

You'd Be Foolish Not to See LHHS' Fools

written by Addy Engelken, a sophomore at Tesoro High School

While the quaint village of Kulyenchikov may be set in 1890s Ukraine, the antics of its foolish inhabitants resonate anywhere.

A curse dating back generations has cast a stupor of stupidity over Kulyenchikov, and it is up to schoolmaster Leon to solve it. Along the way, he sparks a romance with his pupil Sophia Zubritsky.

Nicolas Fuller as Leon arrives in Kulyenchikov with the confident strides of a schoolmaster. He creates comedy amidst confusion with his wide eyes and bewildered grin, marveling at the stupidity of Kulyenchikov during clean, quick asides to the audience. When pretending to be under the idiotic curse, his eyes hilariously glaze over, and he becomes enamored with the billowing fabric of his scarf.

Opposite Leon is Sophia Zubritsky (Carissa Diller), whose doe-eyed gaze and shy smiles capture the hearts of both Leon and the audience. Diller screws her face tight in concentration, sticks her arms out, and leans back tentatively in a monumental moment for the simple Sophia—sitting down!

Adrian Magana brings rockstar bravado to the conniving Gregor Yousekevitch. He saunters onstage, simultaneously spinning in circles and strumming the balalaika, constructed out of cardboard by the props team (led by Alastair Mayer). This prop adds to Magana's hysterical entrance and to the authenticity of the setting.

The Kulyenchikovites create an uproarious ensemble. In a village gathering, Dr. Zubritsky (Joseph Mulrooney) leads the fools in a strange prayer. Together, they contort themselves into an endless variety of gymnastics poses, each displaying unique character while contributing to the overall hilarity of the fools.

Costumes, led by Alex Nguyen, cleverly showcase the difference between Leon and the Kulyenchikovites. Leon dons navy blue with a plaid vest, a color representing wisdom and an academic print, while the Kulyenchikovites wear simple, yet cheery aprons, skirts, and slacks.

Lighting (Ava Kornegay, Justin Eley, Barrett Hinojosa, Elliott Watson) and sound (Ryah Stefani, Elisa Wager) collaborate to highlight the budding romance of Leon and Sophia. The actors are lit by dreamy pink hues during the balcony scene, underscored by the soft, dulcet strains of sweeping strings. Stage manager Danielah Hernandez ensures these romantic beats are hit with precision.

While this chucklesome story may center around a village of idiots, LHHS' Fools is hardly the work of a foolish company. Actors and technicians alike commit to comedy and collaboration, telling a story that reminds the audience of the Kulyenchikovite in all of us.