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## Playhouse production of “42nd Street” is Broadway-caliber

By Jean Brenner

Broadway has come to Bucks County.

See “42nd Street” playing now at Bucks County Playhouse and you will think you are at Broadway on the Delaware. It is bright, active, and thoroughly entertaining.

From the minute the curtain goes up, the audience is treated to amazing entertainment, many beautiful sets, wonderful instrumental music from a live orchestra and incredibly proficient tap dancing.

The basic story is about a totally amazing singer-dancer-actress whose real name is Tessa Grady. She is a young gal, a “would be” from Allentown, who wants to break into show business.

Ostensibly, she is making her way to a Broadway debut playing Peggy Sawyer. She sings, she acts, and she tap dances with grace, energy and enthusiasm. The audience goes wild at her abilities.

Peggy Sawyer is noticed by on-stage dance captain Billy Lawlor, played by Blakely Slaybaugh, who also is an extraordinary tap dancer. From the start, Billy sees Peggy’s talent. He encourages and protects her. He dances with her. He loves her.

Peggy gets her big chance when Dorothy Brock, the leading lady played by Linda Balgord, with a big, beautiful voice and terrific stage presence, falls and breaks her ankle. She cannot even stand on it while others dance around her, so she needs to be replaced.

The story was written so the songwriters could present their music: “You’re getting to Be a Habit with Me,” “I Only Have Eyes for You,” “We’re in the Money!” “Lullaby of Broadway,” “About a Quarter to Nine,” and “Shuffle Off To Buffalo.” It’s the music and dancing you will remember.

Many of this ensemble cast are performing at BCP for the first time. Everyone is so good, they deserve mentioning for their excellent acting and dancing: Matt Bauman, Sean Bell, Cliff Bemis, Kurtis Bradley Brown, Jonathan Bryant, Alyssa Gardner, Ruth Gottschall (a stand-out), Andrew Hodge, Erica Ito, Darrell T. Joe,

Patrick Oliver Jones, Joshua Keen, Nevada Koenig, Brianna Latrash, Monette McKay (also excellent), Michael O'Hara, Kathryn Priest, Slaybaugh, Kilty Reidy, Matt Walton (outstanding), Allie Wiatrowski and Daisy Wright.

The production was directed by Hunter Foster, who has beautifully directed several shows at BCP. Set design is by Anna Louizos, choreography is by Jeremy Dumont, costumes are by Nichole V. Moody, the musical director is William Shuler, the production stage manager is T.J. Kerney, and the general manager is Teresa Sanietro.

And, hat's off to Producers Alex Fraser and Robyn Goodman, Stephen Kocis and Josh Fiedler, whose New York producing team won a Tony in March.

"42nd Street" is often described as a "jukebox musical," of sorts, which includes songs from the 1933 film by the same name, and an assortment of music written for many other films at about the same time.

The book for this American musical is by Michael Stewart and Mark Bramble, lyrics by Al Dubin and Johnny Mercer. It opened in 1980 on Broadway, directed by Gower Champion, winning many awards, including a Tony Award for Best Musical and in 2001, it won a Tony for Best Revival.

"42nd Street" was the last show Champion directed before his death, but also, it was Producer David Merrick's final success.

"42nd Street," which has played all over the world, is playing at Bucks County Playhouse through Aug. 4 so that you, too, can see a phenomenal production.

Tickets can be purchased at [buckscountyplayhouse.org](http://buckscountyplayhouse.org) or 215-862-2121.