



Ash Flanders in Melbourne Theatre Company's *Buyer And Cellar*.

BARBRA'S BASEMENT

Barbra Streisand is bona-fide bonkers, right? Creep beneath her house in the one-man play, ***Buyer And Cellar*** to find out!

IF YOU'RE A FAN of Barbra Streisand, you know she has won ten Grammy Awards, two Oscars, is something of a diva, and has a mall under her Malibu home! Strange as it sounds, the last part is actually true, and is the basis for the award-winning play *Buyer And Cellar*.

Written by playwright Jonathan Tolins (who once wrote for *Queer As Folk*), *Buyer And Cellar* is the story of Los Angeles actor, Alex More, who lands a job as caretaker for Ms Streisand's subterranean basement. To give things a little more perspective, a few years ago Barbra Streisand had a custom-made underground cobblestoned Victorian-era lane built under her house. This little mini-mall has ye olde-style shops full of her collectibles – costumes, dolls, antiques and even a lolly shop!

It all came to light when Babs published her book *My Passion For Design* in 2010, detailing her eccentric renovations, which also included a little lake with a run-of-the-mill waterwheel! All

at Juilliard, Urie won several awards for his work in Bab's cellar including the 2013 Drama Desk Award. Since then the role has also been played by Christopher J Hanke (*Big Love*) and Barrett Foa (*NCIS*).

A new production has made its way to the Melbourne Theatre Company (MTC), directed by Gary Abrahams with Green Room Award winner Ash Flanders filling the shoes of Alex. Considering it's a role New York critics have labeled "crazy, award-winning fantasia", they are certainly big shoes to fill. Flanders doesn't let anyone down. As mentioned last issue, the Flanders has built a credible reputation with the Melbourne fringe group Sisters Grimm. Considering the energy and sheer talent needed for this one-man show, which takes on everyone from Alex, his boyfriend Barry, James Brolin and Streisand herself, Flanders is perfectly cast.

Bear in mind, though, that this is not a Streisand

“ Streisand has a custom-made, underground, cobblestoned, Victorian-era laneway built under her house. ”

of this is the irresistible setting in which the play is based.

Buyer And Cellar revolves around an out-of-work actor who gets to meet and become a part of Streisand's world. It's camp, fantasy and farce. In fact, the premise for the play began when in real life, Tolins met the diva herself at one of his productions. She offered him her Kit Kat bar, which he regrettably passed up, and now through something of a cathartic experience, he has written this show, which has won awards and critical praise.

Originating the role of Alex was Michael Urie, best known for his work in *Angels In America* and television's *Ugly Betty*. Having studied

impersonation in the style of Carla DelVillaggio. Nor are there any props – well, except for a lone symbolic Kit Kat. What the actor brings to the role is an impressive illusion built on mannerisms, nuances and tinges that bring Barbra and her Malibu faux shop laneway into live theatre.

This time last year the MTC ran the one-woman show *I'll Eat You Last* starring Miriam Margolyes. In a similar vein, *Buyer And Cellar*, which *The New York Observer* called a "small masterpiece" is set to sell out fast.

MORE: *Buyer And Cellar* runs until December 12 at Melbourne's Fairfax Studio. Visit www.mtc.com.au