

## Theatre By The Sea wraps up summer with *Scoundrels*

By MATT WUNSCH

**S O U T H KINGSTOWN**—This sort of thing doesn't happen very often. After waiting for friends who were stuck in New York to Rhode Island traffic for five and a half hours, we showed up at Theatre By The Sea at around 8:07 p.m. last Friday, only to see people still milling around the beautiful grounds of the Matunuck theatre.

After securing our seats for opening night of *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, we learned the show had been delayed due to a fire alarm being set off by some trickster.

The culprit? A spider, of all things!

While we were happy not to suffer the embarrassment of walking in late, the delay certainly didn't help what is the only problem with the production—its length. But if you look at the bright side, you get your money's worth.

The musical, based on the 1988 film starring Michael Caine and Steve Martin as mismatched con men working scams on the French Riviera, features the best acting of the 2009 season at TBS.

Al Bundonis stars as the classy swindler Lawrence Johnson, while Jason Gillman resumes the role of the not-so-refined Freddy Benson, a character he played in the Broadway production of *Scoundrels*. It was a stroke of genius pairing these two actors together.

Gillman proves to be a phenomenal physical comedian with his distorted facial expressions, wild and hilarious vocalizations and frantic-yet-controlled movements across the stage. He is the perfect counter to Bundonis who plays the cool, calm and collected

Lawrence.

The two dance, sing and laugh their way through a variety of scams which revolve around taking rich women for all they're worth, and promptly ditching them.

Act one features some excellent scenes including songs like "Great Big Stuff," "Chimp in a Suit," and the hysterical "All About Ruprecht," which features Gillman in some of his most outrageously funny moments. Bundonis must also be credited for making it through this scene without breaking into hysterics—he plays a perfect straight man.

The women falling for their underhanded charms include Muriel Eubanks (Stacey Geer making her debut at TBS) and Jolene Oaks (Rachel Rice in a very strong performance as tougher than most Oklahoma oil baroness). When the swindling bachelors take a wager on who can separate Christine Colgate (Lisa Yuen) from her \$50,000, that's when Lawrence and Freddy are pitted against one another.

Unfortunately, that's also when things start to drag. While Yuen holds her own throughout, she is overmatched by the other leads, and the scenes in the second act lack the punch and humor of the first half of the show. We are treated to some fine, colorful movement during "The More We Dance," for which choreographer Chris Saunders and costume designer Marcia Zammarelli deserve a tip of the hat. There's also "Love is My Legs," a fine duet from Yuen and Gillman, that played their vocal strengths.

But during the final three scenes (including an ill-conceived return to "Great Big Stuff") there was some notice-



PHOTOS BY MARK TUREK

able seat shifting going on through the crowd as the pace of the play came to a near standstill.

*Scoundrels* got a little long in the tooth by 11 p.m., but then again, part of that was the spider's fault.

### If you go

*Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* is on stage now through Sept. 6 at Theatre By The Sea, 35 Cards Pond Road, Matunuck. Tickets cost \$35 to \$49. For tickets and more information call 782-TKTS or visit [www.theatrebythesea.com](http://www.theatrebythesea.com).

*Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* is on stage now through Sept. 6 at Theatre By The Sea, 35 Cards Pond Road, Matunuck. The show stars Jason Gillman, above, as Freddy Benson and Al Bundonis, right, as Lawrence Jamison. Tickets cost \$35 to \$49.

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## SUNSET MUSIC FESTIVAL



PHOTO BY WILLIAM COOLEY



PHOTO COURTESY STAR DIRECTION MANAGEMENT

THE NANTUCKET NECTARS SUNSET MUSIC FESTIVAL featured a high energy performance last Thursday from Collective Soul, left, rocking the crowd at the Newport Yachting Center. The summer-long concert series wraps up this Friday, Aug. 21 with a performance from The Temptations, pictured above. Cadillac Martini will open the show, gates open at 5:30 p.m. For more information visit [www.newportwaterfrontevents.com](http://www.newportwaterfrontevents.com) or call 846-1600. Newport Yachting Center is located at 4 Commercial Wharf in Newport.

## Time Out Dining Out

■ A Naturalist's Journal: A chorus of cicadas

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### FRIDAY

■ **Summer Concert Series with Steve DeConti:** 7 p.m. Extraordinary jazz guitarist Steve DeConti will perform tonight at Cross' Mills Public Library, 4417 Old Post Road, Charlestown. Call 364-6211 or visit [www.crossmills.org](http://www.crossmills.org).

### SATURDAY

■ **Jungle Dogs at Ocean Mist:** 9 p.m. Ska-funk-rockers Jungle Dogs will headline a show which includes Neutral Nation and Two Guys and Another Guy this evening at Ocean Mist, Matunuck Beach Road, South Kingstown. Visit [www.oceanmist.net](http://www.oceanmist.net) or call 782-3740.

### SUNDAY

■ **Norm MacDonald:** 7:30 p.m. Comedian from "Saturday Night Live" will perform as part of the Newport Summer Comedy Series at Newport Yachting Center, Commercial Wharf, Newport. Visit [www.newportwaterfrontevents.com](http://www.newportwaterfrontevents.com).

### MONDAY

■ **Tribeca at Coast Guard House:** 3 to 7 p.m. Live music on the deck every Monday this summer from Tribeca at The Coast Guard House, Ocean Road, Narragansett.

### AUG 25 Kaleidoscope Theatre:

11 a.m. Kaleidoscope Theatre will perform "Goldilocks" at Robert's Hall Auditorium at Rhode Island College, Providence. Call the RIC Box Office at 456-8144.

### AUG 26 Trolley Car Ride:

10 a.m. Old-fashioned trolley ride through Narragansett with historical narrative by Ted Wright. 35 Ocean Road, Narragansett. For information call 782-2597 or visit [www.thetowersri.com](http://www.thetowersri.com)