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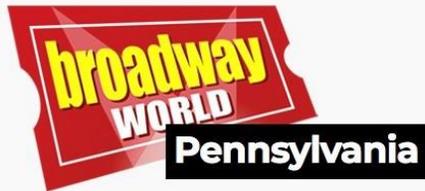


Photo Flash: Bucks County Playhouse Honors RISE Inspiration Lou Volpe



Lou Volpe - the fourth person to presented **Bucks County Playhouse** Hall of Fame Award

Photo Credit: Margaryta Kenis

by BWW News Desk Apr. 20, 2018

Lou Volpe, the retired theatre education pioneer was recently inducted into the prestigious **Bucks County Playhouse** Hall of Fame, following such honorees as **Angela Lansbury**, **Oscar Hammerstein** and **Shirley Jones**. A formal ceremony was held on April 14 at the historic playhouse. Volpe, whose career is the inspiration behind "Rise," the new TV series on NBC, was heralded for his life's work as a high school drama teacher at Harry S. Truman High School in Levittown, PA. During his tenure there, he transformed this Bucks County community with the magic of theater.

The Hall of Fame Induction included a Tribute to **Lou Volpe** by Truman High School teacher Tracey Gatte and other fellow educators. School alumni performed "Seasons of Love" from "RENT," one of the shows presented at Harry S. Truman during Volpe's tenure. The alumni were accompanied by Graeme Burgan.



Lou Volpe comes to stage to accept award from **Alexander Fraser** and **Robyn Goodman**

Volpe's induction coincides with the 50th Anniversary of **Bucks County Playhouse's** Student Theater Festival, where for more than 30 years, his students electrified thousands of participants with their presentations.

He was presented the award by **Bucks County Playhouse** Producing Director **Alexander Fraser** and Executive Producer **Robyn Goodman**. Additional remarks were made by "Hamilton" producer **Jeffrey Seller** (also a producer of "Rise") as well as "Rise" producer **Flody Suarez**. Hans Weichhart, Chief Relationship Officer at the Educational Theatre Association, and **Michaela Murphy**, Education Director at **Bucks County Playhouse** and a nationally known storyteller, actress, coach and teacher, spoke about ongoing programs and Volpe's impact. Michael Sokolove, author of "Drama High," the book that inspired the television program, also paid tribute to Volpe.

Fraser realized the impact Volpe had in the community, especially after reading the book "Drama High." He said, "I was so connected to the story, that I was in tears through much of the book. Lou truly changed lives - thousands of lives. Most people involved in theater credit their high school drama theater with getting them interested in theater. That's how I felt about my teacher. We believe by inducting Lou into our Hall of Fame, we demonstrate the importance every high school drama teacher has on their students."

ABOUT Lou Volpe:

Now retired, **Lou Volpe** was an educator for 44 years at Harry S. Truman High School in Levittown, PA. He began his career as an English teacher but quickly moved to teaching theatre where he found his true career calling. Over the course of his tenure he directed many musicals and plays. Many of these shows were produced at festivals throughout the USA including 6 mainstage shows and many one acts at The International Thespian Society Secondary School Theatre Festival at The University of Nebraska/Lincoln.

Lou and Truman High School were asked to present the premiere high school pilot production of "Les Miserables," "Rent," and "Spring Awakening" by the New York licensing company, **Music Theatre International**. These productions gained national recognition for Volpe and Truman, with renowned producer Sir **Cameron Mackintosh** traveling to Levittown for the opening of Volpe's acclaimed production of "Les Miserables" and leading the audience in a standing ovation. In 2014, The Ford Theatre in Washington named Volpe "the arts education teacher of the year." He and his son Tom traveled to Washington for the gala in his honor and while there they were invited to The White House to meet **President Barack Obama** and First **Michelle Obama**.

In 2013, Michael Sokolov's book "Drama High," which celebrated and chronicled Volpe's remarkable career, was published and named to The New York Times Best Seller List. In 2015, Broadway producer **Jeffrey Seller** ("Hamilton," "Rent," "Avenue Q," and "In the Heights") developed the book, with writer Jason Katims ("Friday Night Lights," "Parenthood") into the TV series ("Rise") that premiered on March 13, 2018 on NBC.

