

Arts & Leisure

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GRYMES HILL

Italian 'Fella' finds new home, romance at Wagner College

'THE MOST HAPPY FELLA'

Dates: Remaining performances are Dec. 2, 3, 4 and 5 at 8 p.m. and Dec. 5 and 6 at 2 p.m.

Where: the Main Hall Theatre at Wagner College, Grymes Hill

Where: Located in Main Hall, the WCT College Theatre

Box office hours: Monday through Friday from noon to 4 p.m.

Tickets: Single tickets are on sale with price ranges for children, senior and adult tickets; Wagner students attend free with current ID

Staten Island Advance Entertainment Desk

Love blooms in the vineyards of Napa Valley as Wagner College Theatre presents Frank Loesser's 1956 musical masterpiece "The Most Happy Fella" in the Main Hall Theatre, where it opened last weekend.

Six years after his hit "Guys and Dolls," by far his most memorable contribution to the Broadway musical canon, Loesser returned to the boards with this musical version of Sidney Howard's 1924 Pulitzer Prize winner, "They Knew What They Wanted."

Focusing on the May-December romance of Italian immigrant Tony Esposito and San Francisco waitress Rosabella, the musically eclectic score contains more than 30 songs — including Broadway standards like "Joey, Joey, Joey," "My Heart is So Full of You" and "Standing on the Corner."

The rarely performed musical, which speaks to the experience of the Italian immigrant, is being performed for the first time at Wagner College. The production features Loesser's authorized "two piano" version.

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The cast of "Most Happy Fella." (COURTESY OF KAREN O'DONNELL)

'Fella'

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In the principal role of Tony Esposito is baritone Anthony Turner, a professor of voice in Wagner's Music Department. The veteran performer has been featured in opera, musical theater, concert and orchestral performances throughout the United States and Europe, including the Next Wave Festival at Brooklyn Academy of Music, Piccolo Spoleto in Charleston, S.C., and the Barbican Festival in London.

WCT's production also features fellow Staten Island residents Jeanine Bruen (Rosabella), Joshua Sottile (Joey), and Joe O'Malley (Doctor).

WCT's "The Most Happy

Fella" is directed by Drew Scott Harris (WCT's "Carousel," "Beauty and the Beast," "Titanic"), choreographed by Sarah Tranchina ('10), with music direction by Lauri Young (WCT's "Merrily We Roll Along.") Young will be accompanied by Wendy Bobbitt Cavett, who played the 1991 Broadway revival, and recently served as Music Director for the Broadway production of "Mamma Mia!"

"The Most Happy Fella" opened at Broadway's Imperial Theatre May 3, 1956, with a cast that featured Robert Weede, Jo Sullivan and Art Lund. Opening two months after "My Fair Lady," the production won the NY Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Musical, and ran 676 performances.



Christopher Zika, Gregory Ippolito, Steven Kallas and Matthew Healey sing "Standing On the Corner" in "Most Happy Fella." (COURTESY OF KAREN O'DONNELL)