

>> Singing the well-received "Whatever Lola Wants," Lola tempts Young Joe to forget returning to his wife. The scene required that exchange student Preston be scantily-costumed and dance provocatively.

> The wives of the baseball fanatics lament their husbands' obsession with "Sixth Months out of Every Year." The wives felt forgotten during the months of the baseball season.



Photo courtesy of Dan Plehal.

play hardball

Production of *Damn Yankees* filled with political innuendo and triumph of love

> A few of the Washington Senators hoist Young Joe in celebration of his acceptance to the team. Due to Joe's enthusiasm, the Senators began to win games in pursuit of the Pennant.

cast

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|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Joey Thomas | Old Joe Boyd |
| Stephanie Demaree | Meg Boyd |
| Zach Armstrong | Henry/Mr. Jones |
| Daniele DeBacker | Mrs. Sadie Hawkins/Mrs. Jones/Batboy |
| Andrew Collie | Vernon/Mr. Brown |
| Chelsea Cottle | Mrs. Brown/Shelly O'Neil |
| Jason Blackwell | Sohovik/Mr. Smith |
| Queenie Elam | Mrs. Smith |
| Tommy Gillespie | Rocky/Mr. French |
| Carrie Adams | Ms. Millie Weston/Mrs. French |
| Keegan Cassidy | Big Al/Mr. Good/Commissioner |
| Margaret Hutchinson | Mrs. Good |
| Justin Vazquez | Buster/Mr. Wilson |
| Chelsea Reba | Mrs. Wilson |
| Sean Close | Mr. Applegate |
| Kelsey Meiklejohn | Sister |
| Megan Castle | Doris |
| Brian Paljug | Young Joe Boyd/Hardy |
| Paul Allan Tucker | Smokey |
| Andrew Gardner | Lefkowitz/Lynch |
| David Mendler | Eddie/Mambo King |
| Brad McLemore | Benny Van Buren |
| Bess Kaye | Gloria Thorpe |
| Melissa Bailey | Welch |
| Hatty Preston | Lola |
| Tess of the d'Urbervilles | Contessa (Dog) |



As the first production of William & Mary's Theatre Program, *Damn Yankees* capitulated on the political fever of the 2008 Presidential Election. However, despite the well-received political jokes, the themes of love and commitment and the fun of presenting "the American past-time" in a musical production meant the most to the cast of *Damn Yankees*.

Directed by Dr. Laurie Wolf and Musically directed by Gary Green, *Damn Yankees* played for two consecutive weekends in mid-October. Before each show began, a screen featuring old newsreels of famous events in national baseball history ran for the waiting audience to enjoy. This special feature of the production prepared the audience for the 1955 setting of the musical.

Although Dr. Wolf mentioned the political nature of the show in her Director's Note, the audience was taken by surprise by the jokes referencing Alaskan Governor Sarah Palin, the Republican Party Vice-Presidential nominee.

Mrs. Welch, played by Melissa Bailey, was often the character to make these pointed remarks. Her comments insinuated a parallel between Mrs. Welch and Governor Palin. "Most of my 'Sarah Palin' dialogue were ad-libs where I had no specific lines," Bailey said. "While most of these ad-libs were happily to a comic effect, that was not their only purpose. The character of Welch was written as a man, which would be the natural choice for a person of such power and wealth in 1955. Mrs. Welch, therefore, is a woman in what is typically a man's world dealing with all the scrutiny that comes with that. The viewers can interpret how Govern-

nor Sarah Palin fits into that scenario."

Dr. Wolf pointed out that the political awareness of the audience drove the success of the jokes. "Had the audience not been as politically savvy as they were, many of the jokes and innuendoes would have fallen flat," Dr. Wolf said.

However, the lesson learned by Joe about the importance of love and family over his obsession with baseball was the ultimate moral of the story.

The character of Old Joe Boyd was played by senior Joey Thomas. Thomas believed that what Joe learned can serve as a reminder to us all of what is truly valuable in life. "I think the important thing to take away from the show is that all of our earthly trappings, our obsessions, our possessions, careers, and goals all ultimately pale in comparison to the value of love," Thomas said. "Many things in life will try to tempt us away from finding and maintaining a functional relationship with one special person, but there is nothing more human or more beautiful than two souls so tightly bound that they appear to be one."

Although it seemed otherwise, baseball proved to take second-place. "It takes Young Joe most of the play to realize that there are actually some things more important than baseball - his wife, love and home," Dr. Wolf said.

So, in lieu of the applause to such comic baseball numbers as "The Game" and "Heart" and the appreciation of the timely political ad-libs, the audience was reminded of the bigger things in life in *Damn Yankees*.

>Meredith Howard