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Sensational Cast Revives NUNSENSE Nostalgia at Peninsula Players Theatre

By Peggy Sue Dunigan, writer for Broadway World

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When writer Dan Goggin imagined and produced his line of greeting cards featuring sassy nuns, few people would have predicted their instant success or the award-winning, full-length musical after the fact titled *Nunsense*. When the show premiered on Broadway in 1985, the *Nunsense* phenomena continued with numerous revivals and sequels, and this includes being adapted for the television screen. Fish Creek's Peninsula Players Theatre (PPT) reprises the rollicking musical from their 1987 season with a spectacular cast that shines another light on these angelic Little Sisters from Hoboken.



From left is Stephanie Wahl, Cassie Slater, Liz Pazik, Ashley Lanyon and Christine Mild

While the show's premise inspires instant comedy -- almost an entire order of sister sent to their heavenly demise by savoring the cook's tainted vichyssoise -- the real entertainment value lies in these actresses commanding the PPT stage. Scenic designer J. Branson delivers an authentic Catholic school gymnasium to evoke fond or not so fond memories where Reverend Mother Mary Regina wants to plan a benefit to raise money and bury the remaining sisters hidden in the freezer from the soup disaster.

To begin the PPT evening, the sisters wander through the audience asking questions while offering their blessings. Liz Pazik commands this dazzling cast as Reverend Mother, Sister Regina, which includes her own solos "Turn Up the Spotlight" and "An Unexpected Discovery." In a delightful duet with Sister Hubert's Cassie Slater, the two sing of convent camaraderie. This five-women cast also features Christine Mild (Sister Robert Anne), Stephanie Wahl (Sister Amnesia) and Ashley Lanyon (Sister Mary Leo), to complement each other while sharing the evening with the lonely man, Matt Super, who assists the ladies playing the stage manager. Six musicians accompany the cast, entirely visible to the audience and a treat to see perform on stage, under Musical Director Valerie Maze, hidden behind the keyboard dressed as another nun.

During the performance, Wahl gives a wonderful comic number filled with improvisation in "The Quiz," where audience participation becomes essential. In another memorable number, "Baking with the BVM (Blessed Virgin Mother," three sisters remain intensely ironic as they discuss recipes written by Mother Mary. Mild belts out "I Want to Be A Star" while she wishes to be more than an understudy in the benefit. With a show punctuated with one-liners similar to "Why did Moses wander around the desert for 40 years? Because he was a man and never asked directions," these women steal each scene directed by another gifted woman Karen Sheridan, and *Nunsense* puts a smile on everyone's face.

The musical may remind the audience of a time past, whether in a Catholic or religious school, or place of worship, where a sister or priest, pastor or teacher, enriched their real-life education. These are memories which Goggin admits he drew on in creating the "Little Sisters of Hoboken" for this rollicking two hours of fun. However, the audience's memories may not include a rendition of "The Saint Andrew Sisters" or Sister Mary Amnesia's solo "I Could Have Gone to Nashville" again sung exceptionally by Wahl in a song which inspired an entire sequel to the original show.

For the night's finale, three company numbers reprise the women's talents and demonstrate why this musical endures -- in other words, why "Nunsense is Habit Forming." Peninsula Players concludes an absolutely fabulous 2015 season filled with world premieres, comedy, drama, and heartwarming new plays directly from Broadway by renowned playwrights that ensure an 81st season. With this lighthearted goodbye to summer, Door County anticipates the 2016 season where for those theater addicts who require a little winter fix, PPT sponsors a play reading season beginning Monday, February 4 at Björklunden in Baileys Harbor. Or be sure to celebrate National Nunsense Day on February 12... Congratulations to Artistic Director Greg Vinkler, PPT and this outstanding *Nunsense* cast and crew for wrapping up an exhilarating summer set on the peninsula shore.

Peninsula Players presents NUNSENSE through October 18 to conclude the 2016 season. For additional information of performance time and tickets, please call 920.868.3287 or visit www.peninsulaplayers.com