

Bergen County Players' A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum Opens 92nd Season

Stephen Sondheim's Tony-Award Winning Musical Comedy Runs Thru October 19 In Oradell

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EINPresswire.com/ -- Making people laugh is a time-tested way to get attention and make money – ancient playwrights knew it as do writers and producers of modern hits. Bergen County Players (BCP), one of America's longest-running little theater companies, takes humor back to its roots, combining the time-tested 2,000-year-old comedies of Roman playwright Plautus with the infectious energy of classic burlesque for an all-new production of the Tony Award-winning musical comedy *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*.

With music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim (his first Tony Award-winning musical) and book by Burt Shevelove and Larry Gelbart, Forum kicked off BCP's 92nd season and will run through Saturday, October 19 at the Little Firehouse Theatre in Oradell. Show times are Friday and Saturday nights at 8PM and on Sundays at 2PM. Tickets to *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, all priced at \$32, can be purchased online at www.bcplayers.org, by calling 201-261-4200 or by visiting the box office at 298 Kinderkamack Road in Oradell during regular box office hours.

Forum is an irreverent romp through ancient Rome that tells the story of a crafty slave and his side-splitting attempts to win his freedom. Full of wily ruses, madcap chases and harebrained schemes, it pokes fun at ancient slavery, with breathtaking wit. Ray Yucis of Paterson, who is directing the current production at BCP, says he selected it because it is "absurd and outrageous



The cast of *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* perform thru October 19 at the Little Firehouse Theatre in Oradell, NJ. For tickets go to www.bcplayers.org or call 201-261-4200.

and just plain old fun." As he notes, "Forum is Broadway's greatest farce and promises to have audiences rolling in the aisles. It is one of the funniest musicals ever written."

Satire and farce, which can include physical humor and exaggerated characters, are actually the foundations of burlesque, which had its roots in early European theater. Burlesque began as a form of comedic performance in the early 1800's. Over time, it evolved and made its way to the U.S., where it included elements of striptease. Sean Miller, a British author, defines burlesque as "a blend of comedy and sensuality, presented in a theatrical format with highly stylized acts, as well as elaborate costumes and props."



Kate McManus of Englewood, NJ began her career in burlesque in 2012. McManus is pictured here as Hellz Kitten.

Iconic performers like Gypsy Rose Lee helped shape the history of burlesque and set the stage for new artists. Kate McManus of Englewood, NJ, a member of the Bergen County Players, began her career in burlesque in 2012, when she used a Groupon for a "Burlesque Biking Bootcamp," and took the name

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Sean Miller

"Hellz Kitten," a nod to the gritty New York City neighborhood. She eventually segued from performance to producing. "As a little girl, I dreamed of playing Maria Von Trapp on Broadway, despite an annoying lack of talent." Her desire for the spotlight never went away, and she found a way to make it happen via burlesque. "It's a super accepting and inclusive outlet for anyone who wants to try it."

The talented cast of *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* includes several BCP veterans, including Steve Bell of Hackensack as Pseudolus, the slave attempting to win his freedom (the same role Steve played in BCP's 1999 production of *Forum*), John Kiely of Allendale as henpecked husband Senex, and Lori Feiler-Fluger of River Edge as his shrewish wife, Domina. Senex and Domina are the parents of Hero (played by newcomer Damon Vincenty of Westwood), who has enlisted Pseudolus' help to woo Philia (Sherry Mayce of Little Falls, also in her BCP debut). Rounding out the cast of 18 on BCP's intimate stage are Brad Forenza of Jersey City as

Hysterium, William Cantor of Woodcliff Lake as Erronius, Edward Van Saders of Sparkill, NY as Marcus Lycus, and Jesse Kriesel of New City, NY as Miles Gloriosus. Proteans are played by Zachary Boyd of Cresskill, Bradley Carrington of Berkeley Heights, Carlos Palencia Junior of Fair Lawn, with Courtesans being played by Nikki Alvarado of Allendale, Nicole Henry of Westwood, Maria Possavino of Chestnut Ridge, NY, Melissa Rivera of Dumont, Katherine Stelma of Bloomfield, and Melissa Miller of River Vale.



Pictured are the cast of BCP's A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum now on stage at the Little Firehouse Theatre in Oradell through October 19.

One of Forum's most iconic songs sums up the continued lure of burlesque: "Something appealing. Something appalling. Something for everyone. A comedy tonight!" Those interested in tickets can go to www.bcplayers.org or call 201-261-4200.

The Bergen County Players, Inc. is a non-Equity, non-profit community theater company dedicated to presenting quality productions for the enrichment of the community.

TICKET AND SCHEDULE INFORMATION

*All performances take place at The Little Firehouse Theatre at 298 Kinderkamack Road in Oradell, home to the Bergen County Players since 1949. Performance times are Fridays and Saturdays at 8PM, and Sundays at 2PM.

*All tickets for A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum are \$32. Tickets can be purchased online at www.bcplayers.org, by calling 201-261-4200 or by visiting the box office at 298 Kinderkamack Road in Oradell during regular box office hours. Visa, Master Card, and American Express are accepted.

*Those interested in Group Sales or benefit theater parties can call (201) 261-4200 (option #6) BCP offers seating to accommodate patrons who are mobility impaired and can transfer from a wheelchair. These seats can be purchased by calling the box office at 201-261-4200 and will be released for public sale two weeks prior to performance.

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