

Comedy finds its Southern accent

Greenville Little Theatre produces 'The Foreigner'

By Paul Hyde

ARTS WRITER
phyde@greenvillenews.com

The funniest thing about the characters in Larry Shue's "The Foreigner" is this: They have no idea they're funny.

"If the characters go for the laughs, they're not going to get them," says Reed Halvorson, director of Greenville Little Theatre's production of Shue's comedy.

"The point is to tell the story as clearly and concisely as you can," he adds. "For a director, that means getting the play up on its feet and getting out of the way."

Greenville Little Theatre's "Foreigner" opens Friday. The play concerns a meek, lovesick English accountant, Charlie Baker, vacationing in rural Georgia. Pathologically shy, Charlie pretends to be unable to speak English and becomes privy to assorted secrets and scandals freely discussed in front of him by the other visitors.

The award-winning Off-Broadway play is much-loved by regional theaters for the laughter-inducing antics of its hilarious characters.

This production features local theater funnyman Ryan Bradburn as Charley. Greenville Little Theatre offered a well-received production of the play a dozen years ago, starring theater veteran Todd Weir, now appearing in Centre Stage's "Dirty Rotten Scoundrels."

"The Foreigner" focuses on two sides of the South,



PATRICK COLLARD / Staff

Featured in Greenville Little Theatre's production of "The Foreigner" are, from left, Sam McCalla, April Schaeffer, Ryan Bradburn, Jan Anderson and Michael Hart.

YOU CAN GO

- **What:** Greenville Little Theatre's "The Foreigner"
- **When:** 8 p.m. on Friday and Saturday, April 14-16, 21-23; 3 p.m. on April 10 and 17
- **Where:** Greenville Little Theatre, 444 College St.
- **Tickets:** \$26 with discounts for seniors, children and groups of 10 or more
- **Information:** 864-233-6238 or www.greenvillelittletheatre.org

featuring salt-of-the-earth country folk — "genuinely nice people with a strong sense of Southern hospitality," says Halvorson — as well as one KKK member.

"More than anything, the play emphasizes character-based humor," says Halvorson. "There's a raw honesty about the show. A Southern audience will

know these people. What we enjoy so much about the play is that we can relate to it."

Underneath the laughs, the play offers a heart-warming message of acceptance, says Halvorson.

"The play says that when we have an open mind and willingness to learn from people who are different,

great things occur," he says. "In this play, great humor comes out of it."

The key to making the play work is comic timing, and Halvorson says he's found the right cast.

"We've got very strong comedic actors who can find the comedic moments," says Halvorson, who is also GLT's associate director. "I'm very fortunate in the cast. When you have people who have comic timing, it makes your job as a director so much easier."

"It's a smart, tight, well done piece of work and a lot of fun," adds Halvorson. "I can't tell you how excited I am to be directing it."