

By: TRACY CUMMINGS - For the North County Times

## Welk's high-spirited, well-cast 'Dolly' a delight

Some women are just plain old powerful, and Dolly Gallagher Levi is one of those women. She orchestrates her world magically. Whether folks want to marry, a man needs to learn how to dance or people have to get out of jail, Dolly whips out a calling card and promises the world. The thing is, she can keep her promises. Jerry Herman's musical "Hello, Dolly!" ---- set in 19th-century New York ---- is the story of how Dolly lands a man for herself. A rich man. A rich, crotchety man.

Cathy Gene Greenwood is wonderful as Dolly. She's vibrant, and plenty of charm lightens what could be the heavy hand of her machinations. When Dolly admits that she's tired of working so hard to support herself, she sings "Before the Parade Passes By." Greenwood's performances of this lesser-known song and "So Long, Dearie" highlight how she can bring warmth and humor to every moment she's onstage.



Her comedic foils are Cornelius and Barnaby (Scott Dreier and Grant Tyler). Both work for the man Dolly wants to marry. He is such a taskmaster, he hasn't given either of his clerks a night out for years. The antics of Cornelius and Barnaby are delightful. Dreier's beautiful voice belies the goofy face he gives Cornelius. His duet with Victoria Strong is gorgeous. Ray Limon must have had tremendous fun directing the show. He uses every inch of the stage ---- and more ---- so that it's visually interesting and witty.

Scene changes of Gordon Richins' generous sets are seamless. The numerous dance numbers Limon choreographed are boisterous and athletic, with "It Takes a Woman" particularly funny. In other numbers, men fly across the stage. Dancers Justin Caster and Shawn Burgess cartwheel and do back flips ---- and smile while they're doing it. When the ensemble launches into perfect high kicks, it satisfies a craving in a way that Dolly herself would be proud of.

Which makes us wonder, why does she want to marry the meanest man in the bunch? Well, David Allen Jones, who plays cranky merchant Horace Vandergelder, transforms his entire demeanor when he realizes he's in love with Dolly. It's a marvelous moment that caps a marvelous show.

"Hello, Dolly!" is broadly funny, maybe even a little silly, but it's also wonderful. Each performer brings the one thing onstage that keeps it from lapsing into nonsense: heart.

Heart? Love? They might always be foolish, but, as Dolly shows us, they give us everything we want.

"Hello, Dolly!" runs two hours and 20 minutes, with a 20-minute intermission.

Where: Welk Resort Theatre,  
Lawrence Welk Resort, 8860  
Lawrence Welk Drive,  
Escondido Tickets: \$46-\$51

