

Funny bones are gonna break

Calling all area stand-up comics! The First Annual Rhode Island Comic Throwdown is taking applications for comics to compete for cash prizes this summer at three Newport venues.

Comics can compete in three divisions: Professional for any comedian paid regularly for performing; Amateur for any comedian performing free on a regular basis; and Novice for a new comedian just getting started. Comedians can enter only one category. Between five and 10 comedians will compete before three judges each Thursday for four weeks. Each comedian will perform up to a five-minute set in the four preliminary rounds before the semifinals begin. The first-place winner will receive \$700 and the second-place winner receives \$300. Third prize is a trophy.

The throwdown starts Thursday, July 8, and continues every Thursday at 8:30 p.m. until the Aug. 19 finals. Schedule is as follows:

July 8: Gas Lamp Grille, 206 Thames St., Newport
July 15: Billy Goode's, 23



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Marlborough St., Newport
July 22: Jimmy's Saloon, 37 Memorial Blvd., Newport
July 29: Gas Lamp Grille
Aug. 5: Semifinals at Billy Goode's
Aug. 12: Semifinals at Jimmy's
Aug. 19: Finals at Gas Lamp Grille

e To enter, e-mail bio, resume and application request to Tom C. Erb at RIComicThrowdown@gmail.com. Entrance fee payable at first scheduled appearance is \$10.

Feeling bookish?

Finally, something the big kids can get in on. Sure it's great when kids read during the summer but have you seen those Dr. Seuss books? You could breeze right through those faster than you can say "Cat in the Hat."

Books for adults have a lot more pages after all. But adults have less time for pleasure reading what with all that work to make money to put food on the table to feed the little kids. So how cool that the Newport Public Library has announced its "Water Your Mind" Adult Summer Reading Challenge, running from July 6-Aug. 21, open to any adult with a

library card.

Everyone who signs up can get a free packet of wild-flower seeds. Then read at least one book to qualify for weekly drawings of \$5 gift certificates to the Newport Public Library Friends Bookstore.

Read five books and complete a Summer Reading Log by Aug. 21 and be entered into a grand prize drawing for a \$50 Newport County Chamber of Commerce gift certificate good at local shops and restaurants.

So stop by the Reference Desk to sign up. Call (401) 847-8720, Ext. 208. Visit www.newportlibraryri.org.

HELLO AGAIN

THEATER REVIEW

'HELLO, DOLLY'

Directed and choreographed by Kevin P. Hill

Through July 11

Theatre By The Sea, 364 Cards Pond Road, Matunuck

BY DAVE CHRISTNER

"Hello, Dolly" is one of those classic Broadway musicals that just keeps getting better with time. And Theatre By The Sea's current production does nothing to diminish its startling success. The show doesn't age; on the contrary, it makes those of us who originally saw the show way back when feel youthful again, humming songs we know by heart and experiencing once again just how great an escape musical theater can be from the daily pressures of living in a complex world. Brilliant composers and lyricists like Jerry Herman sure have a way of making us feel good — if only for a moment.

Michael Stewart's book, based on Thornton Wilder's "The Matchmaker," chronicles a day in the life of Dolly Gallagher Levi, a widow who struggles to make a living as, among other things, a marriage broker in Yonkers, N.Y., at the turn of the 20th century. Dolly is played to perfection by Tony Award-winning actress Cady Huffman, who smoothes Dolly's rough edges with equal amounts of humor and feminine charm. Winner of a 2001 Tony for her role as Ulla in "The Producers," Huffman's comic timing is superb, and her commanding voice rocks the old barn to its foundation through a host of memorable songs.

Director and choreographer Kevin P. Hill brings a heady mix of the ridiculous and sublime to the choreography by infusing the dance numbers with a Charlie Chaplin brand of locomotion; this stylized movement works exceedingly well in a high-energy restaurant scene where the head-



It girl. Tony Award winner Cady Huffman, shown performing the title song to 'Hello Dolly' with the ensemble, pulls out all the stops as a fantastic Dolly Gallagher Levi. PHOTO BY MARK TUREK

Dolly is played to perfection by Tony Award-winning actress **Cady Huffman**, who smoothes Dolly's rough edges with equal amounts of humor and feminine charm.

waiter and staff adorned in Costume Designer Lou Bird's black-and-white uniforms flail about like the Keystone Cops. Musical director Bob Bray and lighting designer Aaron Meadow add to the fray with a lively score and helter-skelter flashes of light reminiscent of a 1920s silent movie.

Dolly, who admittedly "has always been a woman who arranges things," has her hands full as she tries to arrange marriages for a number of dissimilar clients and acquaintances including the wealthy widower Horace Vandergelder (Al Bundonis), widow Irene Molloy (Rebecca Barko), Vandergelder's niece, Ermengarde (Amanda LaMotte), Cornelius Hackl (Jason Ostrowski) and Barnaby Tucker (Jake Bridges), and, of course, herself.

Bundonis plays Vandergelder with a perfect air of

detached cynicism that fits a man looking for a housekeeper as much as a wife. His rendition of "It Takes a Woman" is a real crowd pleaser. Ostrowski and Bridges are brilliant as the Yonkers yokels who toil endlessly in Vandergelder's feed store until on a whim they follow Vandergelder and Dolly to the glittering streets of Manhattan and their lives change forever. These two actors are as adept at slapstick comedy as they are with dancing or with non-dancing in the number "Dancing," where Dolly teaches them to dance.

Rebecca Barko delivers a haunting rendition of the beautiful "Ribbons Down My Back" as Irene contemplates finding love after the loss of her husband; in the lovely duet "It Only Takes a Moment," she and Ostrowski give voice to the show's under-

lying theme of finding true love.

Kimberly V. Cox's scenic design takes you right back to turn of the century New York and Bird's costumes are nothing short of miraculous, filling the stage with yards of fabric and scores of color and styles; the leads and ensemble go through countless scene and costume changes without a hitch.

"Hello, Dolly" is more than just a show for the ages; it's a show for all ages. So take the kids along to this madcap and moving spectacle of musical theater. And maybe the best part is that you can say you saw Cady Huffman in the role of Dolly.

Dave Christner is Slocum, R.I.'s most obscure playwright and novelist.

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. (401) 782-8587. www.theatrebythesea.com.