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Entertaining Options

August 29, 2017

Final Week: Patricia Richardson in “Other Desert Cities” at the Bucks County Playhouse



“Other Desert Cities” (Bucks County Playhouse): Patricia Richardson (Polly Wyeth), Deirdre Madigan (Silda Gauman), Liza J. Bennett (Brooke Wyeth), Kevin Kilner (Lyman Wyeth), and Charles Socarides (Trip Wyeth).

By Allen Foster

Patricia Richardson is currently enjoying her triumphant return to New Hope’s storied Bucks County Playhouse. The veteran actress plays Polly Wyeth in the arresting *Other Desert Cities*, which is in its final week (running from now till September 2). Last summer, she captivated as M’Lynn in *Steel Magnolias*.

“This is a fantastic production,” Patricia told *Entertaining Options*. “I’m very fortunate to be involved. I love Robyn Goodman [Executive Producer]. I’ve known her since the ’70s. She reached out to me last year for *Steel Magnolias* and asked if I would come back and do this play. I was like, ‘Gosh, yes! I would love to.’ I am very happy to be back and I am so grateful to have such strong support here.”



Other Desert Cities by Jon Robin Baitz takes place at The Wyeth Home in Palm Springs, California on Christmas Eve, 2004. It features Patricia Richardson as Polly Wyeth, Kevin Kilner as Lyman Wyeth (Polly’s husband), Deidre Madigan as Silda Grauman (Polly’s sister), Charles Socarides as Trip Wyeth (Polly’s son), and Liza J. Bennett as Brooke Wyeth (Polly’s daughter). The story revolves around a family get-together, which starts off tense and quickly deteriorates when Brooke announces that her next book will be a tell-all memoir that exposes her illustrious family’s darkest secrets.

“All of the actors in the play have worked quite a bit,” Patricia informed. “Everybody has done Broadway and significant work on television. Charles was in ABC’s *When We Rise*, Liza was in *12 Years a Slave* and she’s done a lot of work in New York theater, Kevin has just done a ton of stuff everywhere [*Home Alone 3*, *The Blacklist*, *House of Cards*], Deidre has also done an incredible amount of work in theater and television [*Daredevil*, *Law & Order*, *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*], and we all love Sheryl Kaller. Sheryl is a Broadway director who was nominated for the Tony Award for ‘Best Director’ for her work on *Next Fall* by Geoffrey Nauffts. She’s absolutely terrific, so smart, so tasteful, just a really great director.”



“Other Desert Cities” (Bucks County Playhouse): Kevin Kilner (Lyman Wyeth) and Patricia Richardson (Polly Wyeth).

This past Saturday night, *Other Desert Cities* played to a near capacity crowd. Patricia gifted Polly Wyeth with remarkable depth and a wide breadth of absorbing emotional range. She was elegant, sharp, witty, cold, and, at times, rather (delightfully) nasty. She portrayed a complex character who had tasted both stardom and experienced unfathomable loss. Polly devoted herself to her family in ways they often didn't recognize, and the silent hurt she long endured hardened her, making her come across as bitter and aloof.

“It's very emotionally intense,” Patricia agreed. “I'm just going out every night and exploring the character. We all are. We're exploring the play, trying to be at the top of our game and just make it better and better with every performance. We're looking for every nuance of this play and trying different things to bring to light every cornice of every character and every relationship.”



“Other Desert Cities” (Bucks County Playhouse): Liza J. Bennett (Brooke Wyeth) and Kevin Kilner (Lyman Wyeth).

Lyman is the rock, Silda is the burst of color, Trip is the neutrality, and Brooke is the wounded spirit searching for answers. Watching this volatile combination of individuals is more addictive than binging on the unscripted voyeuristic drama of a show like *Big Brother*.

“I love coming back to this area. I was so excited to see that they are building a hotel next-door and they are also building a café right up against the theater. You can walk out along the river and you’ll be able to have a drink on the deck right next to the theater. But even more important, they are developing this huge educational program for kids, kindergarten through high school. They’ve hired this great woman, Michaela Murphy, who understands the kind of program needed because she’s run them before at New York’s Second Stage.”



Other Desert Cities” (Bucks County Playhouse): Deirdre Madigan (Silda Gauman) and Patricia Richardson (Polly Wyeth).

“The Bucks County Playhouse always has a mix of things in the works,” Patricia added. “There’s the redo of shows that have already run, plus they have productions that are pre-Broadway. The next show they are developing is *Rock and Roll Man: The Alan Freed Story*.”

According to Bucks County Playhouse, *Rock and Roll Man: The Alan Freed Story* is a high energy musical that uncovers the true story of Alan Freed — the “Father of Rock and Roll.” “It is the 1950s and a cocky young DJ discovers the music that all America wants to hear — except no radio station will play it. Through guts, grit, and ingenuity, Alan perseveres and unearths music for a new generation.” The production features both original songs and classic tunes by legends like Little Richard, Frankie Lymon and Screamin’ Jay Hawkins. The world premiere is Tuesday, September 12.

In closing, Patricia expressed, “*Other Desert Cities* is a really wonderful play. I mean, who hasn’t had family drama on a holiday weekend?! It’s dramatic, but it also has its funny moments and it’s nice doing work that goes back-and-forth between the two. This story has the advantage of having a secret at the end that you don’t expect. But you can’t tell anyone the ending, they need to come see the play for themselves.”



Other Desert Cities” (Bucks County Playhouse): Liza J. Bennett (Brooke Wyeth) and Charles Socarides (Trip Wyeth).

The raw emotion these five individuals radiate from the stage washes over the crowd like a potent elixir. *Other Desert Cities* is an impactful production that reverberates inside you long after the story’s end.

This is the final week of *Other Desert Cities*. The remaining dates and times are as follows:

Tuesday, August 29 at 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, August 30 at 2:00 p.m.

Wednesday August 30 at 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, August 31 at 2:00 p.m.

Thursday, August 31 at 7:30 p.m.

Friday, September 1 at 7:00 p.m.

Saturday, September 2 at 2:00 p.m.



“Other Desert Cities” (Bucks County Playhouse): Patricia Richardson (Polly Wyeth).