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Bells Are Ringing

By [Jeff Hudson](#)

The Davis Shakespeare Ensemble raids the archives for *Bells Are Ringing*, a much neglected 1956 musical comedy that enjoyed a two-year Broadway run, but has rarely been staged since.

This frothy confection of a show is built around the requisite boy-meets-girl romance, the cute angle being that they meet unseen on the phone. Lead character Ella Peterson (the charismatic Gia Battista) is a “telephone girl” working for an answering service; she falls in love with a customer’s voice, struggling playwright Jeff Moss (an appealing Ian Hopps). Eventually, they meet in person; you know the rest. Spicing things up are kooky supporting roles, including a dentist yearning to compose Broadway anthems (Tim Gaffaney) and a racetrack bookie pretending to run a legitimate classical record business (Kyle Stoner). There’s also a Latin cha-cha number that unfortunately hasn’t aged well.

Bells Are Ringing, 8 p.m. Thursday and Friday; 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. Saturday; 2 p.m. Sunday. \$15-\$25. Veterans Memorial Theatre, 203 E. 14th Street in, Davis; (530) 802-0998; www.shakespearedavis.org. Through July 30.

The story advances on formula-driven plot mechanics involving now-obsolete technology, but director Dennis Beasley plays up the loopy situational humor underpinning many scenes (like a bunch of young male actors desperately emulating Marlon Brando). Several songs (“The Party’s Over,” “Just In Time”) are timeless. Battista and Hopps make an appealing pair (and sing nice duets), and sprightly choreography (Kristi Webb and Battista) energizes several numbers. *Bells Are Ringing* may be something of a dated Eisenhower-era keepsake, but young love never goes out of style, and this production’s bubbly energy, winning attitude—and the show’s undervalued score—make it easy to enjoy.

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