

# The Conway Daily Sun

## Theater Review: A 'damn' good time

By Alec Kerr

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Richard Sabellico as Mr. Applegate, the devil incarnate, and Peter Carrier as Joe Hardy, a man who sold his soul to be a baseball sensation, in the Mount Washington Valley Theatre Company production of "Damn Yankees," which will be running daily at 7:30 p.m., except Monday, through July 23. (BERNADETTE FRIBERG PHOTO)



Peter Carrier as Joe Hardy, a man who sold his soul to the devil to be a baseball sensation and Becca Gottlieb as Lola, a seductress working for the devil, in the Mount Washington Valley Theatre Company production of "Damn Yankees," which will be running daily at 7:30 p.m., except Monday, through July 23. (BERNADETTE FRIBERG PHOTO)

CONWAY — "Damn Yankees," the Mount Washington Valley Theatre Company current production playing at the Eastern Slope Inn Playhouse through July 23, is about a middle-aged baseball fan so desperate to see his beloved Washington Senators beat those damn Yankees that he's willing to sell his soul to the devil.

Yes, it is another variation on the old Faust legend. Guy sells soul to devil for everything he ever dreamed of only to realize he already had everything he wanted. Joe Boyd (Kevin

O'Neil) is literally your average Joe Schmo. A passing wish to sell his soul to the devil is granted when Lucifer himself appears in the form of Mr. Applegate (Richard Sabellico).

Applegate transforms Joe Boyd into the 22-year-old baseball sensation Joe Hardy (Peter Carrier) who single handedly turns the Senators' baseball season around. Joe, a salesman himself, gets an escape clause put into this contract. He can change his mind by midnight on Sept. 24. This is itself a trick as the regular season ends Sept. 25, so if Joe wants the Senators to win the pennant it must be before then.

Joe misses his wife (Patricia Bartlett) and moves back into his home as a boarder. Carrier and Bartlett share a tender duet on "A Man/Woman Doesn't Know." Mrs. Boyd doesn't realize she's singing about her missing husband with this younger version of her husband. It adds poignancy to an otherwise standard ballad.

Applegate doesn't like this development and sends in Lola (Becca Gottlieb), his best seductress, to help ensure that he gets Joe's soul. This leads to perhaps the show's most famous number "Whatever Lola Wants," which Gottlieb brings across with fantastic flair. Gottlieb's performance is a highlight of show. She is both sensual and funny and even creates some sympathy for Lola.

The whole cast is strong, though. Sabellico, who just directed the Mount Washington Valley Theatre Company's latest production of "Annie," is quite funny as Applegate. Applegate has most of the show's best lines and Sabellico has a dry line delivery that works just right.

Carrier has a likable stage presence and a powerful voice. He brings a lot of warmth and heart to his performance. Andrew Lipman has fun as the team manager and there's a nice sense of camaraderie between the actors who make up the team. This comes across best in the tongue-in-cheek number "The Game," a song about all the women the team has given up in the name of the game.

The show also features some impressive dance numbers, which shouldn't be surprising given that the great Bob Fosse was the show's original choreographer. Director and choreographer Nathaniel Shaw does a nice job creating Fosse-esque dance routines particularly for "What Lola Wants" and "Two Lost Souls."

"Damn Yankees," by George Abbott and Douglass Wallop and music and lyrics by Richard Adler and Jerry Ross, first opened on Broadway in 1955 and went on to win six Tony

Awards. The Mount Washington Valley Theatre Company production is working from a slightly revised revival of the show from 1994.

The revival version makes some alteration to the second act including Lola falling in love with Joe and Lola and Joe singing "Two Lost Souls," which was original a duet between Lola and Applegate. These changes seem odd and detract from the main theme of Joe's everlasting love for his wife.

This is a solid piece of musical theater that is well presented by the Mount Washington Valley Theatre Company. Tickets are \$30. For tickets visit [www.mwvtheatre.org](http://www.mwvtheatre.org) or call the box office at 356-5776.