

THE CON IS ON

THEATER REVIEW

'DIRTY ROTTEN SCOUNDRELS

Directed by Aimee Turner

Through Sept. 6

Theatre by the Sea, 364 Cards Pond Road, Matunuck

BY DAVE CHRISTNER

A fire drill is a strange way to open a show, but that's what happened last Friday night when Theatre by the Sea opened its season closer. A fire alarm attributed to a spider delayed the curtain by about 15 minutes. At first, it seemed like a dirty rotten trick just to prolong opening night excitement, but then I decided I didn't care if it was a trick; anything that extended the length of a sensational season at the old barn would suit me just fine. The fact that the show just happened to be "Dirty Rotten Scoundrels" was entirely appropriate as well.

Adapted from the movie of the same title with book by Jeffrey Lane and music and lyrics by David Yazbek, "Dirty Rotten Scoundrels" tells the story of two very different con men who make a living fleecing financially fit females on the French Riviera. Lawrence Jameson (Al Bundonis) is a sophisticated old smoothie at the top of his game, raking in millions in cash, checks, stocks and bonds, and jewelry from an odd assortment of women all looking for the same thing: love in all the wrong places. Freddy Benson (Jason Gillman), Jameson's nemesis, by contrast is new to the con on the continent and has just been making ends meet by hustling a few meals and feels on an irregular basis and those coming only from the most naive of the naive. He meets Jameson on a train and follows him to the chateau on the Riviera that Jameson calls home. Once there, Freddy recognizes Jameson's greatness and expresses a desire to emulate his lifestyle and learn from the master in the hilarious number "Great Big Stuff."

Enter Cincinnati soap queen, Christine Colgate (Lisa Yuen who plays Rachael on "All My Children"), who is touring Europe as a consequence of having won a jingle contest for a laundry detergent.

The two con artists interpret the "soap queen" title to mean she comes from money — Proctor and Gamble after all has its corporate headquarters in Cincinnati.

Set against the predominately blue Mediterranean backdrop of Ray Recht's ultra cool and highly imaginative set, Yuen's Christine enters wearing a low-cut aqua colored dress from costume designer Marcia Zammarelli's chic line of theatrical south of France evening wear. She dazzles the two con men with her effervescent charm and striking good looks; they enter a competition first to swindle her out of \$50,000 and then to seduce her when they learn she has no money. Problem is: they are both smitten.

With a treasure trove of complications to overcome, there is ample opportunity for the principals and ensemble to mine the script for humor, brilliantly perform songs that range everywhere from the ridiculous to the sublime, and dance under "Mediterranean stars" produced brilliantly by Paul Toben's lighting design.

Bundonis, Gillman, Yuen and Christopher Swan as local police chief Andre Thibault are remarkable; each brings to his or her role great singing, dancing, acting and perfect comic timing. Stacey Geer's performance as Omaha heiress Muriel Eubanks is brilliant whether singing a poignant ballad or engaging in witty repartee. As always, the ensemble is the equal of any chorus line on Broadway, and Andrew Smithson's musical direction is superb.

Aimee Turner's expert directorial skills are evident in every aspect of this stellar production.

Dave Christner is a South County playwright and novelist. "A Little Lower than the Angels," his drama about R.I.'s part in the slave trade, is being produced by Trinity Ministry of the Arts in Newport in February 2010.

e Performances are Tues.-Fri., 8 p.m., Thurs. 2 p.m., Sat., 4:30 & 8:30 p.m., & Sun., 5 p.m. Tickets \$39-\$49. Student rush tickets \$15. (401) 782-8587. www.theatrebythesea.com.

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GALLERIES

Anchor Bend Glassworks, 16 Franklin St., Newport. www.anchorbendglass.com. (401) 849-0698. Through 8-31: "New Summer Designs," blown and sculptural glass art created in fire. Open Mon.-Sat., 10 a.m.-5 p.m., & Sun., 11 a.m.-5 p.m.

Arnold Art Gallery, 210 Thames St., Newport. www.arnoldart.com. (401) 847-2273. Through 9-6: New works by Jeremy Miranda.

Art on the Wharf, 33 Banister's Wharf, Newport. www.artonthewharf.com. (401) 845-6858. Through 8-31: "9th Annual Summer Exhibition," paintings by British artist Tony Gill of New England coastal summers. Open daily noon-6 p.m.

AS220, 115 Empire St., Providence. www.as220.org. (401) 831-9327. Through 8-29: Main Gallery: "On-The-Line: 19 on Paper" group exhibition. "Open Window," collages by Christine Olszewski; at Project Space, 93 Mathewson St.: "Pieces," works by Sharon Kahn-Cutts & Wendyll Brown. Open Wed.-Fri., 1-6 p.m.; Sat., noon-4 p.m.

Bert Gallery, 540 South Water St., Providence. www.bertgallery.com. (401) 751-2628. Through 8-28: "A Moment, A Place, An Era," photos of 1937 Louisiana by O. Winston Link & of 1950s-'60s urban Rhode Island by Carmel Vitullo. Thurs., 8-20, 6:30 p.m. An Interview with Carmel Vitullo. Open Tues.-Fri., 11 a.m.-5 p.m., & Sat., noon-4 p.m.

