'Spamalot' aspires to capture laid-back, 'nonsensical' humor

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"Monty Python's Spamalot" will make its way to Clarence Brown Theatre this Thursday.

The musical has been described as an "outrageous musical comedy lovingly ripped off" from the classic "Monty Python and the Holy Grail." The production has been on tour across the world and has been the winner of three Tony Awards, including Best Musical.

"Spamalot" finds a way to blend Monty Python's farcical comedy with Broadway's musicality. It's a mix of show-stopping songs, choreographed dances and original Monty Python humor.

The production follows King Arthur’s quest for the Holy Grail after being visited by God. David Kortemeier is the visiting actor who plays King Arthur. A fan of "Monty Python and the Holy Grail," Kortemeier said "Spamalot" doesn't deviate much from the movie. However, it does stray away from the original ending of the film, which is something Kortemeier enjoys about the musical.

The quick-paced show doesn’t require much thinking from the audience. It's designed to keep the audience laughing with various means of comedy.

"What the musical really does is just poke fun at everybody," Kortemeier said. "It pokes fun at Broadway. It pokes fun at relationships. It's just non-stop, nonsensical fun.

"It's really about going to the theater and having a great time."

In the midst of all the jokes and gags lies a more heartfelt message, Kortemeier said. He compares the finding of the grail to one finding their purpose in life.

"I think one thing this piece does ask is the question of, 'What's your grail?'" Kortemeier said. "'What is the thing you are searching for, and are you on your journey to search for it?'"

Kortemeier had previously played the role of King Arthur at the regional opening in Chicago three years ago.

"It's been a real treat," Kortemeier said, "to return to the show and find different takes on things and to work with the students."

The cast of the production is comprised of visiting and UT faculty actors. Graduate and undergrad students also have roles both in the production and on the production crew.

Jessica Hill, a junior in theatre, is one of the students working on the wardrobe crew for "Spamalot." The process, Hill said, has been a difficult one due to the vastness of it all.

"There are so many things involved in the process of getting the show on its feet it can be overwhelming," she said, "but the overall magic of the show outweighs the tough process."

Bill Jenkins, director for the musical, has previously directed two other productions for CBT. In CBT's press release for "Spamalot," he said he has enjoyed working on the production.

"I have so enjoyed working with the extraordinary team assembled at the CBT on this simply joyful and hilarious play," Jenkins said. "I love comedy and nothing is as funny as this show. This cast is one of the best I have ever worked with."

"Spamalot" will run from April 24 through May 11 at CBT. Students can see "Spamalot" for free with their student ID this Thursday. For other dates, tickets start at $5 for students and $10 for UT faculty.