

# GILLIGAN'S ISLAND

## 'GILLIGAN'

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production, which was first staged in 1992 in North Carolina, stems from its creative sources. Sherwood Schwartz, creator of the original 1960s television series, co-wrote the book with son Lloyd. His daughter Hope co-wrote the songs with her husband Laurence Juber, a Grammy-winning guitarist who was a member of Wings with Paul McCartney. When families collaborate, there's a danger that personal friction can sometimes filter down and poison the product, but in this case, the whole enterprise has a lighthearted harmony and sustains its engaging goofiness without slipping into corn.

Sherwood Schwartz's original concept is familiar to fans — a group of comically clashing types on board the USS Minnow is shipwrecked and forced to coexist. These included bumbling Gilligan (Grant Rosen), seductive movie star Ginger (Shea Alexander), wildly wealthy, materialistic Mr. and Mrs. Howell (real-life husband and wife Marshall Borden and Lee Meriwether), pretty young girl Mary Ann (Melissa Fahn), the professor (Gordon Goodman) and the Skipper (Matthew Kimbrough). As creator Schwartz defines it, throw together a gang of people who would never fraternize in daily life and you'll have conflict and eventually mutual dependence.

The conflicts never move past humor into true suspense or jeopardy, even though a plot about extraterrestrials is introduced. That doesn't matter, because the show's most endearing element is its sparkling musical score. So many musicals today rely on raucous rhythms and

nondescript, filler-type tunes to keep a story on course. But "Gilligan's Island — The Musical" has many engaging show-stoppers, seen to strong advantage under the expert musical direction of Gerald Sternbach.

Check out "Things I Never Said," a duet between Gilligan and Mary Ann. The song has a likable, infectious charm and could easily find a berth on Billboard's Top 10. "Island Lullaby" is buoyant and "The Professor's Lament" has refreshingly witty words. Also particularly enjoyable are "How Do You Know You're In Love?," "Goodbye Island," "It's Good To Be Rich" and "I'll Spend My Time With You."

Director/choreographer Sha Newman possesses an infallible instinct for bringing out the best in such broad material. She keeps the actors under firm control, so that we laugh at their loony antics and still accept them as characters we can relate to. Her imaginative musical staging makes every number shine.

All the cast members easily capture the cartoon-like aspects and the humanity of their TV equivalents.

Rosen is a fine singer (so much so that we'd like more from him), and the personification of Gilligan physically and emotionally.

Meriwether's Mrs. Howell isn't as weirdly eccentric as Natalie Shafer in the television series, but she's lovely and graceful and puts over her lines with class and flair.

Alexander's Ginger has the requisite sexiness and Gordon Goodman is outstanding as the Professor. Borden, playing Mr. Howell, keeps audience sympathy even when he's expressing materialistic ideas and Kimbrough is bombastically believable as the Skipper.

**HOT TIP**