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# 'Guys & Dolls' brings Damon Runyan characters to life in park ampitheater

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night, June 20 and continues Wed.-Sat. through June  
28 at 8:30 p.m.

*Bob Compton and courtesy of Shawnee Mission's Theatre in the  
Park*

## "Guys & Dolls" at Theatre in the Park

Rating: ★★★★★

The quintessential 1950s New York musical

comedy, “**Guys & Dolls**” opened June 20 at Shawnee Mission Park’s **Theatre in the Park** with a nostalgic retrospect of the monumental musical by Frank Loesser, that contains a string of hits well-known from that time.

Based on the colorful



*Bob Compton and courtesy of Shawnee Mission's Theatre in the Park*

characters of Damon Runyon, the story focuses on two couples, Nathan Detroit and his fiancée of 14 years, Miss Adelaide; and big-time gambler, Sky Masterson, and Miss Sarah Brown of the Save-a-Soul Mission. As the story unfolds, the audience watches with amusement the laments of Miss Adelaide as she tries to drag Nathan Detroit to the altar. To complicate matters, Nathan Detroit has wagered Sky Masterson that he cannot get Miss Sarah Brown to accompany him on a date. Complications and mishaps keep the story moving along toward a long expected resolution and happy ending.

Give lots of credit to the cast and crew for this rendition of “**Guys & Dolls.**” The show is a monster to produce effectively. The story is charming, as are the characters. The many scenes, the many musical numbers, the large cast, and all the cumbersome set changes always cause the show to run long and get tiresome before reaching its end. **Theatre in the**

**Park** did a beautiful job of re-creating this well loved masterpiece.

The show is a hit and a success as it plays at **Theatre in the Park**. Audiences know so many of the songs featured in this musical score. Expect to hear such songs as “The Oldest Established Permanent Floating Crap Game,” “I’ll Know,” “Bushel and a Peck,” “Guys & Dolls,” “If I Were a Bell,” “I’ve Never Been in Love Before,” “Luck be a Lady,” “Sit Down You’re Rockin’ the Boat,” and others.

The acting singing and dancing were all worthy of note. Exceptional performances came from Brian Shortess as Sky and Franci Talamantez as Adleaide. Their acting, stage presence, and vocal performances stood out among the exceptionally strong cast. Next, the comedic and frantic Nathan Detroit, came to life in the capable hands of Chad Burriss while the female lead of Sarah Brown stood out for the amazing soprano of Alexandra Addington. Joell Ramsdell, as Nicely-Nicely Johnson, provided some good comedic timing and some fun musical numbers.

Overall, “**Guys & Dolls**” provides a fun evening in the park. The beautiful amphitheater catches the winds as soon as the sun begins to set. Any gentle breeze allows the fans to be comfortable while entertained. Shawnee Mission’s **Theatre in the Park** has grown consistently year after year, and now provides a beautiful setting with a large stage and a crystal-clear sound system.

Everyone who attends will enjoy this version of “**Guys & Dolls**.” It’s a step back into a bygone era in a kinder and gentler America.

It is the script itself that causes the show to slow down so much. The creative team did what they could to keep the show moving along as fast as it can be moved. They deserve lots of credit and applause for their effort and success in producing “**Guys & Dolls.**”

The creative team that produced “**Guys & Dolls**” includes: Hank Koehn, director; Randy Schott, vocal director & conductor; Carolyn Braverman, choreographer; Kaelyn Kreicbergs, stage manager; Rand Anderson, assistant stage manager; Sam Kalmus, assistant stage manager; Amy Crouse, accompanist; Libby Irving, costume coordinator; Beth Nugent, props coordinator; Tammy Kaiser, scenic designer.

The cast for “**Guys & Dolls**” includes: Brian Shortess Sky Masterson; Alexandra Addington Sarah Brown; Chad Burris, Nathan Detroit; Franci Talamantez, Ms. Adelaide; Joell Ramsdell, Nicely-Nicely Johnson; Jason Derryberry, Benny Southstreet; Ryan Casey, Rusty Charlie; David Anderson, Big Jule; Mike Brown, Lt. Brannigan ; J.P. Helder, Arvide Abernathy; Debbie Blinn, General Cartwright; Don Leonard, Harry The Horse; Kristoph Gies, Calvin; Nicholas Perry, Joey Biltmore; Mauricio Lozano, Master of Ceremonies; Frankie Baker, Crapshooter/Havana Dancer, Liver Lips Louie, Lookout; Nicholas Perry, The Greek; Jim Morre Crapshooter, Society Max; Mauricio Lozano, Angie the Ox; Spencer Gochis, Brandy Bottle Bates; Ed Downes, Scranton Slim, crapshooter, the Hot Box Waiter; Hot Box Girls: Lauren Dunkak, Abby Sharp, Emmy Hadley, Alexis Leikam, Stephanie Ainsworth, Mission Band: Agatha, Cat Larrison; Martha, Emily Blackwell.

“**Guys & Dolls**” continues Wednesday through Saturday for one more week at Shawnee mission Park’s **Theatre in the Park**. For more information go to their website:  
[www.theatreinthepark.org](http://www.theatreinthepark.org)

## **SUGGESTED LINKS**

- 'Chitty Chitty Bang Bang' soars to entertain Kansas City audience
- Disney’s live action ‘Cinderella-Kids’ delights audiences
- Headbangers unite in Starlight’s rockin’ production of 'We Will Rock You'
- Famed antiquities expert appears at Union Station's King Tut exhibit
- Explosive energy propels ‘Lysistada Jones’ in Midwest debut for Egads! Theatre



**Bob Evans**

Kansas City Performing Arts Examiner