

A slice of Italian life comes to Schoolhouse Theater

'How to Bury a Saint' makes world premiere

BY SUE GUZMAN
SENIOR WRITER

A new play written by Janice Maffei and directed by Schoolhouse Artistic Director Bram Lewis makes its debut June 2 at the Schoolhouse Theater in Croton Falls, in a show that will run through June 19.

Bocce, meatballs, nerve and ritual are all in the mix in *How to Bury a Saint*. The fictional "dramedy" is set in Mahopac and tells the story of three generations of the Colasuanno family—Italian-Americans with roots in Calabria.

Maffei was sparked to write *Saint* as a result of a 2013 controversy at a Brooklyn bocce club that refused to allow women to become voting members. When interviewed by the *New York Times*, a member of the bocce club explained the rationale for keeping the club all-male: "I want to play comfortable. I want to be able to scratch myself and play like the barbarian I am."

In the story, Patsy is the matriarch, and wants to join the bocce



PHOTO COURTESY OF SCHOOLHOUSE THEATER

Playwright Janice Maffei's new play makes its debut June 2 at The Schoolhouse Theater.

club, but it's for 'men only.' She is the "nonna" or grandmother to Louis, who drives the flower car for a local funeral home and lacks a sense of deeper purpose. Patsy is troubled by her grandson's failure to launch and is convinced he's the victim of the "evil eye" and in need of a malocchio

ritual to remove the curse. Patsy's daughter Lucy wants both her mother's meatball recipe and some respect. Facing off with the family is Sal Cetrullo, the president of the bocce club, Javier the Panamanian plumber who is Lucy's live-in boyfriend, and Ashley Bevilacqua, who is Louis' love interest.

For Maffei, it was also the story of her own family. A proud Italian-American, the playwright was raised in a family where her mother made excellent meatballs that no one can replicate to this day.

When her mother died in 1991 without handing down the official recipe, the question of how to keep a tradition alive, yet move beyond it, resonated with her. How are family traditions

preserved and carried on? How do you acquire a meatball recipe, learn to dance the tarantella, or be a girl and get to play bocce? How are new traditions created as the family circle expands through marriage between different faiths and cultures?

The play delves deeply into what it means to be a family and how identities are preserved and carried on. It will have the audience thinking about gender issues in their own family and considering how what happens in the home sets the course for women in the world.

For director Bram Lewis, the production will be "A full meal, something the theater will serve up for us all to digest. We'll have a lot for the audience to relish in terms of the frail and silly. We'll

get a chance to open up and examine our own values and then discuss it at a talk back after each Sunday show." The audience can also expect to be treated to the sounds of Louie Prima, Connie Francis and Dean Martin, and maybe even a game of bocce.

Show times June 2-19 are Thursdays through Saturdays at 8:00 pm and Sundays at 3:00 pm. Individual tickets for main stage productions are \$38. Senior citizen discount tickets are \$35 and student tickets are available at \$15. They can be purchased online at www.schoolhousetheater.org or by calling the box office at 914-277-8477. The Schoolhouse is located at 3 Owens Road, Croton Falls, NY, just off exit 8 on I-684.



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