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## Review Roundup: BUDDY at Bucks County Playhouse in New Hope



By BWW News Desk

Directed by Tony nominee Hunter Foster with choreography by Lorin Latarro, Buddy will first run at the Bucks County Playhouse from May 27 through June 17 and will then transfer to the Kimmel Center's Perelman Theater on June 24 for previews, with the official opening June 28. The show will run at the Kimmel Center through July 9.

Virtually the entire cast from the 2016 record-breaking run at Bucks County Playhouse is scheduled to return for the 2017 production. Leading the cast of Broadway, off-Broadway, and regional talent is John Dewey (Hello Dolly!), reprising his role as Buddy Holly. Also returning to the production (in alphabetical order): Zach Cossman (Band Geeks: The Musical, Regional Premiere) as Jerry Allison; Andrew Frace (Jersey Boys, First National Tour) as Hipockets Duncan; James David Larson (Into the Woods, Roundabout Theater Company) as Joe B. Mauldin; Kent M. Lewis (Mamma Mia, Las Vegas) as Norman Petty; Brandi Massey (The Color Purple, Broadway) as Apollo Performer; Elizabeth Nestlerode (The Meanest Birthday Girl, Off-Broadway) as Vi Petty; Karack Osborn (She Stoops to Conquer, Stratford Festival) as 'The Big Bopper'; Gilbert Sanchez (Showgirls the Musical, Off-Broadway) as Ritchie Valens;

Max Sangerman (*The Lightning Thief*, First National Tour) as Tommy Allsupp. They will be joined by Natalie Ortega, as the sole newcomer to the cast. She appears as Buddy's wife, Maria Elena.

The production is helmed by director Hunter Foster (*Company*, Bucks County Playhouse), and choreographer Lorin Latarro (*Waitress*, Broadway), both of whom are also Bucks County Playhouse Artistic Associates. Paul Masse serves as musical director, Adam Koch is scenic designer with lighting design by Gina Scherr, costume design by Nicole V. Moody, and sound design by Matthew Given.

Let's see what the critics have to say!

Philly.com (John TImpane): All rests on that music: Twenty-seven tunes, and the band is absolutely cracking. John Dewey is awkward, delightful, and driven as Buddy; Zach Cossman is tremendous as randy drummer Jerry Allison; and James David Larson is hilariously athletic as bassist Joe B. Mauldin. They make us believe we're hearing Buddy Holly and The Crickets - I'd be surprised if The Crickets ever sounded this good. Here is the Kimmel video of the New York rehearsals:

The Reporter Online (Frank Burd): As I sat in the audience watching the show, I felt like I was in a crowd of a late 50's rock concert. I listened and watched, wondering why my parents didn't like rock n' roll. It seemed so normal, so natural. As it neared the end, I saw a girl, then two girls, then a boy- no they were women and men. They weren't teenagers but folks in their 60's and 70's. They were standing up and rocking to the beat. Soon, they were joined by more and more. It was a very special moment for all in the house.

New Hope Free Press (John Dwyer): The chemistry between this ensemble creates a special magic. The demands of being in a band and being in a cast makes for a kinship that have performances take off like a rocket. There are 27 songs that are performed by the group, including "That'll Be the Day," "Peggy Sue," "Johnny Be Good," "It's So Easy," "Everyday," "La Bamba" by Ritchie Valens (Gilbert D Sanchez), and "Chantilly Lace" by the Big Bopper (Karack Osborn). With a special shout out to "Shout" and the Apollo powerhouse diva known as Brandi Chavonne Massey, this is true classic rock 'n' roll immersion. The Playhouse will have to undergo construction again after the roof is blown off the building by one of the most memorable finales, with singing that shakes the rafters.