.
INFO: Contact (512) 393-8200

Cinco de Mayo Luncheon

WHEN: May 1 at 11:30 a.m.
WHERE: Centro Cultural Hispano de San Marcos, in Cuauhtemoc Hall
WHO: Hosted by Centro Cultural Hispano de San Marcos, League of United Latin American Council (LULAC) #654 and Sociedad Cuauhtemoc. Tickets are \$10 per person and \$100 for a table of 8.
INFO: Contact Gloria Salazar at (512) 878-0640

Cottage Kitchen

WHEN: Friday, May 1 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
WHERE: Charles S. Cock House Museum
WHO: Central Texas Medical Center
Menu: Chicken fried steak, mashed potato, mixed vegetables, salad, roll, mousse, pecan pie, iced tea and coffee.
INFO: (512) 665-6048

50+ S.M.A.S.H. Social Club: Picnic in the Park

WHEN: Friday, May 1 from 12 to 2 p.m.
WHERE: Rio Vista Park
WHO: Bring a friend; hot dogs, chips drinks and other goodies will be provided. Free, for ages 50 and up.
INFO: Call (512) 393-8400