

'The Musical of Musicals' brings the work of five different Broadway composers to the Wharf Theater

By LILY DAYTON Herald Correspondent Monterey County Herald

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It's one of the oldest plots in literature: An ingénue can't pay her rent. Her villainous landlord insists on being paid. The hero steps in, pays the rent and saves the day.

Now, multiply that times five — in the style of five different Broadway composers. What you get is "The Musical of Musicals (The Musical!)," a satirical Broadway revue that will be presented locally by the Monterey Peninsula College Theatre Company.

The show opens Friday at the Bruce Ariss Wharf Theater on Old Fisherman's Wharf in Monterey. There will be a preview performance Thursday.

The opening of this production coincides with the introduction of MPC Theatre Company's new Dinner and Theatre packages, which offer prix fixe menus from Café Fina, Dominico's, Jacks and Montrio.

Directed by Gary Bolen, "The Musical of Musicals (The Musical!)" features Camila de la Llata, Maria Comstock, Jennifer L. Newman, Phyllis Davis, Mitch Davis, Tomomi Yoshida, Cole Farotte, Robb Haase, John Daniel, Adriane Oglietti and Kristin Grillo.

The creative team includes Sherri Beck (choreographer), Barney Hulse (musical director), D. Thomas Beck (technical director), Joanna Hobbs (lighting designer), Constance Gamiere (costume designer) and Ana Warner (props designer).

"This is a lot of fun because most of these composers that are being satirized are favorites of mine," said Bolen, who describes himself as Stephen Sondheim's biggest fan. "Rather than being bound to one style, I get to do (the work of) five different composers."

When the story is told the first time, it is in homage to Rodgers and Hammerstein, taking place in Kansas in the summertime and including a dream ballet.

Next, the same story is presented in the style of Sondheim, with the landlord portrayed as a tortured artist who slashes his tenants' throats because they don't appreciate his art. The story is then performed in an eye-catching homage to Jerry Herman and "Mame."

With a nod to Andrew Lloyd Webber, the tale is next told as a rock musical. In the final telling, the story is set in a "Cabaret" in "Chicago," giving tribute to Kander and Ebb.

"It's like those (artists) who do caricature," said Bolen. "The (picture) looks like the person, but an exaggerated version of the person. It's the same — we get to do Sondheim's style, but exaggerated somewhat."

"The Musical of Musicals (The Musical!)" will be the first of MPC Theatre Company's productions to be presented at the Wharf Theater, where they plan to produce the rest of their main stage shows during their extensive Theatre Arts Department renovations.

"We're rehearsing on campus, building in Sand City, then moving everything to the Wharf," said Bolen. "We're like a bus and truck company for all of our productions this season."

Speaking over the telephone from the temporary tech building in Sand City, technical director Beck said, "We build sets here, set them up, paint them and finish them, then take them apart and move them to the show. The Wharf is problematic because we can't bring any trucks with scenery down until after 9 at night. Last Saturday we were there until midnight."

But still, despite the inconvenient loading restrictions, Beck said the Wharf Theater is ideal for this production. "It's intimate," he said. "I don't think this show would work on our main stage because of the size of our stage and house. I think this will be great here."

Beck has fond memories of the Wharf Theater, since he designed the first show that was produced there in the late '70s, "Guys and Dolls."

"It's back to the future for me," he said. "It's fun."

He added that it will be interesting to see how the wharf location changes ticket sales, perhaps adding a new audience base to MPC Theatre aficionados.

"In addition to our regular season ticket holders, we might get a whole new set of people who are out on the wharf and wander in."

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THEATER OPENING

·What: The Monterey Peninsula College Theatre Company presents "The Musical of Musicals (The Musical!)"

·Where: The Bruce Ariss Wharf Theater, Wharf No. 1, Monterey

·When: Previews at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 5; opens 7:30 p.m., Friday April 6; continues at 7:30 p.m. on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, with 2 p.m. Sunday matinees, through April 29

·Tickets: \$25 general, \$22 seniors, \$15 young adults (16-21) & military, and \$10 children 15 & under; 24-hr. advance purchase \$20; online \$18 for general and seniors; available through the MPC Box Office (646-4213) Wednesdays from 3-7 p.m., Thursdays & Fridays from 3-5 p.m., at the performance venue 90 minutes prior to any performance, or online at www.TicketGuys.com; Dinner & Theatre packages \$29.95-\$39.95 per person include performance ticket and prix fixe menus from Café Fina, Dominico's, Jacks, and Montrio (price does not include gratuity, drinks or dessert); available only at the MPC Box office, and may not be available for same-day purchase

·Information: 646-4213 or www.mpctheatre.com