

April 5, 2016
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DRAG COMEDY STAR VARLA JEAN MERMAN'S "BIG BLACK HOLE" CIRCLES INTO BROWARD CENTER'S ORBIT ON APRIL 21

FORT LAUDERDALE – Mark Cortale presents **Varla Jean Merman**, drag comedy sensation and star of the classic cult film *Girls Will Be Girls*, as she brings her *Big Black Hole* to the Amaturo Theater at the Broward Center for the Performing Arts on Thursday, April 21 at 8:30 p.m.

Described as hilariously funny, the show ventures to a galaxy far, far away with one of America's top drag stars in this musical and comedic romp around the universe. Jeffery Roberson stars as Varla Jean Merman and Gerald Goode is on piano. "Boldly go where thousands of men have gone before" in this hilarious new space odyssey cabaret with warp-speed wit and out-of-this-world wonder. Merman returns to the Broward after hosting Lea DeLaria's show at the Parker Playhouse in February.

Merman is the purported love child of Ethel Merman and Ernest Borgnine. After a typically busy past couple of years starring to critical acclaim as the title roles in the original musical comedy farces *Mildred Fierce* in Boston, *Scrooge in Rouge* in New Orleans, Menotti's opera *The Medium* in New York, and her new show *Twice Upon A Mattress... Will My Prince Ever Come?* at The Art House in Provincetown, she also debuted her first show on London's West End in a decade with her popular hit *The Book of Merman*. The daffy diva-turned-author described her hit show as being "equal parts pop-up book, scratch 'n sniff, and Braille" as she invited audiences to "see, smell and finger her life story."

Roberson aka Varla Jean Merman starred recently Off-Broadway in the musical *Lucky Guy* opposite Leslie Jordan at the Little Shubert, prompting *The New York Times* to write "If Carol Burnett and Harvey Korman had stood in front of the right pair of funhouse mirrors, they might have resembled Ms. Merman and Mr. Jordan in stature as well as comedic talent." He played the role of Mary Sunshine in the revival of *Chicago* on Broadway and in 2010 won Boston's Elliot Norton Award for Best Musical Performance in the *Phantom of the OPRAH*. He returned to Boston to star as Mother Superior in SpeakEasy Stage's *The Divine Sister* by Charles Busch. As Merman, he has filled concert halls and cabarets across the world including the Sydney Opera House, Carnegie Hall, the Public Theater, London's Soho Theatre, LA's Renberg Theatre, and San Francisco's Victoria Theatre. He recently completed shooting the feature films *Girls Will Be Girls 2012* and *Varla Jean and the Mushroomheads*, which played the 2012 festival circuit. He made his network television debut on *All My Children*, guest starred as Merman in *Ugly Betty*'s final season and on Bravo's *Project Runway* Season 5 as the winning model for the show's drag challenge.

Tickets are \$35-\$45 with \$75 VIP seats that include a meet and greet. Ticketmaster is the only official ticketing service of the Broward Center, Parker Playhouse and affiliated venues. Buy tickets online at BrowardCenter.org or Ticketmaster.com; by phone at 954-462-0222; in person at Ticketmaster outlets or the Broward Center's AutoNation Box Office. Know who you are buying from when you purchase tickets. We CANNOT PROVIDE REFUNDS OR CUSTOMER SERVICE for tickets purchased from unauthorized sites, brokers or secondary ticket sellers.

The Broward Center for the Performing Arts is located in the Riverwalk Arts & Entertainment District at 201 SW Fifth Avenue in Fort Lauderdale.

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All dates, programs and artists are subject to change.

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CALENDAR BRIEF: Mark Cortale presents **Varla Jean Merman's *Big Black Hole*** written and starring Jeffery Roberson and featuring Gerald Goode at the piano on **Thursday, April 21 at 8:30 p.m.** The show ventures to a galaxy far, far away with one of America's top drag stars in this musical and comedic romp around the universe. Tickets are \$35-\$45 with \$75 VIP seats that include a meet and greet. Ticketmaster is the only official ticketing service of the Broward Center, Parker Playhouse and affiliated venues. Buy tickets online at BrowardCenter.org or Ticketmaster.com; by phone at 954-462-0222; in person at Ticketmaster outlets or the Broward Center's AutoNation Box Office. The Broward Center for the Performing Arts is located in the Riverwalk Arts & Entertainment District at 201 SW Fifth Avenue in Fort Lauderdale.

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About The Broward Center for the Performing Arts

The Broward Center for the Performing Arts is one of America's premier performing arts venues. Presenting more than 700 performances each year to more than 700,000 patrons, the Center showcases a wide range of exciting cultural programming and events, and offers one of the largest arts-in-education programs in the United States, serving more than 150,000 students annually. The Broward Performing Arts Foundation, Inc. receives and maintains funds to sustain, develop and secure the future of the Broward Center. The Broward Center for the Performing Arts is located in the Riverwalk Arts & Entertainment District at 201 SW Fifth Ave. in Fort Lauderdale. For more information, visit BrowardCenter.org.

The Riverwalk Arts & Entertainment Consortium is a cultural partnership between the Broward Center for the Performing Arts, Bonnet House Museum & Gardens, NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale, Florida Grand Opera, Fort Lauderdale History Center and the Historic Stranahan House Museum. It is supported by the Broward County Board of County Commissioners as recommended by the Broward Cultural Council and the Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau. Programs are sponsored in part by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, the Florida Council on Arts and Culture.