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## Discovering a 'New World' - The Bucks County Playhouse stages a musical comedy all about Thanksgiving

- By Keith Loria

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The cast of "The New World," which is being performed at the Bucks County Playhouse through Dec. 2.  
Photo by Joan Marcus

The holiday season is just around the corner, and while Christmas-themed plays and concerts pop up year after year, Thanksgiving tends to get neglected.

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That's about to change thanks to "The New World," a new musical comedy about what happened when the Pilgrims washed ashore Plymouth Rock. The show is making its world premiere at the Bucks County Playhouse in New Hope, Pennsylvania, through Dec. 2.

"The New World," with a book by Regina DeCicco and L.F. Turner, music by Gary Adler and lyrics by Phoebe Kreutz, had its first-ever reading at the Playhouse's Oscar Hammerstein Festival in 2014, and it was so well received that it was added to the Playhouse's lineup.

"We're thrilled to present this original musical comedy developed for and by Bucks County Playhouse," says Robyn Goodman, executive producer for the theater. "Our talented creative team has reimagined an important moment in history when love and food brought disparate cultures together and created the great melting pot we call America today."

The show is directed by Stafford Arima, newly appointed artistic director of Theater Calgary, and choreographed by Bucks County Playhouse artistic associate Lorin Latarro.

Broadway veteran Ann Harada of "Avenue Q" fame leads a large cast, which includes Jennifer Perry of "Kinky Boots," plus "American Idol" veteran and Bucks County Playhouse favorite Justin Guarini (filling in for an injured Julius Thomas III).

The cast also includes Clyde Alves as Tago, Eddie Cooper as Miles Standish, Ann Sanders as Mrs. Corn, Rod Singleton as Colonel Corn, and Tyler Maynard as Carl. It also features Ginna Le Vine, the grand-niece of Oscar-winning actress Grace Kelly, who coincidentally made her professional stage debut in 1949 at Bucks County Playhouse, where she was a member of its famed apprentice program.

Le Vine was a part of the original reading while still in drama school, invited by Arima, who she had known through the Broadway Dreams Foundation.

“He asked me to be part of this, and it was just hysterical right off the bat,” she says. “I was so excited to be part of a new work. I love watching and seeing how things develop and change creatively. I also loved the entire concept of retelling an event that a lot of people in American don’t know much about.”

The story takes a comedic look at how the Pilgrims turned North American life on its ear in 1620 when they first meet up with the Native Americans in Massachusetts. The Native Americans are enjoying a gluten free, low carb, artisanally happy life when they are invaded by the nation’s first immigrants and everything changes.

“It’s done in a satirical way but has a lot of heart to it,” Le Vine says. “It is basically the story of those we know as Pilgrims coming to America and inevitably having conflict, and ultimately happiness. In many ways, it’s a classic telling of those different than you and how we handle those differences.”

She adds that there are lots of twists and turns in the show, and one of developments is a love story. And it’s all done in a comedic way.

The secret to doing comedy, she says, is being truthful.

“So often the track in comedy is to go for something outrageous because you think it’s funny but when you have something that’s totally honest and turning the dial on it a ton, and having the guts to play that to an audience, I think that’s key,” Le Vine says. “You have to have full commitment. You cannot be afraid of making a fool out of yourself, you have to completely go for it.”

Having been part of the show since the beginning, the actress has enjoyed seeing her character evolve and progress.

“It’s been a privilege to continue to play this character and get to put her to life on stage,” she says. “What’s been so incredible is the creative team has been so collaborative and so open to discussion about things we find in the characters. I’ve wanted to expand the quirkiest

qualities of her and show her spunk, beyond initially coming in as more of a Kennedy-esque character. That's been a lot of fun and I've been able to push her and explore."

Le Vine was interested in the arts from a young age, and remembers playing Miss Hannigan in a middle-school production of "Annie." From that point on, she started studying and doing shows and decided theater was the right career path for her.

"I had this curiosity about people and exploring different lives, and I was just drawn to the craft, especially musical theater," she says.

In "The New World," Le Vine expects audiences to enjoy the fact that they will be laughing while watching a story they have been told their whole life being told in a whole new way.

"It's almost turned on its head, all these things we think about, but it has so much love in it that it reflects the America we know now," she says. "People fight and fall in love and do things in a way with such heart, and I think it's a wonderful evening in the theater and people will really love it."

*"A New World" is at the Bucks County Playhouse, 70 S. Main St., New Hope, Pennsylvania, through Dec. 2. Tickets cost \$40-\$75; [www.buckscountyplayhouse.org](http://www.buckscountyplayhouse.org); 215-862-2121.*