

'Fiddler on the Roof'

'Golde' Starts New 'Tradition' With Her First National Tour

By PHYLLES R. SIGAL
Design Editor

When Nancy Evans looks in the mirror, she sees her great-grandmother.

That's how authentic the costumes are for the touring production of "Fiddler on the Roof," coming to the Capitol Theatre, at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 10.

Evans plays Golde, the matriarch of the Jewish family at the center of the popular musical, which includes such songs as "Tradition," "Matchmaker," "If I Were a Rich Man," "To Life" and "Sunrise, Sunset."

Evans can relate to the role she's playing, as her own grandparents and great-grandparents are from Russia.

In fact, her grandfather hid under his bed, just 5 years old, as a pogrom was taking place outside his door. She first saw the show with her grandmother, when she was in junior high in 1965 in Richmond, Va., where she grew up.

The story is about Tevya, the patriarch; Golde; and their five daughters, living in Anatevka, Russia. It takes place in the early part of the 1900s, when the tsar evicts the Jews from their village.

Evans noted that while the play itself is about life in a village, the "29 people on stage become a village," she said. As her relationships grow with the cast members, the words she says on stage ring even more true.

"The words have meaning, they are truthful at that moment. ... When I'm singing to my 'daughters' or blessing them."

She also pointed out that she and John Prece, who plays Tevya, have a wonderful rapport, and it "comes across on stage." Prece has performed the role somewhere between 1,500-1,600 times in nine national tours.

Evans, on the other hand, is on her first national tour.

Having just celebrated her 59th birthday, Evans has been doing professional theater only since 2007, having been involved in opera for many years before that. She received a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in fine arts from Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, where she studied opera.

Prior to this tour, she has done regional theater around the country and in Canada.



NANCY EVANS

Being on a national tour, she said, "is pretty fabulous. I'd never done a show more than 60 times; now I've done this one about 90," — with about another 100 to go before the tour ends.

"I'm working with extremely talented actors. And I've learned a tremendous amount as an actor and as a person," she said.

For example, she's learned "how much you can do when you need to," "how to get

along with a big group of strangers who become such close friends" and how to juggle relationships. During her opera career, she was never gone more than six or eight weeks at a time; now she's away from home for months.

"I've learned how to keep things fresh, how to give an audience something new," she said.

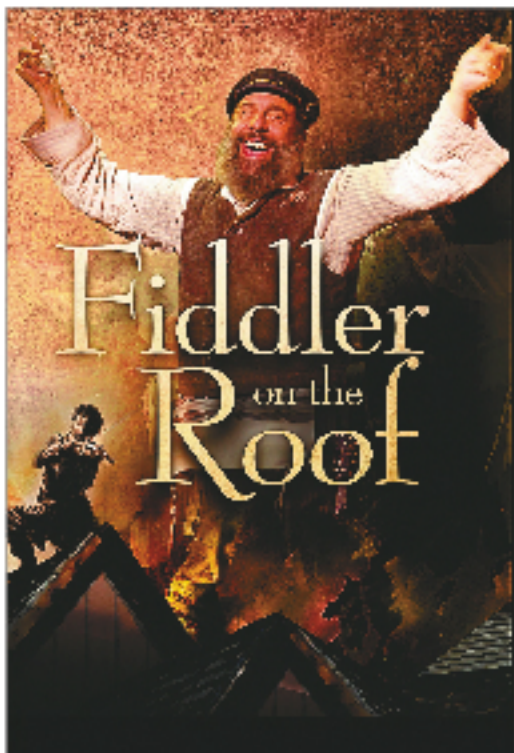
"I love performing," she noted. This particular role, she said, is "fantastic. It's straight drama. It's got emotional, demanding moments. I sing and dance a little bit. This role is not boring; there's so much to do. She's so three-dimensional; you can really sink your teeth into her."

Is it her favorite role?

"Whatever I'm working on at the time is my favorite," she said.

And she loves "Fiddler."

"The story, the music, the people. ...



"It's as meaningful today as the day it was written. Because it's historical, it doesn't go out of style," she said.

The show was written in 1964 and opened in 1965, winning nine Tony Awards that year, including best musical, best actor (Zero Mostel), featured actress (Miriam Karlinova), author (Joseph Stein), producer (Harold Prince), director (Jerome Robbins), composer and lyricist (Jerry Bock and Sheldon Harnick), costume designer (Patricia Zipprodt) and choreographer (Jerome Robbins.)

"The songs stand up on their own," she said. In fact, Evans noted that her daughter came to see it for the first time, and she knew all the songs.

"People leave singing the show," she said. "I wish everybody comes! We'll make 'em laugh and cry," she promises.

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• "Fiddler on the Roof," 7:30 p.m., Feb. 10, at the Capitol Theatre. For tickets, stop by WesBanco Arena box office, 14th Street, Wheeling, call 800-745-300 or purchase tickets online at www.Ticketmaster.com.