

# UA theater hosts comedy 'Lend me a Tenor'



STAFF PHOTO | MICHELLE LEPIANKA CARTER

University of Alabama cast members rehearse for "Lend Me a Tenor" Sept. 30 at the Marian Gallaway Theatre. The play opens Tuesday.

By Reggie Allen  
Special to Tusk

Comedy is a technique many performers have difficulty executing, according to Jeffery Tangeman, head of the master of fine arts and undergraduate directing programs at the University of Alabama and director of the upcoming farce "Lend Me a Tenor."

When done right, it's a laugh riot. When done wrong, there's silence. Tangeman hopes for the riot in his second time directing Ken Ludwig's hit comedy. Produced on Broadway in 1989, "Lend Me a Tenor" received nine Tony nominations and won two. It's been performed in 25 countries and translated into 16 languages; Theatre Tuscaloosa performed it in 1993.

"Lend Me A Tenor" takes place in 1930s Cleveland, where an opera house awaits the arrival of acclaimed tenor Tito Morelli (Kevin Ryan Williams), who is slated to perform the lead in Verdi's "Otello." Following a series of unfortunate events, general manager Henry

Saunders (Jordan DeWitt) believes the singer is dead. With the performance about to start, Saunders sends in his assistant Max (David Nicholson), an aspiring singer, to take Morelli's place, hoping no one will notice the difference. Enter the farce.

Imagine Murphy's Law with an animated and comedic twist: high energy, sharp movements and slamming doors. Mistaken identity is a given and provides comic relief for the audience, while the people on stage fight for their sanity.

"Everyone's having a good time, actually, everyone in the audience is having a good time," said Naomi Prentice, who plays Maggie, Henry's daughter and Max's sort-of girlfriend. "No one on stage is having a good time."

Tangeman said many are intimidated when they hear that the play is centered on an opera, but in reality, the opera is not even seen during the production. It is more of an expositional backdrop.

"They think, 'Oh, they're going to sing opera and I'm not going to enjoy it.' It's a

## 'LEND ME A TENOR'

**What:** Ken Ludwig's hit comedy, produced by the UA Department of Theatre and Dance

**When:** 7:30 p.m. Tuesday-Oct. 11, 2 p.m. Oct. 12

**Where:** Marian Gallaway Theatre, Rowand-Johnson Hall, UA campus

**Cost:** \$20 general, \$17 seniors and UA faculty and staff, \$14 students

**More:** [www.theatre.ua.edu](http://www.theatre.ua.edu), [www.uatix.com](http://www.uatix.com)

sex farce. It's comedy," Tangeman said.

The production features stock characters, relatable people with distinguishing characteristics: the femme fatale, the awkward neurotic, the tough, etc. Cast members said the casting was just right. UA

student DeWitt said Saunders does not require him to deviate from his nature.

"Everything he does is big," DeWitt said. "I'm like that and it's, like, my default mode. It is so easy to flip on the autopilot and go 'bwwwahh wockawocka.'"

For others, like Brooke West, who plays harlot-esque Diana, the opera company's sexy soprano, it's something different from the straight-laced plays she is accustomed to, a chance for her to be silly.

DeWitt and West watched a reel from the 2010 Broadway revival, directed by Stanley Tucci and starring Tony Shalhoub, and said UA's interpretation is much sharper and quicker in dialogue. The revival worked in pauses, giving time for the audience to register certain jokes, they said.

"Ours rolls like a machine, has to be like a train," DeWitt said, snapping his fingers at breakneck speed.

Prentice said to expect to laugh, a lot, and maybe cry a little. Happy tears, that is, she said, guaranteeing that patrons will leave with at least a small smile on their faces. ■