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SCSU taught Minnesotan

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Learning to speak Minnesotan and understanding Midwest culture may be a bit tough for newcomers to grasp.

However, "How to Talk Minnesotan: The Musical," drew quite a crowd Friday night at the Ritsche Auditorium in Stewart Hall.

"How to Talk Minnesotan," consisted of a mix of musical and theatrical skits poking fun at Minnesotan language, fashion, mannerisms and everything in between. Hot dish and the infamous Minnesota long goodbye were addressed.

"I actually think it's a really good show, its really fun," said fourth-year SCSU student Traci Denman. "I really like the hot dish stuff."

The musical version is based on the book written by Howard Mohr.



Media Credit: Adam Kritzeck

The cast of "How to Talk Minnesotan" perform one of many musical skits during the two hour musical. From left to right:

Mohr hosts a radio show with musical guests and commercials for imaginary products. His show is heard by more than four million people each week.

"He wrote an actual book called 'How to talk Minnesotan,' and in about 1994 or 1995 or so he got approached by Curt Wollan, who is our producer, about writing a musical," said Tim Drake, a performer for "How to Talk Minnesotan." "So they contacted him, and he said he had never written a musical before but he thought it would be kind of a fun challenge."

The musical began at the Plymouth Playhouse in January 1997. They are best known for producing award-winning comedies and musicals.

"Over a million people have actually seen the show during that run," said Ted Rossing, a performer for "How to Talk Minnesotan."

Although not quite a million turned out to see the show Friday, the audience relished in the hilarity the cast portrayed Minnesotans.

The cast integrated the show with the audience by giving language lessons and explaining Minnesota mannerisms as they acted each scene.

For example, the proper way to answer a "How are you?" in Minnesota is by saying something positive with a negative term. In response, a "Not too bad," "It could be worse" and "Can't complain" all qualify as acceptable responses.

"There are no yah, you betchas or any of that kind of stuff," Rossing said. "None of that, you know kind of thing, because it's supposed to be for all Minnesotans."

Drake said the director put together much of the pre-production by himself.

"The director and producer Curt Wollan, but he and Howard specifically wrote in the script that he didn't want us to do over the top accents like they did in the movie 'Fargo,' for example," Drake said. "Because it's more realistic if it's just real, and that's where the humor is, if it's just real life."

There are other versions of "How to Talk Minnesotan" for those who missed the show and would like to catch a performance.

"There ended up being three versions," Drake said. "There's a summer version, which we're doing here, and there's a winter version, which is a completely different show, and we then we did 'A Best Of' which is a combination of the two with some added scenes and some added songs."

Aside from "How to Talk Minnesotan," audience members can see the same performers in other musical comedies as well presented by Plymouth Playhouse.

Caroline Walters (Darlene Humde), David Saffert (Leland Edwards), Susan Tillman (Lucy Humde), Chuck Deeter (Ed Humde) and Tim Drake (Miller Johnson.)



Media Credit: Adam Kritzeck
During the performance of "How to Talk Minneston" an audience member partakes in a skit by posing in a picture with a fish. From left to right: Susan Tillman, Chuck Deeter, Ted Rossing, Caroline Walters, David Saffert, and Tim Drake.

"Church Basement Ladies" is a musical comedy based on the book "Growing up Lutheran," about four women solving problems in the basement of their rural Minnesota church during the year 1965.

For more information and show schedules check out their Web site at www.plymouthplayhouse.com.

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