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Review Roundup: THE NERD at Bucks County Playhouse

Executive Producer Robyn Goodman, Producing Director Alexander Fraser and Producers Stephen Kocis and Josh Fiedler present "The Nerd," Larry Shue's outrageously funny comedy, running at Bucks County Playhouse (BCP) now through July 15. BroadwayWorld has a first look at the cast in action below!

Leading the cast are Grant Shaud, most recently seen on Broadway in "Relatively Speaking" and known to millions of Americans as Miles from the Emmy-award winning television series "Murphy Brown;" Zuzanna Szadkowski, remembered for five seasons as Dorota Kishlovsky on the drama series "Gossip Girl" and as Nurse Pell in Steven Soderbergh's "The Knick;" and Joe Kinosian, writer and star of the award-winning musical "Murder for Two." The 2017 Bucks County Playhouse Season is sponsored by Bank of America.

Willum Cubbert, an aspiring young architect in Terre Haute, Indiana, has often told his friends about the debt he owes to Rick Steadman, a fellow ex-GI who saved his life - but whom he never met! He had written to Rick with an oath -as long as he is alive, "You will have somebody on Earth who will do anything for you." Obviously, Willum is delighted when Rick shows up unexpectedly at his apartment on the night of his birthday. Hilarity ensues when it becomes apparent that Rick is a bumbling oaf with no social sense, little intelligence and less tact. Most importantly, it looks as if Rick never plans to leave!

Kinosian will play Rick Steadman, the "Nerd" of the title. Along with Shaud and Szadkowski (who will play Warnock and Clelia Walgrave), the cast is led by Kyle Cameron (Dora Maver Moore Winner for "Cranked") as Willum Cubbert, Clea Alsip (BCP's "Steel Magnolias" and "Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike") as Tansy McGinnis and Gavin Lee (Tony nominee for Broadway's "Mary Poppins") as Axel Hammond. They are joined by Avey Noble (Showtime's "The Affair" and NBC's "The Mysteries of Laura") as Thor Waldgrave.

Directed by Marc Vietor (Off-Broadway's "School for Scandal"). Maruti Evans is set designer. Thom Weaver is lighting designer. Costume design is by Annie Simon. Greg Pliska serves as sound designer. Alyssa Howard is production stage manager.

Single tickets to "The Nerd" are on sale now. Tickets range from \$40 - \$75. Special rates for groups of 10 or more. Subscriptions to the full 2017 Season are still available. For complete details, and to purchase

tickets, visit buckscountyplayhouse.org, call 215-862-2121, or visit the box office at 70 South Main Street, New Hope, PA.

Let's see what the critics have to say!

DC Metro Theater Arts (Neal Newman): Just bringing these absurd folk together would make an amusing evening, but we soon encounter the only character with a realistic-sounding name, Rick Steadman, whom Willum has been hoping to meet since Steadman saved his life years ago in the war. Steadman turns up, dressed as The Fly (don't ask), and turns out to be a human being totally lacking social ability. He is absolutely unaware of his effect on people around him, and immediately becomes the insufferable bore who plans to stay forever and ever. He even looks like a nerd - he has the standard shirt pocket penholders, pink pants (excellent costumes by Annie Simon), and a physicality that seems to be made of balloons and rubber bands. His idea of artistic expression is learning to play "The Star Spangled Banner" on the tambourine. Shrewdly played by Joe Kinosian (the co-creator of the Off Broadway hit *Murder for Two*), Rick flings himself into absurd postures on the furniture, uttering irksome platitudes, until the second act, when the friends plot to have the guilt-ridden Willum throw Rick out of his house.

phindie (Cameron Kelsall): Would that Shue's comedy about the limits of loyalty and friendship held up as well. Essentially a two-hour set-up for a two-minute punchline, this material has clearly seen better days. Marc Vietor's production, cast with an array of earnest actors unable to put across the zanier elements of the text, is almost entirely laugh-free. Matters aren't helped by Maruti Evans' conceptual set or Thom Weaver's abrasive lighting, both all wrong for farce. Even the opening night audience-stacked, as usual, with family, friends, and other boosters-greeted the proceedings with tepid enthusiasm. But at least the groovy costumes can momentarily take our minds off the decidedly square play surrounding them.

CentralJersey.com (Anthony Stoeckert): The production does a good job of capturing the play's late-'70s setting without going overboard or making it jokey. The set by Maruit Evans consists of Willum's apartment with denim-colored furniture. In a clever move, the walls look like blueprints. Costume designer Annie Simon has done a terrific job with the outfits, which include plaid pants, wide ties, a green polo-type shirt with stripes in the middle and a white color and, best of all, a powder-blue tuxedo worn by Axel.

New Hope Free Press (John Dwyer): Marc Vietor, as director, has not been able to orchestrate the different styles and story lines to make the evening a total success. The shift in acting style and focus, to use a period metaphor from its 1979 time frame, is like taking a phonograph needle off one part of a record, and landing on a different song with an entirely different sound. The show continues, but the audience realizes something disconcerting has happened.