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Pop Culture Madness

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The Buddy Holly Story Rocks New Hope and Philadelphia!



By Debra Wallace

From the moment the curtain rises in New Hope and Philadelphia, it is so easy to fall in love with John Dewey in the title role in “Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story.” After the summer of 2016’s record-breaking run at the Bucks County Playhouse, nearly the entire cast has returned to the playhouse and is debuting in the Perelman Theater at the Kimmel Center to bring Buddy Holly’s music alive. The original cast is joined by Natalie Ortega, as the sole newcomer to the cast, who appears as Buddy’s wife, Maria Elena.

The production is helmed by director Hunter Foster (Company, Bucks County Playhouse), and choreographer Lorin Latarro, (“Waitress,” on Broadway), both of whom are also Bucks County Playhouse Artistic Associates.

The show features a book by Alan Janes and music and lyrics by Buddy Holly. It opened in London’s West End, where it ran for over 10 years, and premiered on Broadway in 1990.

While sitting in your seat and clapping, it will take everything you have not to jump to your feet to dance to the 27 well-loved songs and his greatest hits, including “Peggy Sue,” “That’ll Be The Day,” “Not Fade Away,” “It’s So Easy,” “Oh Boy,” “Why Do Fools Fall in Love,” and many more.

The current show runs through Saturday, June 17, at the Bucks County Playhouse and then travels to the Perelman Theater at the Kimmel Center in Philadelphia from June 24 to July 9. From the enthusiasm and strong following, fans of the show may see it in both venues.



“The audience response to our production in 2016 was so overwhelming that we decided to break precedent and bring the production back this year,” explained Stephen Kocis, the co-producer of “Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story.”

“Our collaboration with The Kimmel Center, also a first for us,” he said, *“should give confidence to audience members that our commitment to high quality productions and top-notch casts is unparalleled.”*

This unique partnership is something that everyone involved is enthusiastic about. *“This is an exciting project for the Kimmel Center as we continue to expand our role as producers,”* said Anne Ewers, Kimmel Center president and CEO. *“This five-star cast and record-breaking production will be a brilliant addition to summer on the Kimmel Center Campus and we are thrilled to be partnering with our friends at Bucks County Playhouse.”*

Dewey, a native of Virginia, is a 2005 graduate of The Boston Conservatory. His past stage credits include: “The Diary of Anne Frank,” “A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” “Hello Dolly,” and “No, No, Nanette!” On television, he has acted in “Gotham.” His voice can also be heard in numerous TV and radio commercials including those for Nerf and Monopoly.

Q: Did you do much research on Buddy Holly himself?

JOHN DEWEY: I tried to watch and listen to as much Buddy as I could, obviously to get down his vocal and musical style. But also I wanted to listen to interviews of him, where he’s just casually talking with someone. I feel like that gives a little better look into someone’s personality, being able to hear the cadence in their speech, how they laugh, and other things like that.

Q: How does the man, and the music, stay with you?

JD: It is a pretty demanding show, both vocally and physically. Sometimes I’ll actually find myself singing songs from the show after the show, and I have to remind myself to stop already and give myself a break. Like I’ve said I have fun up there every night, and at the end of the show when we’re

playing the concert in Clear Lake, it's really the closest I've ever come to being a rock star, so it's pretty incredible.

Q: Does the fate of Buddy Holly – dying so young – make you think about your own destiny?

JD: Yes. Buddy dying so young really just makes you feel that you have to get the most out of life that you can. Buddy was that kind of guy that just never stopped, it's how he was about to do all the things he did in less than 2 years, and as cheesy as it sounds, it makes you really think about cherishing every minute.

Q: This show would make a great soundtrack, is there one in the works?

JD: There are no current plans for any recordings.

Q: How will the show change when it moves from the Bucks County Playhouse to the Kimmel Center?

JD: As far as I know the show will be exactly the same at Kimmel. The only noticeable difference will probably be some blocking and scene transitions, but that's only because the physical space itself will be a little different.

Q: Are you more inclined to listen to Buddy Holly music, or music from that era, because of this show?

