

THEATER REVIEW: "Young Frankenstein" lives again at UA



If you walk into "Young Frankenstein" the musical expecting "Young Frankenstein" the movie, well, you're entering with the wrong attitude.

Walk this way.

As with any adaptation from one medium to another — book to film, myth to play, song to after-school special — don't expect literal, note-for-note translation. This grab-bag of shticky gags, mostly catchy melodies and joyful eye candy is like a celebration of a classic, almost a spoof on a satire. Much like "Spamalot," it loves its classic-comedy source material, stays in the same veins — which makes sense, given Mel Brooks' involvement — but alters enough to land a few surprise laughs.

And also like "Spamalot," it can't really be the original, seeming a bit like a once-edgy rock band playing a casino gig. The best jokes most will already know; anticipating them is part of the fun, but there is just a hint of letdown when a chance to re-live one passes by. Without getting too spoiler-y, let's just say: "My grandfather's work was doo-doo!"

Yet it mostly scores, and in a handful of moments, the musical exceeds and excels, with one notable highlight being the expansion of the "Puttin' on the Ritz" number, which by itself would make this University of Alabama production worth your time and money.

Director Stacy Alley, who also choreographed, cast a shining collection of triple threats, so it probably shouldn't be surprising when 6-foot-5 grad actor William Green, working atop boots strapped with five extra inches on the bottom to make an even more towering monster, performs a passable buck-and-wing in addition to tap ... well, tramp, given that footwear.

The chorus performs the fleet-footed, flashy, crowd-pleasing stomp Alley guides so well. It'll remind you that, especially in the past decade, UA has turned out numerous Broadway-level performers — a number of them actually working or having worked on the Great White Way, others touring, working in TV and film, or probably about to be discovered.