
TALE OF 3 COMICS PLAYS ATLANTIS:[Boca Raton Edition]

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Abstract (Article Summary)

"The retirees are the hottest audience down here, so we gear our productions towards them. We've been looking for a place for a few years in south central Palm Beach County, and this location is perfect," said [Gary Waldman], 37, who has produced, directed, written and acted throughout South Florida, off-Broadway and nationally as well. "Our premiere show, also a world premiere, was Snowbirds [written by Waldman], which was very appropriate for the audience."

Full Text (671 words)

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The 6-month-old Atlantis Playhouse already is presenting its fourth show, the off-Broadway musical comedy *Sophie, Totie & Belle*.

Based on the lives of singer-comedians Sophie Tucker, Totie Fields and Belle Barth, the play is a revival of a production that originally opened more than 10 years ago at Jan McArt's Royal Palm Dinner Theatre in Boca Raton.

Preview performances are scheduled for today through Sunday, with regular performances running Wednesday through Aug. 17.

"It's silly, it's funny, it's about three groundbreaking singers/ comediennes who meet in heaven and go over their careers," said producing artistic director Gary Waldman, who directed productions of the play in New York and Deerfield Beach before taking it off- Broadway in 2000. "They recreate their old material, and it's still as fresh as ever."

Three South Florida actresses will play the roles. Angela Thomas of Hollywood, who teaches theater at Piper High School in Sunrise and has worked with Waldman in several productions, will portray Sophie Tucker.

"I usually play the comic role, but this time I have more of a dramatic role, because her story is deeper and darker, so that will be new for me," said Thomas, 36, who earned her graduate degree in theater at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton. "I've done mostly straight plays, but musical theater is really my forte, so working with Gary on these productions is always great."

Waldman and partner Jamison Troutman, both of Delray Beach, opened the 200-seat playhouse to appeal primarily to the area's retiree population.

"The retirees are the hottest audience down here, so we gear our productions towards them. We've been looking for a place for a few years in south central Palm Beach County, and this location is perfect," said Waldman, 37, who has produced, directed, written and acted throughout South Florida, off-Broadway and nationally as well. "Our premiere show, also a world premiere, was Snowbirds [written by Waldman], which was very appropriate for the audience."

Troutman, who handles the business end of the playhouse and productions, says they like to present shows that lend themselves to touring.

"We mount shows for the retiree type of audience, then tour them around," said Troutman, 26, who has produced theater off-Broadway, throughout Florida and in Canada. "We had a theater [Drama Center] in Deerfield Beach, but we closed it; this location is much better."

The playhouse, which completed an extended run of Jim Bailey as Barbra Streisand, will open its first full season in October with a production of Pickles, a new musical comedy by Ginger Reiter.

Based on the true story of the author's love affair with the famous Borscht Belt comic Jackie Mason, the play opens in previews Oct. 15, with opening night scheduled for Oct. 22. The show will run through Nov. 30.

I Write the Songs – The Music of Barry Manilow will run in previews Dec. 6-12, with regular performances running Dec. 13 to Jan. 25.

Meet Me at the Pitkin, will run in previews Feb. 4-8, with its regular run set for Feb. 11 to March 28.

Bubbe Meises, a revival of the off-Broadway musical, will be in previews April 3-9, with the regular run scheduled for April 10 to May 9.

Show times for Sophie, Totie & Belle are 8 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday and 2 and 7 p.m. Sunday. Tickets are \$26.50 for Wednesday through Friday and Sunday evening shows and \$29 for Saturday evenings and Sunday matinees. Preview tickets are \$5 off the regular price.

A subscription for all four plays is \$90 for Wednesday through Friday and Sunday evening shows, \$100 for the Saturday evening and Sunday matinee shows.

Individual tickets are \$26.50 for Wednesday through Friday evening shows and \$29 for Saturday evenings and Sunday matinees. All prices are subject to 6 percent sales tax.

The Atlantic Playhouse is at the Shoppes of Atlantis, 5893 S. Congress Ave., north of Boynton Beach. Call 800-690-1863 from Boca Raton and Delray Beach, 561-304-3212 from all other areas.

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