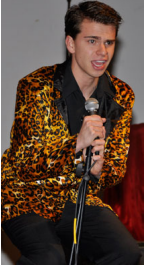


## 'Breaking Up is Hard to Do' keeps audience laughing

Written by Darci Tomky

---



**Taylor Haidle lets it loose and gets the crowd laughing as he opened the musical with his solo "Breaking Up is Hard to Do."**

From the first notes of "Breaking Up is Hard to Do," last weekend's spring musical had the entire audience laughing, crying ... or laughing so hard they cried.

With the expertise of director Carla Mayfield and music director Pat Wiebers, the HHS drama department hit the nail on the head with their hilarious performances on the HHS stage March 26-27. Featuring the music of Neil Sedaka, this production took everyone back 50 years to doo-wop songs and toe-tapping beats.

A sensational cast with six leads, eight chorus members and two musicians set the scene at Esther's Paradise Resort in the Catskills on Labor Day weekend, 1960.

The resort's heartthrob performer Del Delmonaco, played by Taylor Haidle, captured the audience from the get-go with his charm and good looks. "I don't mean to toot my own horn, but toot toot!" said Del. Haidle really embraced this character from his leopard-print suit jacket to his flirtatious dance moves.

Marge Gelman, played by Ella Stewart, and her friend Lois Warner, played by Nicole Brandt, are thrown into the mix when they get caught up in the wild shenanigans at the resort.

Heartbroken Marge and stage-struck Lois look for a magical weekend to get Marge's mind off her called-off wedding. "There's plenty of fish in the tree," assured a ditsy Lois.

## 'Breaking Up is Hard to Do' keeps audience laughing

Written by Darci Tomky

---

Marge quickly forgets her former fiancé when the spellbinding Del strolls into her life. Lois tells Del that Marge is really falling for him and he simply replies, “Well she’s human, ain’t she?”

Stewart was brilliant as she took the audience on a journey through Marge’s ups and downs in her search for love.

Brandt played the fun-loving (but sometimes scatterbrained) Lois with ease. In her quest to perform on stage, Lois concocted a plan to get her and Marge in the spotlight, noting nothing would “snow on this parade!”

Meanwhile, the clutzy cabana boy Gabe Green admires Marge from the sidelines. Played by Brian DeBoer, this secret songwriter is the one behind Del’s success. The acting was sincere, and DeBoer had the audience on his side as the boy-next-door tried to impress and win the heart of Marge.

As if the crowd wasn’t laughing enough, add in resort owner Esther Simowitz, played by Nora Roth, and emcee Harvey Feldman, played by Duncan Brandt, to the cast.

The widowed Esther certainly isn’t looking for love as she simply tries to keep her resort running. “I’ve saved enough money to last me a lifetime, unless I want to buy something!” Roth played the optimistic resort owner brilliantly, not letting any of the unfortunate incidences get her down. “Anyone who ate the chili for lunch needs to report to the nurse immediately ... just for fun!”

With a clever punch line to every joke, Harvey doesn’t want marriage just as much as Esther. “A man’s not complete until he’s married, then he’s finished,” joked Harvey. The always dramatic and over-the-top Duncan Brandt invited the audience in to Harvey’s thoughts as he realizes he loves Esther. “You’re like a sister to me,” he practiced. “Only lately I kind of want to kiss my sister on the mouth.”

## 'Breaking Up is Hard to Do' keeps audience laughing

Written by Darci Tomky

---

The crazy Labor Day weekend included a visit from American Bandstand, on-stage performances at the resort and a host of twists and turns resulting in both heartache and love.

Of course, a musical wouldn't be a musical without some catchy tunes. Audience members left the theater humming "Breaking Up is Hard to Do," "Calendar Girl," "Little Devil," "King of Clowns" and "Happy Birthday, Sweet Sixteen" among a number of other classics written by Sedaka.

Chorus members Teanna Amaral, Severine Barras, Becca Brandt, Molly Brandt, Briar Bergner, Camille Elliott, Brooke Parker and Mariah Struckmeyer added a superb touch to the '50s and '60s songs and definitely fit the part with their frilly dresses and choreographed hand motions.

Band members Ben Martinez on drums, José Jaquez on guitar and Wiebers on piano set the tone for the evening. They had a huge amount of rock-n-roll music to learn, and after putting it all together, they accompanied the vocalists perfectly.

Don't be fooled, it wasn't only the cast members who had everyone laughing. Audience participation tickled all our funny bones as Harvey and Del sang and danced with Mary Kipp at Friday's performance and Jean Francescato from Big Springs, Neb. on Saturday night.

Also getting some time in the spotlight were audience members Gary Krumm on Friday and Elon Nelson on Saturday. Playing Mr. Weinblatt, they stood up to accept their trophy for winning the Simon Says contest three days running, only to have it taken away because they sat down before Simon said.

To everyone's delight, the musical had all happy endings. Gabe and Harvey got their girls, Lois got some time on the stage, Marge healed her heartache, Del was exposed as an imposter, and Esther received money to fix up the resort. So even though they found out "breaking up" really is "hard to do," in the end they could say, "Love will keep us together."

# 'Breaking Up is Hard to Do' keeps audience laughing

Written by Darci Tomky

---