Bill Krul Gallery, 142 Boon St., Narragansett. www.backyardcardgallery.com. (401) 782-1715. Through 8-30: "It Is What It Is," paintings by Katherine Patric Kroener & "Seascapes of South County & Block Island," photos by Susan Ruggieri. Open Mon.-Thurs., 10 a.m.-8 p.m., & Fri.-Sun., 10 a.m.-10 p.m.

Charlestown Gallery, 5000 South County Trail, Charlestown. www.charlestowngalleryri.com. (401) 364-0120. Through 8-19: "Two Views," paintings by Amy Goodwin & Gregory Kammerer. 8-22 through 9-14: "Nocturnes and..." paintings by Shawn Kenney. Open Wed.-Mon., 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

Courthouse Center for the Arts, 3481 Kingstown Road, West Kingstown. www.courthousearts.org. (401) 782-1018. 8-20 through 9-16: South County Tourism Photo Contest. Reception Thurs., 8-20, 6-7:30 p.m. Open Mon.-Fri., 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Sat., 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

DeBlois Gallery, 138 Bellevue Ave., Newport. www.debloisgallery.com. (401) 847-9977. Through 9-1: Annual Members' Show with new work in varied media by members Kathy Armor, Ann Marie Balasco, Ron Caplain & more. Open Tues.-Sun., noon-5 p.m.

Eveline Luppi Gallery, 7 Main St., Wickford. www.evelineluppigallery.com. (401) 294-9111. 8-22 through 9-27: "Everyday Ignition," art by Brugger, Klier & Karrass. Reception Sat., 8-29, 3-6 p.m. Open Wed.-Sun., noon-6 p.m.; Fri., noon-8 p.m.

Hope Gallery, 435 Hope St., Bristol. www.hopegalleryfineartfinecraft.com. (401) 396-9117. Through 8-28: "Heat & Sand" oil & acrylic artist Sue Butler. Open Tues.-Thurs., Sun., noon-5 p.m.; Fri. & Sat., noon-6 p.m.

Jessica Hagen Fine Art & Design, 226 Bellevue Ave., Suite 8, Newport. www.jessicahagen.com. (401) 849-3271. Through 8-30: "Exploring Form in the Landscape," new paintings by Karen Iglehart. Open Thurs.-Sat., 11 a.m.-4 p.m.

Montanaro Contemporary Arts, 2967 East Main Road, Portsmouth. www.montanarogallery.com. (401) 741-8101. Through 8-24: "Abstractions and Representations," solo exhibit by Newport artist Michael Montanaro.

Muse, 426 Main St., Warren. (401) 289-2150. Through 10-27: "Gone Fishing," watercolor & prismacolor pencil by Jim Bush.

The Newport Wedding Gallery, 478 Thames St., Newport. www.thenewportwedding-gallery.com. (401) 619-5900. Through 8-30: "On the Tiffany Wall," photos by Donna Castor & "Seaside Weddings," New England wedding cakes, centerpiece and attire. Open Sat. & Sun. 10 a.m.-6 p.m.

Reign Gallery, 192 Thames St., Newport. www.reigngallery.com. (401) 848-2544. 8-21 through 8-23: Russian artist Alexei Butirskiy's painting & book signing. Opening reception Sat., 8-22, 6-9 p.m. Open Mon.-Wed., 10 a.m.-6 p.m., Thurs.-Sun., 10 a.m.-10 p.m.

The Schock Gallery, 47 Conanicus Ave., Jamestown. www.schockgallery.com. (401) 423-3383. Through 8-31: Summer Show of New Works by artists Cindy Blair, Barbara Hutchison, Kate Petrie, David Schock & Pat Tuff. Open Sun.-Wed., noon-5 p.m.; Thurs.-Sat., noon-10 p.m.

South County Art Association, Helme House, 2587 Kingstown Road, Kingstown. www.south-countyart.org. (401) 783-2195. Through 8-29: "82nd Members Annual," original works in any media. Open Wed.-Sun., 1-5 p.m.

Spring Bull Gallery, 55 Bellevue Ave., Newport. www.springbullgallery.com. (401) 849-9666. Through 8-31: Spring Bull Members' Exhibition: variety of media. Open daily, noon-5 p.m.

Tiverton Arts Council, at Tiverton Town Hall, 343 Highland Road, Tiverton. (401) 288-0999. Through 10-13: "Down on the Farm," farm scenes & barnyard animals by local artists. Open Mon.-Fri., 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m.

MUSEUMS

National Museum of American Illustration, 492 Bellevue Ave., Newport. www.americanillustration.org. (401) 851-8949. Through 8-30: "Norman Rockwell: American Imagist." Self-guided tours Sat., 10 a.m.-4 p.m. & Sun., 11 a.m.-4 p.m.; 90-minute guided tours Fri., 2 p.m. Open year-round for guided groups & VIP tours by reservation. \$18 adults; \$16 seniors & military; \$15 group rate (10 or more); \$12 students; \$8 children 5 to 12.

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Stress and Anxiety Relief Classes



When: Summer Series: Mondays at 6 p.m.

Where: 24 Brown Street, Wickford, RI 02852

How Much: Fee based on your co-pay.

What: Breath for calming the mind and body, progressive muscle relaxation, Chi Gong, visualization and imagery, meditation, skills for inner peace.

To register call: Linda Thomas, MSW, at 401-295-2911



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