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Arts & Culture

## Bucks County Playhouse brings 'Buddy Holly' to Philly



By Larry Nichols

Audiences can relive the early days of rock 'n' roll when The Kimmel Center brings the Bucks County Playhouse production of "Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story" to Philly through July 9.

The show follows the iconic singer's rise to fame, starting in 1957 and through his tragic death less than two years later, when Holly, Richie Valens and The Big Bopper perished in a plane crash. But the show celebrates his life and music, featuring more than 20 of his greatest hits, including "That'll Be The Day," "Peggy Sue," "Oh Boy" and many more.

Out actor Gilbert Sanchez, who plays Valens in the show, said that while he wasn't too familiar with the rock music of the 1950s, most people know more about the music of that era than they think.

"It's mostly Buddy Holly songs, but we have a few Ritchie Valens songs and one song by the Big Bopper as well," he said about the music of the show. "I loved Richie Valens; 'La Bamba' was one of my go-to movies growing up. I wasn't too familiar with Buddy Holly, but you don't realize how much you know

that music. It's like, Oh, I definitely know all of these songs like 'Johnny B. Goode.' It's always there. When you watch the show you understand that it's all there. It's all influenced by them."

Sanchez said all of the performers in the show are accomplished musicians, who play live while singing.

"I'm actually one of the very few people that do not play an instrument at all in the entire cast," he said. "It's funny because it's written that Buddy and the Big Bopper ask Richie if they can play 'La Bamba' with him. So I don't play instruments at all. I'm very lucky that I get to kind of shake my hips in front of the crowd and have these amazing musicians backing me."

Sanchez said audiences young and old are showing up because of their love of the music, but they are further pulled into the show by the story and the intensity of the musicians performing on stage.

"The music is what draws them to it," he said. "Once they start to hear the story and see the amazing musicians that I get to share the stage with, they are blown away. The music, of course, speaks for itself, but when they see the talent that is on the stage, it is truly impressive."

*The Kimmel Center presents "Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story" through July 9 at Perelman Theater, 300 S. Broad St. For more information or tickets, call 215-893-1999.*