

"LOVE, INC."

Book, Music and Lyrics by Marc Castle
Produced by Stan Raiff and the Virginia Arts Festival
Feb. 5 - Feb.22, 2009
For tickets call: 1-(800)-982-2787

Hello, I'm Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large;

It makes the heart beat faster to have a romantic musical about finding that special someone right here at Valentine's Day. Well, I exaggerate a little, but "Love, Inc." IS a world premiere. If all goes as planned, we are seeing it before New York off-Broadway audiences will view it, thanks to the Virginia Arts Festival and New York producer Stan Raiff,

Albeit a pretty standard look at the emotional hip-hop of romance, there are moments of gentle pleasure. The show's logo is a heart, with a jig saw puzzle like piece cut out of it. That missing piece forms the period for Inc. (as in Incorporated). Once in it's rightful place hearts will be made whole.

It's a metaphor for the plight of a young woman named Faith. She is uber successful in the corporate world of business but lacking in the cozy realm of love. Time is passing and she doesn't want to end up with a plaque of recognition, lots of money, but alone. A know-it-all neighbor, Aura, and Landon, an "at liberty" actor, become corporate cupids and guide Faith in her quest for love.

They use her business acumen to form a corporation with goals to make Faith a perfect woman and trap the man of her choice who happens to be an Associate Professor of Economics at Columbia. He's called Casey. He has a TV show, is not hard to look at, and is recently divorced. Writing the book, music and lyrics, Marc Castle has the trio follow standard patterns of research, development and marketing. The plan to get Faith and Casey together is handled like a business. Ultimately they realize that love is best left to nature. Not only does Castle follow standard business techniques, he utilizes tried and somewhat standard clichéd plotting and one dimensional characters.. His music is not easy to hum but the lyrics are on occasion clever. There is unfortunately a very long, very trite "Paris song". It is so close to being a parody that I hope the highly inventive director Igor Goldin will look at the number again from that perspective.. It could be an early step for Faith to "lighten up".

The time is the present but this attractive young cast seems mighty chaste for today's sex in the city New Yorkers. There is not one naughty word! I found that refreshing.

The outstanding, very talented comedian, Michael Minaret plays Landon and other roles as well. He makes each of them delightfully distinct individuals in a pleasant, effortless manner. He's a joy.

The character of Faith is an ugly duckling role. It's hard to imagine the statuesque Heather Parcells being physically unappealing to men. One assumes that it's her personality that turns guys off. At present, we don't see any change in Faith's behavior from the beginning to the resolution of the play. She could be a source of much needed humor if she went from a tough (but sympathetic) executive, for instance to a more gentle perfect woman.

Hollis Scarborough is quite fine in her sensitive portrayal of the ex-wife. Her other characters are murky as written and need help from Castle and director Goldin

Paolo Montalban, with his easy, handsome presence and a most pleasing voice, plus subtle acting skills, is a very winning, multi-faceted Casey.

Jeffrey Lodin at the keyboard and as conductor adds zest and sparkle to the songs as do Randy Cohen's and Bryan Crook's crisp orchestrations.

Annmarie Duggan's Valentine lighting is lush and pretty to behold. Sean Tribble's sliding screens set glides from one locale to another with the greatest of ease.

At this point I feel that it is imperative for Mr. Castle to give his two female characters different and separate characters. The men are alive and well. There is potential here for a charming little musical if he can help these ladies who are capable of doing more.

This is Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large and I'll see you at the next opening.