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THE MORNING CALL

May 16, 2018

Theater: Bucks County Playhouse kicks off season with 'Act of God'



Harry Bouvy stars as the Supreme being in 'Act of God,' a Broadway comedy opening that kicks off the new season at the Bucks County Playhouse May 18. (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

In an era where seemingly everything from “Roseanne” to “Will and Grace” has a reboot, God has decided to take a fresh look at one of his greatest cultural achievements, The Ten Commandments.

Bucks County Playhouse opens its new season May 18 with “Act of God,” a Broadway comedy by David Javerbaum, A 13-time Emmy-winning writer from “The Daily Show with Jon Stewart.”

“When I saw this play on Broadway, after wiping the tears of laughter off my face, I thought of producing it at THE Bucks County Playhouse,” says Executive Producer Robyn Goodman. “The wit with which God reinvents his commandments could only be written by a master like Javerbaum.” Returning to earth, the Supreme Being has taken the form of acclaimed New York actor Harry Bouvy. He is joined by two faithful archangels, Ashley D. Kelley as Michael and Joe Kinosian as Gabriel. Director is Tracy Brigden.



Ashley D. Kelley stars as archangel Michael in 'Act of God' at the Bucks County Playhouse. (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

“An Act of God” is based on Javerbaum’s 2011 book, “The Last Testament: A Memoir by God,” and his Twitter account @TheTweetofGod, which had more than 2 million followers before he discontinued the feed in 2016. Javerbaum is the co-creator of the Netflix sitcom “Disjointed,” starring Kathy Bates, and worked on “The Late Late Show with James Corden” and “The Colbert Report.”

Bouvy most recently played Dr. Dillamond in the national tour of “Wicked.” He played Sir Robin in “Spamalot” and Carmen Ghia in “The Producers.”

Kelley most recently starred in the title role in “Bella: An American Tall Tale” at Playwrights Horizons. She has appeared on “Marvel’s Luke Cage” (Netflix) and in a recurring arc in Netflix’s new show “Insatiable.” Kinoshian returns to the playhouse after appearing in “Murder for Two: Holiday Edition” and “The Nerd.” Kinoshian co-wrote “Murder for Two.”



Joe Kinoshian stars as the archangel Gabriel in 'Act of God' at the Pennsylvania Playhouse. (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

For publicity fun, the playhouse asked actors who have performed at the playhouse to share their 11th commandment. Here are some of the answers:

Sally Struthers, best known for playing Gloria in “All in the Family”: “Thou shalt sing ... you know you make me wanna shalt.”

Marsha Mason, four-time Oscar nominated actress: “Thou shalt have fun creating new paradigms for living an empathetic life.”

Jessica Walter, best known for her TV show “Arrested Development”: “Thou shalt vote in midterms!”

Patricia Richardson, best known as the wife of Tim Allen in the TV hit “Home Improvement”: “Thou should avoid all discussion of personal belief systems. No one wants to hear about it.”

Susan Sullivan, actress who starred in TV’s “Castle” as Castle’s mom: “Thou shall remember those who brought you insight and laughter.”

Justin Guarini, actor and singer best known as runner-up on the first season of “American Idol”: “Thou shalt refrain from checking thy Instagram likes during dramatic moments in a darkened theater.”

“**Act of God**,” May 18-June 16, Bucks County Playhouse, 70 S. Main St., New Hope. Tickets: \$40-\$75. 215-862-2121, buckscountyplayhouse.org.



'Dance Quilt,' presented by Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts May 18 and 19, features 100 students in faculty, guest and student choreographed works. (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

'Dance Quilt' at Charter Arts

Last summer, Diane LaBelle, CEO of Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts, was given a box by the dance faculty and asked to place five items inside — one that meant something to her personally, one a found object, one that came from the earth, one from a different time period and one that speaks to the future.

The items were intended to inspire new choreographic works by Charter Arts dance faculty to be presented in the 2018 "Dance Quilt" concert.

You can see the results in the 15th annual "Dance Quilt" May 18 and 19 at the Bethlehem school. The concert features more than 100 student dancers in faculty, guest and student-choreographed work in modern, ballet and tap.

"Dance Quilt" is the final product of a year-long rehearsal and performance course required for all dance students.

Kim Maniscalco, Charter Arts artistic director of dance, says: "For me, a quilt represents many hours of work put forth from the hands of many people. The outcome is always a thing of beauty, even when created for utilitarian purposes. Because a quilt is created over a period of weeks or even months, each square contains a history of the day on which it was stitched. Many stories, thoughts and feelings are found in the threads that draw the colorful fabric together to create the final product ... a labor of love. So it is with our 'Quilt.' Choreographers, dancers and technicians came together, and over the course of many months, the dances that make up this concert, each with their own stories and color, were created."

LaBelle's box contained a sea shell from Jekyll Island, a bottle brush from Goggleworks in Reading, an Elvis Presley CD, LaBelle's father's journal as a soldier in World War II and the date 9/19/19.

Modern works by three choreographers were inspired by the box. They include "9-19-19" by Jennifer Weaver, "Sailed On" by Rebecca Moyer and "The Rest of the Day Proved Calm" by Amy Berry.

Maniscalco says the name of Berry's work came from LaBelle's father's journal about what happened after an attack on his Navy ship. Other elements incorporate items from the box. Gestures of arm reaching and twisting with spoked fingers represent an industrial bottle brush. Dancers will bend to collect a seashell. The Elvis song "Can't Help Falling in Love" is conveyed through spelling of the words

“help,” “falling” and the “l” from the word “love” with the dancers’ bodies. The final two sections of the dance become eerie and tense in a reference to the date 9/19/19, which some predict will be the end of the world.

The concert also includes two faculty-choreographed classical ballet pieces — “The Birthday Party” by Maniscalco and “Walt Fantasia” by guest Molly O’Reilly — and a musical theater piece called “Where It’s Sunny” by Weaver.

Student choreographed dances are “Age Moyen: A Very Rough Sketch” by junior Isabelle Cattie and “The Mosaic We Built” by senior Christiana Lenzer. The works were created for the school’s fall concert, “Dance Soup” (“Age Moyen”) and spring concert, “Young Choreographers in Concert” (“The Mosaic We Built”).

“Dance Quilt,” 7 p.m. May 18 and 19; 2 p.m. May 19, Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts, 321 E. Third St., Bethlehem. Tickets: \$11-\$13. www.charterarts.org.

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