

# Tootsie: He/She/They Are Causing Laughter



The cast of the National Tour of TOOTSIE. Photo by Evan Zimmerman for MurphyMade.

PPAC presents *Tootsie*, featuring the clever, Tony-winning book by Robert Horn and brilliant score by Tony-winner David Yazbek. You likely recall the beloved story of struggling NY actor Michael Dorsey, skillfully portrayed by Drew Becker. Michael may be talented but his perfectionism gains him a reputation for being difficult to work with. Even his agent doesn't want to work with him, and in an act of desperation he makes the decision to create a female persona, Dorothy Michaels, in order to win an ideal role. Kathy Halenda comically portrays the quintessential agent, Rita — neurotic, anxious and obnoxiously self-serving. In fact, the production calls out many stereotypes within the business, especially misogynistic males. You may find yourself continuously laughing as punchlines zing, double entendres tickle and inside jokes abound throughout the production!

Becker does an amazing job portraying this alter persona. One could easily forget he's a man. While this is entirely impressive, I found myself wishing he'd accidentally slip here and there with some awkward male mannerisms, sometimes being a bit gruff in women's garb.

We do see Michael as himself while interacting with roommate Jeff and friend Sandy in his apartment. This is where the comic relief really shines! Jared David Michael Grant, who portrays Jeff, delivers his perfectly-timed lines so sarcastically you quickly come to love him best. Payton Reilly as Sandy perfectly portrays an annoying pessimist you can't help but love too.

Act I could have been shorter. It lacks the energy one would expect from a Broadway production, and the play-within-a-play thing doesn't always work here. Act II, however, comes in energized. Ashley Alexandra, who portrays Julie, packs a powerful punch as she belts out "Gone, Gone, Gone." Prior to this, she wows us with her sweet, soulful sound. You really feel the chemistry between Julie and Dorothy as they share heartfelt moments. Sadly, this chemistry is only established between the other cast members and Dorothy when they tell us it is so.

Hilarious mentionables are thanks to Matthew Rella as a dim-witted, narcissistic actor, Max, who falls for Dorothy and flexes muscle using games right out of Kelso's playbook. Also, Adam Du Plessis as Ron, the dramatically anal director/choreographer, has us in stitches whenever he appears.

Scenic design by David Rockwell and Christine Peters is perfection. These include the use of pastel backdrops for calm moments, beautiful turquoise and cobalt cityscapes for reflection. Business offices and quick-fold apartment are a few of the impressive movable settings that flow in and out.

Dance arrangements by David Chase and Denis Jones are a major highlight of the show. While the songs are not the typically memorable sing-alongs we love in musicals, hats off to Musical Directors Josh Ceballos and Andrew David Sotomayor. Hilarious lyrics add to the fun. Additional kudos go to Don Holder, Brian Ronan and William Ivey Long for appropriate lighting design, sound design and costuming respectively.

*Tootsie runs through Sunday, October 30. Strong language (but you'll love it!). For more info, visit [ppacri.org](http://ppacri.org).*