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BUCKS COUNTY HERALD

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Don't miss stellar Bucks Playhouse production of "Guys and Dolls"

JEAN BRENNER



JOAN MARCUS

Dancers perform during a nightclub scene from the Bucks County Playhouse production of "Guys and Dolls."

Talented actors, singers and dancers are pouring their hearts, souls and energy into an entertaining, upbeat production of "Guys and Dolls" playing right now at Bucks County Playhouse.

Suddenly, Saturday night, we were transported back to the 1950s and 1960s when large cast musicals graced

the stages of many summer stock theaters including this historic one in New Hope.

Multiple set pieces are flown in from above; the stage turntable, re-discovered a few years ago, smoothly moves scenery around; good lighting enhances the production; Hunter Foster's direction is brisk, imaginative, and excellent.

Everyone appearing in the happy, energetic show is wonderful, as are the five musicians playing in the balcony.

Perfect as lead, Sarah Brown, is actress Elena Shaddow, with her beautiful soprano voice and demure style. She is the essence of a Salvation Army believer searching sincerely for sinners to save.

At the same time, Lesli Margherita as comic lead Miss Adelaide, the Hot Box Club dancer and singer, is relentless in wanting to be married to her boyfriend, Nathan Detroit after being with him for 14 years. Margherita, an experienced actor-singer, plays skillfully her comedic role while sneezing frequently as she deals with a head cold.

Playing opposite Brown is handsome, smooth and charming Clarke Thorell as Sky Masterson. Supposedly, he is just passing through town when he is caught up in a bet that Sarah would not accept an invitation to have dinner with him.

The challenge keeps him there. He must win the bet. Only the strongest of women could resist his charming, debonair Clark Gable manner and entrancing singing voice; Sarah manages to stave him off for only a short while before becoming mesmerized.

Then, there is Steve Rosen as Nathan Detroit. Charming in his own rough-around-the edges style and reminiscent of Nathan Lane who played the role in a Broadway revival, he is the perfect comic lead to play opposite Adelaide.

Rosen has appeared at BCP in "The Rocky Horror Show" and "Company," and currently is co-writing the BCP Christmas show, "Ebenezer Scrooge's Big Playhouse Christmas Show."

As wonderful as are the four leads, others in the company are outstanding as well, including five apprentices – theater majors from various colleges, four of whom are from the University of Michigan. All of them did a fine job on stage, blending right into the ensemble of pros.

Memorable performances are given by everyone: Darius de Haas is terrific as Nicely-Nicely Johnson; very tall Brendan Averett plays an imposing Big Jule; Ruth Gottshall portrays General Matilda B. Cartwright; Eric Greengold plays Harry the Horse; Victor Hernandez is Lieutenant Brannigan; Evan Mayer acts as both Rusty and Charlie; Blakely Slaybaugh is Benny Southstreet; Adam Vanek plays Angie the Ox; Alyssa Gardner is a Hotbox Girl, Lenny Wolpe plays Arvide Abernathy, and the five apprentices sing and dance in the ensemble: Alysa Finnegan, Mason Reeves, Jake Smith, Isabel Stein and Chris Washington.

"Guys and Dolls" is an adaptation of Damon Runyon short stories written in the 1920s and 30s about gangsters, gamblers, and other characters of the New York underworld. Hummable, familiar music runs throughout the show: "I Love You a Bushel and a Peck," "Luck Be a Lady," "I've Never Been in Love Before," "If I Were a Bell I'd Be Ringing."

The delightful musical runs only through Aug. 12, so buying your tickets early for one of eight performances

per week is a good idea.

Yes, parking is a pain, but arrive early and you can find a space with only a short walk to parking areas other than the public metered lot at BCP. This show is worth the effort; you will not be disappointed.

The BCP telephone number is 215-862-2121. Order tickets online through the website: BucksCountyPlayhouse.org.

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