Volpe is a beloved and admired theater adjudicator at **Bucks County Playhouse's** annual Student Theater Festival, where during his tenure as drama teacher many of his productions performed on the historic stage. Volpe lives in Yardley and is devoted to his two twin grandchildren, Lilyanna Mae and Finn Thomas Volpe.

ABOUT Bucks County Playhouse

Bucks County Playhouse, a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization, is the oldest and largest professional Equity performing arts center in Bucks County. Under the direction of Tony Award-winning producers **Alexander Fraser** and **Robyn Goodman**, the Playhouse provides first class professional theatrical entertainment as well as community events, partnerships and arts education programming for visitors and residents of New Hope, Doylestown, Lambertville and the Delaware Valley.

Located between Philadelphia and New York, **Bucks County Playhouse** opened in 1939 in a converted 1790 gristmill after a group of community activists, led by Broadway orchestrator **Don Walker** and playwright **Moss Hart**, rallied to save the building. The Playhouse quickly became one of the country's most famous regional theaters, featuring a roster of American theatrical royalty including **Helen Hayes**, **Kitty Carlisle**, **George S. Kaufman**, **Grace Kelly**, **Robert Redford**, **Bert Lahr**, **Walter Matthau**, **Angela Lansbury**, **Bernadette Peters**, **Alan Alda**, **Tyne Daly**, **Liza Minnelli** and **Audra McDonald** and remained in continuous operation until December 2010. In 2012, the Playhouse re-opened thanks to the efforts of the Bridge Street

Foundation, the nonprofit family foundation of Kevin and **Sherri Daugherty**, and Broadway producer **Jed Bernstein**.

Since its renovation, significant productions include **Terrence McNally's** "Mothers and Sons" starring **Tyne Daly**, which moved to Broadway and was nominated for two Tony Awards, and "Misery" by **William Goldman** based on the **Stephen King** novel which also went on to a Broadway run in the 2015-16 season. Two of the Playhouse's recent productions -- "Company" starring **Justin Guarini**, and **William Finn's** "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee" -- were named by Wall Street Journal to its "Best of Theatre" list for 2015. The Playhouse's productions of "Steel Magnolias" and "Buddy: The **Buddy Holly** Story" broke box office records in 2016. The record was broken again with its production of "Guys and Dolls" in Summer 2017. Thanks to the Bridge Street Foundation and its vision for the New Hope waterfront, the Playhouse is currently in construction as it adds a 4,000-square foot riverfront cafe and bar that will open in 2018.



Alexander Fraser and **Board Chair Marvin Woodall**



Alexander Fraser and Lou Volpe



Alexander Fraser and Robyn Goodman



Alexander Fraser, Reina and Justin Guarini



Ann Gerhart, Michael Sokolove and Sharla Feldscher



Ann Gerhart, Michael Sokolove and Shirley Rumierk



Anna Louizos, Alexander Fraser, Michaela Murphy, Robyn Goodman



Author Michael Sokolove, Producer **Flody Suarez**



Flody Suarez and Jeffrey Seller



Gayle Goodman, Congressman Brian Fitzpatrick, **Alexander Fraser**



Jeffrey Seller leads the way with **Flody Suarez** to stage at Playhouse



Jeffrey Seller, **Flody Suarez**, **Lou Volpe**, **Michaela Murphy**, **Michael Sokolove**



Jeffrey Seller, Shirley Rumierk with Peggy Brenner McRae, Bucks County Playhouse Historian



Joann Bull and Michaela Murphy



Justin and Reina Guarini and Robyn Goodman



Justin Guarini



Lou Volpe and Hans Weichhart of Educational Theatre Association



Lou Volpe, Robyn Goodman, Alexander Fraser and Justin Guarini



Michael Sokolove and Ann Gerhart



Michael Sokolove, Ann Gerhart, and Jeffrey Seller



Robyn Goodman and Greg Kammerer



Robyn Goodman, Alexander Fraser, Congressman Brian Fitzpatrick



Shirley Rumierk (who plays Vanessa Suarez) with Lou Volpe