

[theatre]

Theatre by the Sea's summer will be a real head 'Turner'

by Jim Seavor

Theatre by the Sea has brushed away the cobwebs of winter, rejuvenated the brick walkway around the gazebo, spruced up its gardens and is ready to do what it has been doing since 1933 – put on shows. This year there are four musicals.

And a Tony Award winner starring in one of them.

Monty will be going all the way and Dolly's dropping by. Everyone's favorite people-eating plant, Audrey II, is working up an appetite and a lot of dancers will be auditioning for a few jobs.

All those dancers are in *A Chorus Line* – the Pulitzer and Tony Award winning classic musical. Mitzi Hamilton, who took part in the taping sessions that led to the show and was in the original production, is directing and choreographing this one. She played Val – the dancer who

couldn't get a job until she made some physical changes.

The Theatre's Producing Artistic Director Aimee Turner returns to the stage as Cassie, the dancer who once made it big and now is looking for work in a line. Turner has played Kristine in *A Chorus Line* and Cassandra in *Cats*. On Broadway, she's been in *42nd Street*, *The Will Rogers Follies*, *My Favorite Year*, *The Goodbye Girl* and *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*.

A Chorus Line runs thru June 20.

Next comes *Hello Dolly* and she's a special Dolly. She's Cady Huffman who won the Tony Award for Best Supporting Actress playing Ulla in the original production of *The Producers*. Ulla's the Swedish maid who made life so interesting for Nathan Lane and Mathew Broderick. Huffman also received a Tony nomination for playing Ziegfeld's favorite in *The Will*

Rogers Follies. You can also see her as a regular judge on the Food Network's *Iron Chef America*.

Dolly's in town from June 23 thru July 11.

Audrey II is getting a new look for the Theatre by the Sea. You must know Audrey II. She's the exceptionally hungry plant in *The Little Shop of Horrors*. It doesn't take long before Audrey keeps growing while the cast gets smaller.

Audrey II will look different this year. She's having some work done. The Theatre by the Sea has turned to the Big Nazo folk to create a new monster plant. Why is the *Little Shop* in the old barn's lineup? Turner calls the music "endearing nostalgic" and she also likes the way it takes on what she calls "the golden age of horror."

If you've only seen the film version of *The Little Shop of Horrors*, there may be a surprise or two waiting for you on stage. The movie makers made a major

change.

The Little Shop of Horrors will be shaking things up from July 14 thru Aug 1.

And the season winds down with *The Full Monty* which, like *A Chorus Line*, is about people desperate for a job.

This time it's men who decide they'll raise some money by putting on a show – for one night only. It's not one like Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney used to do in the movies. The men plan to strip. Not just almost – all the way. That's a Full Monty.

Turner calls it a man's show. ... "about men and what it means to be a man." ... "How hard it is to be a guy." Any message? She says *The Full Monty* is about being true to yourself. We forget men judge themselves so harshly."

The Full Monty takes it off Aug 4-29.

And if you like to eat before a show or have a drink afterwards remember all you have to do is



aimee turner

head down the arbor walk and visit the restaurant.

The theatre is located amidst the corn fields at 364 Cards Pond Road, Matunuck. Call (401) 782-8587 or visit www.theatrebythesea.com

BarPlays = drama, comedy + drinks

Tonight, somewhere, a play will end. The audience and the cast will then shuffle off to the local watering hole to celebrate, complain, criticize, and question what they have seen.

The BarPlays Festival: plays set in bars placed in bars hits Providence the last two weeks in June and provides audiences (and casts) a chance to avoid that slog between the theatre and the bar after the show, bringing writers and performers to get together with the audience in a variety of drinking establishments that they likely would have found themselves in already. Over a dozen plays and other short performance pieces are on tap, all of which are set in bars. Participating

BARPLAYS FESTIVAL

Providence's premiere drinking and drama extravaganza
Runs June 14-27
Locations vary.
www.barplays.com for full schedule
No Cover, No reservations

venues include **Abe's, AS220, E & O Tap,**

Everyman Bistro, Nick-a-Nee's, Red Fez, Trinity Brewhouse, and Wild Colonial.

Even greater than the variety of venues is the variety of plays, all of which stay under the half-hour mark.

Some will grip you harder

than you'll grip your glass as you sit, mesmerized by the drama not in front of you on some stage, but right next to you. Some will be loud enough to call for another round without missing a beat. Some plays will be over before you finish your drink. The program for most nights consists of a longer one-act play paired with a couple of shorter pieces. There will also a variety of half-time entertainment to give everyone a chance to get another round.

But, whether serious or funny, whether the subject matter of each individual play is work, texting, war, fortune telling, love, bad art, friendship, betrayal, or pooping, the range of plays, along with the fact that each night includes

more than one selection guarantees something of interest for all who come out to the BarPlays Festival — as well as those people that just happen to already be in the bar.

That mix of intentional and accidental audience is one of the things that inspired the WPA to undertake this project. WPA member David Higgins describes this as "...an opportunity for artists and audience to have a different experience with each other. It brings theater to a place where people already gather. That said, it's not anything new. Beowulf, the first piece of literature written in English sets many of its scenes in a bar and was likely performed orally, in bars both before and after it was written

and many of Shakespeare's audiences were well into their cups. This project is simply one more way to present theatre as a normal, everyday thing for everyone."

BarPlays festival includes plays and performances by: **Charlotte Meehan, David Eliet, Bill McDonnell, Kevin Broccoli, Mathew Provost, David Higgins, Adara Meyers, Angela Colford, Amanda Weir, James Celenza, Leigh Hendrix, Jill Blevins, Kobun Kaluza, Mark Cook, Willa von Nostrand, and Kevin Delaney.**

Along with a variety of other entertainment from area musicians, storytellers, and improv artists.