JD: I still listen mostly to recent music (with the exception being all the 80s rock I was raised on), but every now and again I get an itch to throw on some Buddy or some other 50s rockabilly.

Q: What did you do for work in between last year's Buddy Show in New Hope and the current show?

JD: I played Peter in "The Diary of Anne Frank," at the Flat Rock Playhouse pretty soon after last year's Buddy. Other than that I mostly work as a voiceover actor in New York, doing mostly commercial work. I make my home in New York now.



Q: When did you fall in love with musical theater and acting?

JD: Back in middle school doing theater. I grew up in Virginia, in a small town of Poquoson near Newport News and Williamsburg. It kept my interest in high school and went to school for musical theater at the Boston Conservatory.

Q: When were you bitten with the theater bug?

JD: I can honestly say that it came from my sister, Sarah, who got into the acting and singing bug and I got I got dragged along early. Once I started performing I enjoyed doing it and kept with it.

Q: What were your first shows?

JD: The first couple things I did were more musical revues. The first actual show I remember doing was the "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat," when I played Joseph in my sophomore year in high school. That's when I started to have ideas it was something I wanted to get into.

Q: What are some of your favorite Broadway musicals?

JD: My taste is a little different. One of the first shows I saw on Broadway was "Tommy" with my dad, who was a hippie in the 70s and played classic rock. I also loved Sweeney Todd with Angela Lansbury and of course, "Hamilton."

Q: When do you first get acquainted with Buddy Holly's music?

JD: I don't put a date on the first time that I heard him. For me it was just kind of something I heard along the way. I started with his more famous songs like "That Will Be The Day." And then almost all his hits along the way. Once I started to get into the show, I heard some songs that I hadn't heard before, and got more acquainted with them

Q: What do you love about this show – "Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story?"

JD: The audiences are amazing. A lot of the show is a rock concert. Buddy and the Crickets at the Apollo, and that was a new experience for me. I'm not used to having a show where you just playing a rock concert where people are clapping along and jumping to their feet. We had packed houses last summer and we are getting them again this year.

Q: What do you love about this role and this character?

JD: Playing the role of Buddy Holly is really great. I love that he was just this really driven guy and I have this ability to get on stage and go for something. Buddy is trying to be a rock 'n' roll star. People ask how I keep it fresh every night, but there are 10 incredible musicians there every night, and we've known one another for a year. We are all friends and we have fun on and off stage. It is great to be able to rock out every night to an audience that is so receptive, and vocally appreciative.

Q: How old are you?

JD: I am 34; I fool people with how young I look.

Q: Why did you reprise your role from last summer?

JD: I was excited about the partnership brought us back to Bucks County. We generated a lot of interest last year and this was a second chance for those who didn't get to see it, or those who want

to see it again. We are having a great time in New Hope and we look forward to being in Philadelphia, and being able to explore the city.



Q: What is the advantage of doing a show for such a long time?

JD: Getting to do it again this year has allowed us to go back with the director and rework some aspects of the show. We only had two weeks to put it up last year. We fine-tuned it and hone in on everything. Being able to do it over and over again is a really cool opportunity. Having a year under my belt and being able to think of all the cords, live in the moment and not constantly thinking about the notes I am playing, certainly allows more freedom and comfort when I am on stage.

Q: Why should people come?

JD: I think it is a good story in general. The show does the reader's digest version of his less than two year rise to fame. As far as being able to tell a story, it's cool to see a small-town kid hopes and dreams to be a rock star come true. If you love Buddy Holly's music, you will definitely love the show!"

For More Information on: "Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story"

Bucks County Playhouse, New Hope, through June 17.

Tickets for the Bucks County Playhouse, call: 215-862-2121 or online at www.bcptheater.org, or at the Bucks County Playhouse Box Office. Group sales available for groups of 10 or more.

Kimmel Center's Perelman Theater, Philadelphia, PA

June 24 – July 9, 2017

Tickets at the Kimmel Center call 215-893-1999, online at kimmelcenter.org, or at the Kimmel Center Box Office. Group sale: (215) 790-5883.