

“Failure: a Love Story” by Philip Dawkins.

This is call for interest in Villanova Players second short-season play for 2024.

Rehearsals will begin about the 2nd September, at 2 nights per week and a weekend daytime rehearsal as needed, probably increasing in number later in the schedule. (Rehearsal schedule will be negotiated depending on availability).

Bump in will be 3rd Nov, with a presentation to members on Wed 6th Nov, and performances Fri 8th, Sat 9th (matinee and evening) and Sun 10th (matinee).

This will be an exciting ensemble show – with interesting new techniques and style. It is a genuine rule breaker, including songs and dances – but no instruments! Cast size is flexible, and a range of ages is preferred.

Failure: a Love Story is the story of the Fail family, a family of clock repairers in 1920’s Chicago. The play is sad and funny – often at the same time, and is ultimately uplifting.

Review by Alan Bresloff –

“... a theatrical experience that will stay in your memory for years to come.”

<https://aroundthetownchicago.com/theatre-reviews/failure-a-love-story/>

The Chorus is the driving force of the play – a classic Greek Chorus rather than a choral group. They explain the back story, but also comment on the characters and are entertaining in themselves – supplying much of the comedy. In fact, all characters in the play are Chorus members at some time or another. The play is set in Chicago, so except Henry and Marietta should have mid-west American accents, but not strong or too regional.

So – to introduce the characters:



Henry Fail (formerly Heiner Failbottom): A highly respected clockmaker from “The Old Country”. The family patriarch, but never reaches an age beyond about 36. Should have a slight, but not necessarily identifiable Eastern European accent.



Marietta Fail (formally Marishka Failbottom): An equally respected clockmaker from the same old country. Should have a slight, but not necessarily identifiable Eastern European accent. Also does not live past about 36. Henry and Marietta migrated from “The Old Country” to the US about 20 years before the play begins.



Gertrude (Gerty) Fail: The eldest daughter (about 28). Following in the family tradition, she has grown up among clocks and timepieces. She is feisty and won't take nonsense from no-one. When the play opens, she is the guiding hand of the “Fail Clock Works: Est. 1900”.



Jenny June Fail: The middlest daughter (about 22). A superb lake swimmer and diver. Is madly in love with Johnny Weissmuller (this was before he became famous as Tarzan). She placed second to him in a lake diving competition.



Nelly Fail: The youngest daughter (about 20). She is a professional singer and dancer (almost – she hasn't had her big break yet – she just needs to find the right Hollywood producer). She is by far the favourite of the family – everybody loves Nelly.



John N Fail: The only son. His age is unknown (but about 22), because he was found floating down the highly polluted Chicago River in a Moses basket accompanied by a snake named Moses. He is not so much of a “people person”, and is most at home with animals. He successfully studies for and becomes a Vet.



Mortimer Mortimer: (Age 26) So famous he is named after himself. He is rich – not on account of any family inheritance, personal talent, skills, business acumen etc. He was just lucky at the horses and then on the stock market. He may have squandered all his luck. But is a genuinely nice person. He is the catalyst for almost everything that happens.



Gramophone: An all-singing role he/she supplies most of the music in the play. No actual lines, but lots of songs (spoiler alert – the only one alive at the end of the play).



Old Dog: Unnamed, but an important speaking role. In fact, he has probably the most significant line in the play *“Just because something ends, that don’t mean it wasn’t a great success”*.



Art Dodd: a bartender, also a customer of the “Fail Clock Works: Est 1900”



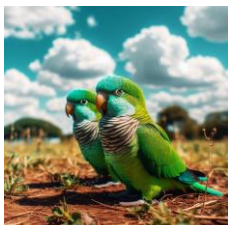
Grantland Rice: A radio journalist (a quite famous real person). In this play he reports on Jenny June’s attempt to swim across Lake Michigan. (This is the real Grantland Rice). https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grantland_Rice



Moses: a very large python. An important speaking part. He/she (gender not specified) is found as a baby in the basket with baby John N., floating down the Chicago River.



Clocks of various descriptions – a Grandfather Clock, Cuckoo Clock, Carriage Clock, etc. Speaking (and ticking) roles. “A Fail Clock is a Working Clock”



Mae and December (feral Monk Parakeets). Speaking roles.

There are other “chorus roles” supplying comments, sound effects and narration.

All characters are part of the chorus, speak directly to the audience, and typically introduce themselves (in the third person).

Review by Brian Granger –

“... the production at PURE is simultaneously hilarious and heart-wrenching,”

<https://charlestoncitypaper.com/2015/11/10/review-pures-failure-a-love-story-is-a-heartwarming-and-humorous-show>

Players Offstage

Stage Manager – Nothing unusual about this. Just the average super-hero needed.

Costumier – for 20’s gear (plus earlier and later eras), as well as specialties such as snake, dog, etc.

Props – plenty of weird and wonderful props needed.

Set – some moveable items. We may need a bed.

Lighting design – there will be some delicate focus needed to allow acting right back to the cyclorama. There will also be 2 specials to light 2 single actors.

Lighting operation – not onerous – mainly the specials in addition to beginning, end and interval.

Video Operation – this is a biggie! There are many scenic “backdrops”, but also much interaction between the actors and images. Timing will be super-critical. It will be expected that the operator will attend rehearsals – approximately one per week.

Sound operation – not needed – there will be no pre-recorded sound effects or music (apart from pre-play and post/play incidental music).