

# Flower power makes lonely Christmas Eve magical

By **CAROL R. EMMENS**  
Special to the Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Christmas is a magical time of year — unless you are lonely like Ethel Pahoni in the play “Magic Flowers.”

On Christmas Eve in Manhattan, Ethel buys a cheap bottle of wine, preparing to spend the holiday alone; she also buys flowers from a persistent street seller who describes them as magic and sure to bring her love.

Kerry Graffitti described her character as “a cynical young copywriter intent on spending Christmas Eve alone but her evening is spoiled by the arrival of her co-worker, Ralph Adams.” He unexpectedly shows up in an unexpected way with a bottle of champagne.

On the surface, Ethel vehemently dislikes Adams (Gordon Palagi). But

internally she is conflicted, which is a popular theme in literature and drama as well as real life.

“Ethel is very guarded, especially when it comes to love and relationships. As a result, she tries to block Ralph’s advances despite what feelings she may have for him,” Graffitti said. “She struggles with whether or not she can trust Ralph with her heart and whether he’s worth the risk.”

At first, his kisses are resisted and, of course, they continue.

Actors perform a wide variety of roles whether they are like the character or the opposite. In “Magic Flowers,” Graffitti does relate to Ethel.

“One can easily see that Ethel has been damaged by rejection, in regards to love and work. Despite this, she remains a strong-

willed, intelligent and witty individual who takes pride in her ability to please herself,” she said. “As a single woman in my early thirties, I’ve gone on my share of dates with men of all sorts and had both rewarding and disastrous relationships.”

“You get to the point where you wonder if it’s worth the trouble and pain to develop any type of relationship and so you rely on yourself, above all,” Graffitti continued. “And when you’ve had your guard up for so long, it’s certainly going to take something very special to bring it down.”

Perhaps magic flowers? By comparison, Palagi is not very much like Adams.

“I don’t think there is anything close to what I’ve done that compares to the grandiosity that Ralph exhibits,” he said. “But it’s a light-hearted comedy so the more

Ralph is out there, the more we like him. Climbing up the wall of a building with a bottle of champagne is wild, but in Ralph’s head, they’re in love. They may bicker but true feelings are there. Right? Since he knows and the audience knows that he could, and very probably will fail, there is a really brisk tension to the play. The role of Ralph is fun to perform.”

Director and playwright

Bill Sterritt was inspired to write the play “Magic Flowers” by his personal experience.

“I had a lonely Christmas during my first year in Carnegie-Mellon graduate school and I used to take the MBA in Boston to classes,” he said. “At the T stop a man was selling flowers he claimed were magic flowers. I built the story from there.”

The result is a sweet co-

medic award-winning one-act play. It has been produced in theaters across the county and is a perfect way to add magic to the holiday season.

Performances are 2 p.m. Saturdays and 1 p.m. Sundays from Dec. 1-23 at the Marquee de Lafayette Hotel, 501 Beach Ave. in Cape May. Tickets are \$10 and available at the door or in advance at eventbrite.com or goldstar.com.

## Bashaw to be recognized for efforts in restaurant, hospitality industries

CAPE MAY — The New Jersey Restaurant and Hospitality Association named Curtis Bashaw, owner of industry leader Cape Resorts, the winner of its 2018 Gold Plate Award.

Cited for contributions to the industry and his community, Bashaw will accept the award at the organization’s 38th annual gala Dec. 3 at Caesars Atlantic City Hotel & Casino.

Bashaw has been a stalwart in southern New Jersey hospitality for nearly four decades. His company, Cape Resorts, operates a collection of classic hotels, award-winning restaurants, unique shops and Beach Plum Farm, a 62-acre farm that provides its restaurants with produce and meats. About 73,000 guests stay at one of Cape Resorts’ eight local properties, and 450,000 people dine at one of its five restaurants annually.

“This award to Curtis is long overdue,” NJRHA President Marilou Halvorsen said. “For many years, he has been a driving force in transform-

ing South Jersey’s hospitality landscape and continues to elevate its stature as a top culinary destination.

“Curtis has a long-range vision for Cape May’s culinary future. He employs many of the next generation of local hospitality talent. He also promotes sustainable farming in West Cape May, where many of his farm-to-table offerings are home-grown.”

Cape Resorts’ properties consistently garner top restaurant honors. Most recently, Wine Spectator bestowed its 2017 Award of Excellence on The Ebbitt Room at the Virginia Hotel; THRILLIST named the Rusty Nail at the Beach Shack one of the Top Beach Bars in the Country; and New Jersey Monthly’s 25th Annual Readers’ Choice Awards recognized the Blue Pig Tavern at Congress Hall for Best Lunch in South Jersey, The Ebbitt Room for Best Romantic Dining and the Brown Room at Congress Hall for Best Bar Scene.

“I am pleased and hon-

ored to have played a part in South Jersey’s emergence as a culinary center,” Bashaw said. “Cape May has an incredibly talented culinary community that has given people yet another reason to visit, and it has been tremendously rewarding for me to work alongside so many truly amazing colleagues.”

The hospitality group also embraces community service. Each year, it donates services to dozens of civic groups, schools and youth organizations to help them fundraise for needed projects. It also stages many community events that are free to the public.

Bashaw has been active on numerous local and state boards and committees throughout his career, championing such issues as city planning, economic development, and arts and education. He also founded and serves as president of The Fund for Cape May, a volunteer group formed to preserve and beautify the city and foster citizenship initiatives, resulting, most recently, in the renovation of Rotary Park.



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