

## Theatre Review: "Buyer & Cellar"

By Kevin M. O'Toole

On occasion, my wife and I have examined the contents of the basement in our home and pondered how a little reorganization might make a world of difference. If one is the singer and stage and movie actress Barbra Streisand with a seemingly unlimited budget, one might take it up another few notches. In a 2010 coffee table tome about the construction and appointment of her home in Malibu, California, with actor James Brolin, the diva detailed how in her basement, she recreated a slew of actual shops that contained the antiques, costumes and mountains of accumulated memorabilia of an established star.

In "Buyer & Cellar," playwright Jonathan Tolins imagines that an out-of-work actor, Alex More, is hired to be the one and only clerk at this peculiar shopping mall for only one customer who already owns everything in it. Weston Playhouse Theatre Company's production of this quirky Off Broadway hit is both hilarious and touching.

As explained by Director Steve Stettler in a talk prior to the opening night performance, actor Kyle Branzel portrays Alex More, but also the actor portraying him who delivers a humorous legal disclaimer to insulate playwright Tolins from possible litigation from Streisand. Everything taken from Streisand's book, "My Passion for Design," is true. The rest is all fervent, observant fiction.

Kyle Branzel was disarming as the actor who opens the show, together with Alex More, his catty boyfriend, the character of Barbra Streisand, her husband and pretentious underlings. Playing multiple characters is nothing new to the talented Branzel, who was required to do just that in last season's production of "Murder for Two." Once again, each characterization was so complete that the audience never got mixed up as to who was who.

The show was not performed, however, as some sort of parlor trick. There was no attempt to mimic Streisand mannerisms or her particular way of speaking. Branzel's performance was conversational in tone. While acknowledging the weirdness of it all, it offered an affectionate portrait of two people from disparate backgrounds trying to connect.

Brian Dudkiewicz's monochromatic set underlined the emphasis on story. The slats in the walls allowed Lighting Designer Amith Chandrashaker to employ different colored projections of light to signify changes of scene.

Performances of "Buyer & Cellar" continue at WPTC's alternative stage at the air-conditioned Weston Rod and Gun Club through September 3. For ticket information, call the WPTC box office at [\(802\) 824-5288](tel:8028245288) or visit its website at [www.westonplayhouse.org](http://www.westonplayhouse.org).

"Buyer & Cellar" marks the final production at the Weston Rod and Gun Club. Future productions will be staged at the Weston Playhouse and beginning next season, at WPTC's new digs at Walker Farm a stone's throw down Route 100.