

Sassy and vibrant musical entertainment at its best



By [Daniel Dercksen](#)

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Musicals are the lifeblood of entertainment and judging by the spontaneous response from its opening weekend audience and rousing ovations, *Guys and Dolls* is a winner. This lavish new production of the hit Broadway and West End musical, which has wowed audiences for more than 70 years, is staged by Cape Town's Gilbert and Sullivan Society, a firm favourite with musical theatre audiences that always guarantees an evening filled with song and dance and wholesome entertainment.



Guys and Dolls is no exception and from its stirring opening it is clear that nothing can stop the passion and fervour of the delightful cast and the orchestra conducted by Bill Holland, whose skilful musical direction brings the music to life in all its glory. It's refreshing to walk into a theatre and hearing an orchestra warming up in the pit, a sure-fire mood setter if ever there was one. Getting in tune is a great way of getting into the mood of the song-and-dance routines to follow.

An electrifying energy

It's a vibrant production, driven by an electrifying energy that runs through the cast and spills over into the audience, which responds eagerly to the wit and humour of Fran Loeser's catchy music and lyrics, and Jo Swerling and Abe Burrows' witty text.

It's a large-ensemble cast and the action and interaction between the characters, the mayhem of the playful cat-and-mouse games, and wooing and charming the gorgeous gals, result in an evening filled with tons of hilarity.

It's musicals like *Guys and Dolls* that serve as a reminder of why we go to the theatre and why it is so catchy: it's easy to sit back and let the musical wash over you and easily become embroiled in a world that razzles and dazzles with vigour and vitality. No matter how gloomy you might feel, or what a day from hell you had at the office, spending time with friends and family with the cast of *Guys and Dolls* turns bad times into good times and you really look forward to living that life that explodes on stage once the curtain lifts. Having a good time is what it is all about and it's definitely worth gambling on *Guys and Dolls*.

Universal appeal



Guys and Dolls is a musical that is universal in its appeal, directed and choreographed with heartfelt honesty by Kyla Thornburn, who makes the most of every moment and gives the cast a great platform to shine.

Set in the "jungle of sin" that is New York in the 1930s, it essentially deals with the shady world of gamblers and gangsters who throw the dice and charm the dolls. At its heart there are two thrilling romances: a 14-year-old relationship between Nathan Detroit, a skilled gambler, and Miss Adelaide, a nightclub performer, which desperately needs to be resolved. There's also a blossoming but niggling first-love encounter between the cunning Sky Masterson, a gambler willing to take betting to the extreme, and the guiltless Sarah Brown, a pious sergeant in the Save-A-Soul Mission with very set ideas about the immortal nature of gambling.

Guys and Dolls does what only full-blooded musical can deliver unashamedly with absolute enjoyment, some great melodies that result in cheerful song and energetic dance routines that most definitely turns any frown upside down.

Laura Bosman is an absolute delight with her show-stealing performance as Miss Adelaide, well supported by an equally enjoyable Andrew Weiss and Wesley Figaji, alternating as Nathan Detroit. Bosman's Adelaide's Lament will have you laughing with joy and her delivery of A Bushel And A Peck and Take Back Your Mink with the female dancing chorus is superb. Andrew Weiss and Wesley Figaji draw full emotion out of their touching Sue Me in their plucky duet with Bosman.

Remarkably robust showstopper



Werner Viln makes a striking Sky Masterson, causing plenty of sighs from admirers in the audience, and delivers a sensitive rendition of 'My Time of Day' and remarkably robust showstopper 'Luck Be a Lady' with the male chorus. Vocally, Sian Atterbury and Jennifer Moss are equally memorable in their sharing role of Sarah Brown, delivering stirring duets with Viln (I'll Know and I've Never Been In Love Before). Another great performance comes from Clifford Graham, whose characterisation of Lieutenant Brannigan is spot on and offers much amusement as he desperately tries to maintain law and order, whilst secretly wanting to be with the

"guys and dolls" who are his real family.

If you are looking for entertainment that delivers what it promises, and more, make sure to take a bet on Guys and Dolls, it's a winner. You are guaranteed to leave the theatre whistling Sit Down, You're Rockin' The Boat, a huge rollicking musical ensemble number that perfectly captures the world of Guys and Dolls, a world where entertainment rules the game, and fun fuels the action.

Guys and Dolls is now playing at the Artscape Theatre until 10 November. Booking is at [Computicket](#) or Artscape Dial-a-Seat on +27 (0)21 421 7695.

Behind the scenes

Guys and Dolls was conceived by producers Cy Feuer and Ernest Martin as an adaptation of Damon Runyon's short stories. The stories, written in the 1920s and 1930s, concerned gangsters, gamblers, and other characters of the New York underworld. Runyon was known for the unique dialect he employed in his stories, mixing highly formal language and slang. Frank Loesser, who had spent most of his career as a lyricist for movie musicals, was hired as composer and lyricist. When the first version of the show's book, written by Jo Swerling, was deemed unusable, Feuer and Martin asked radio comedy writer Abe Burrows to write a new version of the book. Loesser had already written much of the score to correspond with the first version of the book. Burrows later recalled: "Frank Loesser's 14 songs were all great and the [new book] had to be written so that the story would lead into each of them. Later on, the critics spoke of the show as 'integrated'. The word integration usually means that the composer has written songs that follow the storyline gracefully. Well, we accomplished that but we did it in reverse."

The premiere on Broadway was in 1950 where it ran for 1200 performances and won the Tony Award for Best Musical and has since had many Broadway and London revivals, as well as a 1955 film adaptation starring Marlon Brando, Jean Simmons, Frank Sinatra and Vivian Blaine (the role of Miss Adelaide was created for her on stage).

Read more about Guys and Dolls at www.writingstudio.co.za/page1746.html

ABOUT DANIEL DERCKSEN

Daniel Dercksen has been a contributor for Lifestyle since 2012. As the driving force behind the successful independent training initiative The Writing Studio and a published film and theatre journalist of 40 years, teaching workshops in creative writing, playwriting and screenwriting throughout South Africa and internationally the past 22 years. Visit www.writingstudio.co.za
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