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OUTBOUND

ONE MAN, TWO GUVNORS non-stop farce with Beatles inspired songs shows off Chautauqua's Conservatory depth of talent.



By Peter Hall — July 29, 2019 0 Comments 6 Mins Read

THE BASICS: ONE MAN, TWO GUVNORS a comedy by Richard Bean set in Brighton, England in 1963, updates the 1753 Carlo Goldoni farce – “The Servant of Two Masters” – and includes many Beatles-inspired songs by Grant Olding sung live by a “skiffle band” (think John Lennon in Liverpool). Directed by Andrew Borba, it runs at Chautauqua’s air-conditioned Bratton Theater almost every day through August 11 at either 2:15 p.m., 4:00, or 7:00 ([check the website](#)) and on Sunday, August 4 at both 2:15 and 8:00 p.m. Your theater ticket is your gate pass to the Institution. (Hint: check out the bookstore while you’re there!) Runtime: 2-1/2 hours with one intermission

THUMBNAIL SKETCH: Recently fired from his skiffle band (remember the story of ex-Beatle Pete Best?) where, it seems, a trombone player just didn’t fit in with the band’s “new” Beatles-inspired sound, the apparently not-too-bright but actually very inventive and always hungry Francis Henshall scrambles to find work. Through confusion and plain dumb luck, but ultimately through cleverness and a lot of pluck, our boy Francis ends up working as a combination servant-assistant-butler-gofer for two rival gangsters each of whom he addresses, in British slang for one’s employer, as “guvnor.” All the elements of a commedia-style farce are in play, with mistaken identities, disguises, sets with multiple doors and split-second entrances and exits, tons of sexual innuendo, mixing up envelopes, thwarted young love, some audience participation, but all ending with multiple future weddings, of course.



L-R Kayla Kearney and Amara Granderson in their Carnaby Street fashions

THE PLAYERS, THE PLAY, AND THE PRODUCTION: Now in his 4th season as Artistic director of the CTC (Chautauqua Theater Company) director Andrew Borba has actually been with the company for 15 years, and over those years has directed a number of commedia inspired Shakespeare plays (AS YOU LIKE IT, THE TAMING OF THE SHREW, THE COMEDY OF ERRORS, TWELFTH NIGHT) and recently the slapstick **NOISES OFF** and is able to get very even performances out of large casts.

So, here's how the CTC operates. They cast several lead roles with more experienced, professional Equity actors, here including the very high energy Alex Morf as "Francis Henshall," the man with two guvnors; Daniel Pearce (of Rochester!) as "Charlie 'The Duck' Clench," who wants his daughter "Pauline" to marry a fellow gangster for business reasons; and Michael Devin Darnall as "Harry Dangle," (yes, in the style of English humor, that's an explicit pun) a lawyer for the mob.



Alex Morf as Francis and Amara Granderson as Lola cook up some farce

All of the other roles are populated by slightly younger actors, all members of “The Conservatory.” To name a few, we have the very talented Kayla Kearney as a dead gangster’s twin sister “Rachel” who is also one of the “two guvnors;” Rishan Dhamija as “Stanley Stubbers,” the other “guvnor;” as well as Maria Gabriela Rosado González as “Pauline Clench” who is in love with “Alan Dangle” (Kieran Barry); and the clever “Dolly” (Kelsey Deroian) who has a soft spot for Francis and the equally clever “Lola” (Amara Granderson) who has great comic timing.

Kudos, as always with CTC, for the “behind the scenes” folks including Lee Savage for the deliberately “hokey” 1960s sets, Angela Calin for the embarrassingly accurate 60’s costumes (OMG, we dressed like that, didn’t we?), Scott Bolman for lighting, Rob Kaplowitz for sound, and Buffalo’s own Adriano Gatto, fight director!

And a huge round of applause to Christopher Corporandy – Voice, Speech, and Dialect Coach – for on-stage accents that were clear, distinct, and never for a second out-of-place or just cheesy imitations of, say, guys whose names might be John, Paul, George, or Ringo.



Skiffle band

Warm-up entertainment before both Acts I and II, as well as in-between scenes songs were more than ably handled by the “skiffle band” made up of actors Sofia Bunting Newman (washboard, garbage can, and actual trap set); Alexander De Vasconcelos Matos (rhythm guitar); as well as CTC Music Director (and lead guitar) Tommy Crawford; and Eastman School of Music grad, professional bassist Drew Brunson. Very impressive, especially the close-harmony singing!

At intermission a number of people remarked that, if we didn’t have a playbill with bios, you’d be hard pressed to tell the Conservatory actors, everyone operates at such a high level, which has been consistent for years at the Bratton Theater.

Photos: Greg Funka/Chautauqua Institution



WHAT'S NEXT: A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM continues one more time, free, this Wednesday, July 31 in a non-traditional setting, at the Southern Tier Brewing Company. And, as always, the "New Play Workshop" brings new American works on their way to Broadway, off-Broadway, or Regional premieres. ON THE EXHALE (August 14, 16, and 18) by Martin Zimmerman is a one-woman play with a new perspective on gun violence. AGENT 355 (August 15, 17, and 18) by Preston Max Allen and Jessica Kahkoska tells the story of six Revolutionary War women as presented by an all-female punk rock band. Again, [see the website](#) for details.

*HERD OF BUFFALO (Notes on the Rating System)

ONE BUFFALO: This means trouble. A dreadful play, a highly flawed production, or both. Unless there is some really compelling reason for you to attend (i.e. you are the parent of someone who is in it), give this show a wide berth.

TWO BUFFALOS: Passable, but no great shakes. Either the production is pretty far off base, or the play itself is problematic. Unless you are the sort of person who's happy just going to the theater, you might look around for something else.

THREE BUFFALOS: I still have my issues, but this is a pretty darn good night at the theater. If you don't go in with huge expectations, you will probably be pleased.

FOUR BUFFALOS: Both the production and the play are of high caliber. If the genre/content are up your alley, I would make a real effort to attend.

FIVE BUFFALOS: Truly superb—a rare rating. Comedies that leave you weak with laughter, dramas that really touch the heart. Provided that this is the kind of show you like, you'd be a fool to miss it!



Peter Hall

Peter Hall continues trying to figure out how "it" all works. For over 20 years, as a producer and program host on WNET Classical (94.5 FM), he's conducted over 1,000 interviews with artists as he asks them to explain, in layman's terms, "what's the big picture here?" These days Peter can be heard regularly on Sunday afternoons from 1 to 5. On "Theater Talk" (heard Friday mornings at 6:45 and 8:45 a.m. on WBFO 88.7 FM) his favorite question of co-host Anthony Chase is simply "What's goin' on?" As mentioned recently in Buffalo Spree magazine, Peter's "Buffalo Rising reviews are the no-holds barred 'everyman's' take." A member of Buffalo's Artie Awards Committee, Peter holds a B.A. in Comparative Literature from Columbia University and an M.B.A. from SUNY at Buffalo. For over twenty-five years he was an adjunct professor for Canisius College's Richard J. Wehle School of Business.