

**Pasatiempo – Nov. 30 – Dec. 6, 2007**

## **How to Succeed... But Really Lying**

Craig Smith

Watching a rehearsal of *How to Succeed in Business without Really Trying* at NDI-NM's Dance Barns, I realized that some things never change.

Even though his musical was first produced on Broadway in 1961, when "sexual harassment" was just a pair of words, using cheeky lies, double talk, and palace politics to get ahead is still in the cards. No matter what your field or business happens to be, there's always a J. Pierrepont Finch lurking around: the window washer with an eye on the executive suite.

But when you've got Loesser's lyrics and music telling the story, said director Donna Scheer, it's a winner – and that's why she chose it for NDI's young dancer-actor-singers. Not because it's easy to put over, but because it's hard. *How to Succeed* is quality material, and quality material demands fierce concentration no matter what your age or skill level.

"Last year, when we did *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, I was looking for a musical that would suit dancers who sang a little and didn't have a sense of what their acting abilities would be," she said. "This year, I wanted to do something that would challenge their theatrical skills.

"They can dance, we know that. They're getting better at singing. I wanted to do something that stretched their acting – something that had a challenge of a period that was difficult for them. A challenge of stereotypical characters and some really outlandish characters."

In rehearsal, Guy Mannick's Finch exuded confidence while oozing insincerity. J.B. Biggley, the clueless boss, was amusingly impersonated by Justin Baca. Matthew Ortiz cast a dark aura as J.B.'s weaselly nephew, Bud Frump, who keeps whining by phone to mama. Tess Montoya was sweet Rosemary, the secretary who falls hard for Finch. ("That's my helpless friend. Isn't he adorable?" Rosemary says. Her pal Smitty, played by Charlotte Martinez, cracks back, "Adorable, yes. Helpless, no!")

The entire cast had the dance numbers and singing down pretty well, but every now and then, a look of panic would light up an actor's eyes and he would call out, "Line!" But the rehearsal felt well prepared and well paced, and the whole crew sang out loudly and proudly.

"This show offers many moments of real acting," Scheer said. "They think, It's not a song. It's not a dance. What do I do? In the last 15 to 20 years, we've gotten into the sung-through musical, where it never stops. Here it's 'Ooh, a blackout!'

“I’m doing this especially for the older kids,” she added. “If they’re going into musical theater, what are they going to get when they start auditioning? They’re young people. They’re going to get stock: Oklahoma, South Pacific, traditional shows. It’s a great advantage for them to learn what this genre is.”

*How to Succeed in Business without Really Trying* is performed by the National Dance Institute of New Mexico, School for the Performing Arts, at 7 p.m. Friday and Saturday, Nov. 30 and Dec. 1, and 2 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 2, at NDI-NM Dance Barns, 1140 Alto St. Tickets, \$15 and \$10 may be ordered by calling 983-7661.