

<http://www.mcall.com/entertainment/mc-ent-theater-bucks-county-playhouse-desert-cities-20170815-story.html>

THE MORNING CALL

August 16, 2017

'Guys and Dolls' breaks Bucks Playhouse record

The Bucks County Playhouse production of "Guys and Dolls," which ran July 21-Aug. 12, was the playhouse's top-grossing show in its history, eclipsing a record set by the Playhouse's starry revival of "Steel Magnolias" in 2016.

Having reopened in July 2012 following a \$6 million renovation funded by the Bridge Street Foundation, the Bucks Playhouse is thriving with the return of professional Equity theater to New Hope, overseen by four Broadway producers.

As the historic theater observed the fifth anniversary of its reopening, it was challenged with meeting the demands of audiences while dealing with technology that was becoming rapidly out of date.

The solution arrived in the form of a major gift from Nelson and Bette Pfundt and Marv and Dee Ann Woodall. Their support provided upgrades to the Playhouse's patron services and ticketing infrastructure, launch a redesigned website and upgrade the sales team and call center. The gift follows a three-year leadership gift made in 2015 by Harlan and Sally Weissman that provided resources to expand the Playhouse audience base through advanced digital technology.

Construction is underway on an addition to the side of the Playhouse facing the Delaware River that will improve conditions for audiences once they have arrived at the theater— providing a lobby space, additional restrooms, a café, bar and overall greater accessibility. The expansion is scheduled to open early in 2018 and is the final stage of Bridge Street Foundation's vision for the renovated Playhouse.

Off site, the Playhouse also recently opened a ticket office at Peddler's Village in nearby Lahaska. The Playhouse is also days away from launching a trolley service in downtown New Hope to make it easier for patrons to get from the borough's parking lots to the theater.

Looking at the growth of the Playhouse, Fraser explained, "We now feature performances 12 months of the year, and we are operating at more than 70 percent of available performance days."

The 2017 subscription season kicked off in May with the world premiere of "Clue On Stage" starring Sally Struthers and beat budget forecasts followed by the return of "Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story," which originally debuted in summer 2016 as the top-grossing musical in the Playhouse's history. "Buddy" then moved to the Kimmel Center for a summer engagement, and the Playhouse became the first regional theatre company invited to perform at the Kimmel.

More info: bcptheater.org.