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'Menopause the Musical' returns to Bucks County Playhouse



GFour productions

"If you have to have a hot flash, let there be laughter," says Wydetta Carter (right).

By Liz Johnson

When singer-actress Wydetta Carter first started performing in "Menopause the Musical" 13 years ago, she didn't quite understand what all the fuss was about.

"I didn't know what I was singing about. I wasn't in menopause. Now I listen to the commercials and I say 'Oh, right,'" said Carter, one of the longtime performers of the comedy-musical slated to open at the Bucks County Playhouse on Wednesday.

Set in a department store, the play focuses on four very different women — a Fortune 500 CEO, a soap opera star, an Earth mother and an Iowa housewife. They meet shopping for a black lace bra at a lingerie sale and bond over jokes about their hot flashes, mood swings, wrinkles and weight gain, forming a sisterhood that spills into the audience through a rollicking parody of pop songs from the sixties through the eighties.

Inspired by a hot flash and a bottle of wine, "Menopause the Musical" has won 54 Drama Desk and 44 Tony Awards since it opened.

Carter plays the uptight Fortune 500 CEO who learns to loosen up.

"I can relate to the character," said Carter. "She has to look like she has it all together, while on the inside she's fighting all the way. "

Performing can create the same kind of angst, she said, fighting to keep the audience from seeing that she's sweating her way through the act.

"Sometimes I'm trying to hide it so much and keep it in. I think 'I'm not going to sweat through this shirt a third time'," she said.

Carter has been performing since she was 8 years old.

"I was a singer and I did acting in school plays, the things that everyone did," she said.

In her youth, she performed in community theater in Erie, Pennsylvania, where she grew up.

"I knew I was going into some form of the business by the age of 12," she said.

She was in the original production of "Menopause" in Chicago in 2004. Since then, she's been a national understudy, filling in for actresses across the country.

"I look at the faces of the women when I start singing and I'll watch a woman go into a hot flash in the front row, fanning herself and laughing hysterically," said Carter.

"If you have to have a hot flash, let there be laughter," she said

Want to know more?

"Menopause The Musical" will run Wednesday through Jan. 22 at the Bucks County Playhouse, 70 S. Main St. in New Hope. Information: www.bcptheater.org; 215-862-2121.