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# Ed Asner will bring 'A Man and His Prostate' to the Bucks County Playhouse

- By Mike Morsch

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Ed Asner is starring in "A Man and His Prostate" at the Bucks County Playhouse.

Ed Asner was once asked by his therapist, "Why do you grimace so much?"

Already an accomplished actor by the mid-1970s, Asner had a starring role on “The Mary Tyler Moore Show,” one of most acclaimed situation comedies in U.S. television history. Asner played Mary’s tough but lovable boss, Lou Grant, the producer at the fictional television station WJM in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The show ran on CBS from 1970 to 1977, after which the network gave Asner his own spinoff, “Lou Grant,” a dramatic series that ran from 1977 to 1982.

“We limped through that first season,” Asner says of the “Lou Grant” show. “You’re going from a live audience of 300 people [on “The Mary Tyler Moore Show”] with three cameras picking up the comedy as you go along on a half-hour show. You leave that for an hour show that has jokes within it, but is mostly dramatic, with one camera and no audience.”

Transforming the Lou Grant character from comedy to drama proved to be problematic for Asner that first season.

“I was feeling very responsible that whenever I had a joke, that the audience knew it was a joke,” Asner says. “I was in therapy at the time, and one of the first things I asked my shrink after we opened the show was, ‘What do you think?’”

The answer provided by the therapist became a light bulb moment for Asner.

“The first thing out of his mouth was, ‘Why do you grimace so much?’ And I went, ‘ahhhh.’ I looked at it and saw that not having an audience to signify a laugh — and with the crew not being allowed to laugh — I took it upon my high and mighty self to grimace every time I did a laugh line so the audience would know that it was OK to laugh. I immediately stopped grimacing and went on to do the show correctly.”

Whatever adjustments Asner made to his comedic timing and delivery worked. The seven-time Emmy Award winner won five of those awards for his role as Lou Grant,

three while working on “The Mary Tyler Moore Show” and two for his role as the title character on “Lou Grant.”

And Asner’s mastery of the comedic touch will be on full display in his latest role as the actor brings his one-man show, “A Man and His Prostate” to the Bucks County Playhouse in New Hope, Pennsylvania, for four performances March 30 through April 1.

While the show is about a serious health issue, “A Man and His Prostate” entertains while acting as a public service announcement for men to get prostate screenings and checkups.

The show is produced and written from the personal experience by Ed Weinberger, who wrote for Johnny Carson, Bob Hope and Dean Martin and co-created such TV shows as "Taxi" and "The Cosby Show."

And Weinberger built the humor into the script beautifully, according to Asner.

“You’ve got a number of markers all along the way as to what gets laughs and what doesn’t,” Asner says. “And when you’ve established those laughs, periodically during the course of the show, and you’ve been hitting them, then you’re getting the feedback. I haven’t missed on a performance yet, but I won’t take credit for that. It’s the excellence of the script.”

Asner describes the ease with which he’s able to play the part as “the genius of Ed Weinberger.”

“The man has a great comedic take and he was able to combine the two [prostate cancer and humor] and make it a wonderful play,” Asner says. “And anybody with half a talent can do it. All that has to be done is to say the words out loud. I love doing it. I just love doing it.”

Asner says not only will people be entertained but the show, but they will walk away with being more informed about the very serious issue of prostate cancer.

"This play is perfect," he says. "It is a beautifully churned piece on the subject. Weinberger went through it himself. He wrote of his own experiences. And he found the comedic mode in which to present it all. And at the same time, we're presenting very solid facts that should increase public awareness greatly."

*"A Man and His Prostate" will be performed at the Bucks County Playhouse, 70 S. Main St., New Hope, Pennsylvania, March 30 through April 1. For tickets and information, go to [bcptheater.org](http://bcptheater.org) or call 215-862-2121.*