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## A new production of the shady, comic gangster musical, Guys and Dolls



By Ralph Malachowski

"I've Got A Horse Right Here, His Name Is Paul Revere ... ." So begins the Fugue for Tinhornssung by Nicely-Nicely Johnson in the classic musical, Guys and Dolls now at the Bucks County Playhouse. Rarely performed because of the large cast, The Bucks County Playhouse is presenting this musical until August 12. It is the largest musical ever presented on this stage and well worth seeing.

The few revivals of Guys and Dolls on Broadway have been grand occasions, and this revival is no exception. The musical numbers: "Bushel and a Peck," "Adelaide's Lament," "Luck Be a Lady," and "Sit Down, You're Rockin' the Boat" are musical theatre classics. Damon Runyon's underworld characters have been given hearts and souls by Abe Burrows and Jo Swerling who wrote the Book and by Frank Loesser's Music and Lyrics. Characters like Nathan Detroit, Sky Masterson, Miss Adelaide, and Harry the Horse are part of theatre history.

The actors who have appeared in Guys and Dolls include such legends as Frank Sinatra, Marlon Brando, and Nathan Lane. This is a story not of Times Square and its denizens, but of life lived on that stretch of Broadway between Times Square and Columbus Circle, the "Hardened Artery" as it was called by Walter Winchell. The Fifties of Midtown Manhattan with their nightclubs, drugstores, garages, and restaurants are where this musical takes place.

The male contingent of this *Guys and Dolls* includes Steve Rosen as Nathan Detroit, Clarke Thorell as Sky Masterson, Darius de Haas as Nicely-Nicely Johnson, Lenny Wolpe as Arvide Abernathy, and many others who acquit themselves in their roles with aplomb. The female roles are assumed by Elena Shaddow as Sarah Brown, Lesli Margherita as Miss Adelaide, Ruth Gottschall as General Matilda B. Cartwright, and many others.

As good as the men were, the audience favorites on opening night were the women. Lesli Margherita's Miss Adelaide quickly became the audience favorite with her delightfully whacky characterization (and great singing and acting) placed somewhere between Fran Drescher's *The Nanny* from TV, and Betty Hutton's Annie Oakley from *Annie Get Your Gun*. Elena Shaddow's Sarah Brown was believable and touching. The biggest surprise was Ruth Gottschall as General Matilda B. Cartwright. Coming from nowhere, she injected a fresh character to add spice to the proceedings with her booming contralto voice. She also looked and sounded eerily like the late Margaret Tyzack.

Steve Rosen as Nathan Detroit personified the lovable reprobate who never could get married after a fourteen-year engagement. Clarke Thorell's Sky Masterson was dashing. Both men could be seen (in a skewed sense) as updated versions of Oscar Wilde's Algernon and Jack/Ernest from *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Darius de Haas's Nicely-Nicely Johnson was in capable hands. The real surprise was Lenny Wolpe as Arvide Abernathy. His characterization showed a seasoned professional we see too little of these days, a character actor.

William Schuler led the live combo playing louche music, and the creative team all did excellent work. Young choreographer Jeremy Dumont is a talent to watch. Hunter Foster directed.

*Guys and Dolls: A Musical Fable of Broadway* will be at the Bucks County Playhouse, New Hope, PA, until August 12. For tickets, call 215-862-2121 or visit [www.BucksCountyPlayhouse.org](http://www.BucksCountyPlayhouse.org)