

Who doesn't love a good love story?

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While working in his wheat fields, Boaz pauses his laborious maneuvers to meet the eyes of a woman named Ruth, and his heart immediately belongs to her.

Audiences will view this scene of love and humor in the musical production of "Under His Wings" (the Love Story of Ruth and Boaz) in three performances at 10:30 a.m., 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. on Saturday at the College of the Albemarle Performing Arts Center in Elizabeth City.



Written by J. Michael Herron, the musical is being produced by the Emmerich Theatre Production Company, Inc.

Jeffrey Emmerich serves as the director and his wife, Gloria, is the musical director. The couple met in high school and attended San Diego State University where Gloria earned a master's degree in vocal performance and composition and Jeffrey earned a master's degree in fine arts in musical theatre. They have been married 42 years, and opened the Rocky Hock Playhouse after they moved to Edenton in May 2000 from their home in Minneapolis, Minn., where they taught at North Central University.

Both are returning to the roles of Boaz and Naomi which they originated in the musical's premiere on the West Coast in 1993.

"Under His Wings," is a "classic love story with a wonderful happy ending," according to Gloria Emmerich.

Actors move gracefully throughout the scene, as Jeff Emmerich recites a line in a dress rehearsal, "This is God's time for love in my life."

The lines are very familiar to the Emmerichs who have produced "Under His Wings" in several performances in Oregon, Minnesota, the Outer Banks and the Rocky Hock Playhouse. Auditions were held in April and the cast rehearses for two weeks in June prior to the one day production on June 29.

The scenes are both humorous and touching as Naomi is forced to deal with the loss of her two sons and bond with her daughter-in-law, Ruth. Ruth is portrayed by Mariah Schierer, who also serves as the choreographer and costumer of the production.

A graduate of Dean College in Massachusetts with a bachelor's degree in dance, Schierer moved to the area three years ago to work with the Emmerichs at their Rocky Hock Playhouse. This is Schierer's second time playing the role of Ruth.

"I love this story," said Schierer, who studied voice and has been singing her entire life.

Schierer's husband, Nathan, is the set designer and plays the roles of Chilion/Eli. The couple met while working at the Rocky Hock Playhouse and celebrated their first anniversary in May.

Some of the cast members also include former and past students of Jeffrey Emmerich who is also the drama director and an instructor at the College of the Albemarle. Darrell House, a current student, plays the role of Reuben and narrates the story, and Tyler Clark who recently graduated from the program at COA portrays the character, Ashbel.



The Emmerichs have produced "Under His Wings" with eight cast members. However, this season's production includes 30 members which benefits the chorus and choral scenes, explained Jeffrey Emmerich.

Cast members are Jill Malo, Rene Finken Keller, Rachel Carter, Brandi Bigelow, Robyn Phillips, Andrew Dornfried, Logan Wheat, Nick Duncan, Bilal Ellis, Amber Winslow and Katie White. Chorus members are Billy Ward, David Ward, Jacob Fauth, Lorelle Phillips, Loren Phillips, Sandra Culpepper, Breanne Thornton, Brittany House, Layah Fauth, Ruth Fauth and Kassidy Malo.



The performance includes "beautiful Christian duets" and a flowing dialogue between characters that is "very family oriented," said Jeffrey Emmerich.

The musical ends with "Blessed Be the Lord" which Schierer describes as a "stunning" scene. Gloria Emmerich emphasized the beauty of the final scene's movement and music that will please audiences.

"Under His Wings" is a musical for all ages, said Gloria Emmerich. "Who doesn't love a love story?"

Tickets are available by contacting the box office manager at (252) 482-4621 or visiting the website at www.rockyhockplayhouse.com. Ticket prices are \$18 for adults, \$17 for seniors (62 and older), \$10 for children (6-12 years old) and \$15 for groups of 10 or more people.