



## THE PRODUCERS

Book by Mel Brooks and Thomas Meehan  
Music and Lyrics by Mel Brooks

Garland Summer Musicals

Production Crew:

Producer – Patty Granville

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Reviewed Performance 6/16/2017

Reviewed by [Joel Gerard](#), Associate Critic for John Garcia's THE COLUMN

If you've ever seen a Mel Brooks movie, then you should know what to expect from anything he writes. The Producers has raunchy humor with slightly offensive jokes about every race, sex, and religion. But above all else it's also hilarious and fun. It won a record twelve Tony awards on Broadway, and Garland Summer Musicals is doing an award-worthy production right here in North Texas.

The Producers is a musical Mel Brooks wrote based on his own movie "The Producers" from 1967 which starred the late Gene Wilder. Max Bialystock used to be the king of Broadway, but most of his shows are now flops that close as soon as they open. Max gets a visit from his accountant Leo Bloom who discovers that Max could potentially make more money from producing show that flops if he raises more money than he needs to produce the show. To ensure the show closes quickly, they collaborate to find an awful musical called "Springtime For Hitler", hire a terrible director, and wait to pocket the money once the

show fails. Of course things don't go exactly as planned after opening night.

Randy Pearlman plays Max Bialystock the down-on-his-luck Broadway producer looking to make some money. This is a fun role for any actor. Max is a zany character with questionable morals. Mr. Pearlman throws everything into the part, especially during his tour-de-force performance of the song "Betrayed" in Act II. He gets the broad comedy style, but I wish he gave a little more zing to the many one-liners throughout the show. Mel Brooks writes funny puns and jokes, but Mr. Pearlman treated a lot of them like throw-away lines instead of giving them a proper punch. It's a minor quibble for an otherwise excellent performance.

I was also particularly impressed with Art Kedzierski who plays Leo Bloom. Leo is a nerdy, naïve, and neurotic accountant who actually dreams of being a Broadway producer. He breaks out of his shell once he meets Max and starts to experience the life he truly wants. I was truly stunned by Mr. Kedzierski's excellent singing voice. His mannerisms and physical comedy bits worked really well, particularly the times he was caressing a scrap of blue blanket to calm his nerves.

By far the biggest scene-stealer of the show is Michael A. Robinson as Roger DeBris. Roger is a Broadway director, but not a very good one. He's also very much openly gay and surrounds himself with other gay men and women as his design team. To say Mr. Robinson knows how to make an entrance is an understatement. From the moment he walks onstage, he commands the scene and is truly hilarious in the part. His connection with the other actors is note-perfect as is his singing and dancing. Congrats to Mr. Robinson for such a well-executed performance.

Equally as commendable is Peter DiCesare as Roger's "common-law assistant" Carmen Ghia. Carmen is practically a walking gay stereotype. But that's part of the fun of the role. Carmen is as out there and flamboyant as possible. Mr. DiCesare swishes across the stage with ease and turns in a deliciously campy performance. Roger and Carmen are two peas in a pod and Mr. Robinson and Mr. DiCesare play off each other extremely well. It's not a huge singing role, but Mr. DiCesare has a beautiful and crystal-clear voice that can easily be heard in the back of the theater.

In fact, the supporting actors of this production are all outstanding. Steven Miller plays Franz Liebkind, the former German soldier and author of the musical "Springtime For Hitler". Mr. Miller nails his comic delivery and pseudo-German accent. He brings a particular enthusiasm to Franz that made it such a joy to watch. The object of affection for Max and Leo is the Swedish aspiring actress Ulla played by Devin Berg. Ulla is a blonde bombshell that's not too bright, but knows how to use her sexuality to her advantage. She auditions for Max and Leo, landing a role in the show and as their new secretary. Ms. Berg is an excellent dancer, singer, and actress. Every movement she made was punctuated with flair. Special mention goes to the ensemble as well. They tap-danced, moved sets, acted and had a lot of costume changes. They kept the energy going throughout the show and really showcased the choreography.

Set design by Rodney Dobbs was nothing short of amazing. Every set piece was authentic-looking and intricate. Drawers opened, doors closed, curtains parted (and a particularly funny gag involving pigeons) served the story and gave the actors something tangible to play off of. The big set pieces and backdrops

filled the stage and used every inch of space available at the Granville Arts Center. Everything moved swiftly on and off stage and worked in sync.

I don't know how they did it, but the costumes were some of the best I've seen in a local production. And there are a lot of costumes in this show! Michael A. Robinson, Suzi Cranford, and James Gary deserve a round of applause for the stunning outfits on stage. Every character, big and small, looked and fit just right. Mr. Robinson wears a stunning outfit in his first scene as Roger DeBris. When we actually get to see the performance of "Springtime For Hitler" in Act II, there are lederhosen, Nazi uniforms, and the women have incredible German-themed outfits that look like they are from the original Broadway production.

As director of this fine show, Michael Serrecchia proves he knows he's doing. Everything on stage looked seamless and easy. I really only noticed one change that Mr. Serrecchia made at the beginning of Act II. Instead of opening Act II at Max's office, the setting was on stage at a Broadway theater. We lost a joke about what Ulla was up to during intermission, but I understand why the change was made. He made smart decisions with his cast and design team.

There aren't many performances of The Producers, so I highly suggest getting tickets to see this big Broadway musical quickly. And that's no joke.

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Garland Summer Musicals

Granville Arts Center

300 N. 5th ST, Garland, 7504

June 16th – 25th, 2017

Tickets: For dates, times, and ticket information go to [www.garlandartsboxoffice.com](http://www.garlandartsboxoffice.com) or call the box office at 972-205-2790.