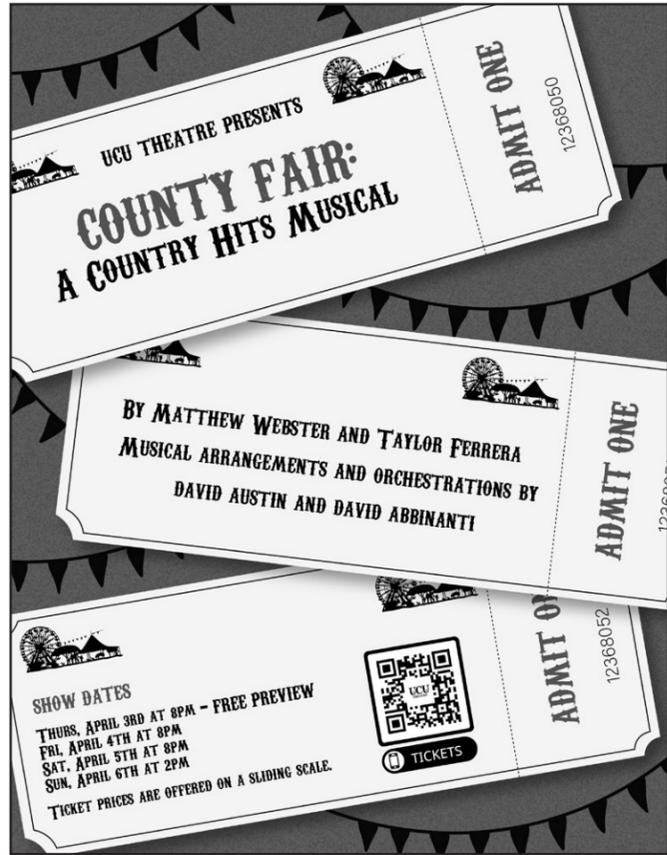


UCU Theatre presents 'County Fair: A Country Hits Musical' April 3-6



BARBOURVILLE, KY - March 17, 2025 - Hoedown hits, a dixie dance-off, secret plans, mistaken identity, and family-friendly comedy are packed into Union Commonwealth University's (UCU) spring production of "County Fair: A Country Hits Musical." Written in 2021 by Matthew Webster and Taylor Ferrera and loosely based on Shakespeare's "Much Ado About Nothing," the musical comedy follows sisters Claudia and DJ as they leave the big city to reckon with their rural inheritance: a beloved county fair.

"This musical feels very of our community," says director and Assistant Professor of Theatre Dr. Jayme Kilburn. "Essentially, it's

about embracing where you come from."

With musical arrangements and orchestrations by David Austin, David Abbinanti, and Nick Wilders, the show features a live band playing popular songs like "Cotton-Eyed Joe," "Chicken Fried," "Hey Good Lookin'," and "Thank God I'm a Country Boy." John Howard, a versatile member of the Kentucky arts community for many years and now an Adjunct Professor of Theatre at Union, serves as the Musical Director.

"Last year with 'High School Musical,' the community really gave us a warm welcome, and we are hoping to build on that desire for quality mu-

sicals and theatrical performances," Howard says. "This show isn't going to look like it did on Broadway, but it's going to knock your socks off! SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL ARTS!!!!"

The cast and crew include other music and theatre professionals Tara Abner Brown, Russell Mendez, and Makella Hylton; Union students; and many community members, including high school students from Knox Central and Barbourville Independent.

"I love the diversity of this group," says Teresa Brooks, who plays the older sister, DJ. "We all come together, having fun while creating something we are proud of."

"I had never been in a musical before, and I am terrified of singing, but working with these people really helped me push through," says Union student Mateo Daza, who plays Ben.

High schooler Angelo Holstein adds, "This show has put me in such a great community of actors. We've had so much fun, and I've never felt like I'm the odd one out for being young or being queer. The theme of coming back to your roots, as someone who tried to hide themselves for so long, is one that really resonates with me."

Performances of "County Fair" will be in Rector Little Theatre on Union's campus as follows:

- Thurs., April 3, 8 pm (Free Preview)
- Fri., April 4, 8 pm
- Sat., April 5, 8 pm
- Sun., April 6, 2 pm

To reserve tickets ahead, go to www.unionky.edu/springplay and select the sliding scale ticket fee that is right for you: \$5, \$10, or \$15. Walk-ins are also welcome, and free tickets are available at the door.

UCU Theatre's programming is supported by funding from Union, ticket sales, and season sponsorships from the Kentucky Foundation for Women and the Barbourville Junior Woman's Study Club. Ticket sales and sponsorships help fund theatre upgrades, student field trips, stipends for workshop presenters and contributing artists, and other expenses. Above all though, sponsorships help the theatre to keep offering free admission to shows and workshops.

"We want the theater to be accessible," Kilburn says. "We're never going to turn anybody away."

For more information about the show, the theatre program, how to become a sponsor, or how to join the selection committee for next year's season, contact Dr. Jayme Kilburn at jkilburn@unionky.edu.

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