

"REVOLUTIONARY ... WHITMANESQUE" —ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY



## SQUEEZE BOX

The Award-winning runaway smash Off-Broadway hit produced by Anne Bancroft!

"HILARIOUS AND HEARTFELT" — THE NEW YORK TIMES

Squeeze Box — a solo comic tour de force by and starring Ann Randolph directed by Susan Forbes

"Elevates the spirit" — Minneapolis Star Tribune  
"Wickedly Hysterical" — Los Angeles Times  
"Flawless!" — Toronto Star  
"She plays many characters ... and she is BRILLIANT!" — Mel Brooks

presented by



February 2-19 at Alleyway Theatre  
buy online at [alleyway.com](http://alleyway.com)



# THEATERWEEK

BY ANTHONY CHASE

## Dame Edna: Back With A Vengeance

Dame Edna may be unfamiliar to many people in the Buffalo entertainment market, but her visit to Shea's is an historic event. Created by performer Barry Humphries in the 1950s, Dame Edna began as an Australian housewife who annihilated right-wing causes by supporting them. Over the years, she has grown in size and ambition, becoming a Dame and an international superstar in her own right. Indeed, the character is now more famous than her creator. Critic John Lahr, himself the son of great comic performer Bert Lahr, has described Barry Humphries as the greatest living clown in the world. In his biography of Humphries, *Dame Edna Everage and the Rise of Western Civilization: Backstage With Barry Humphries*, Lahr describes Humphries' unique talent and his extraordinary career, in which his character took on a life of her own, as if she were a real person. In interviews, Humphries is either himself or Edna, but will never break character, admitting to being one while embodying the other. To see Barry Humphries in person, in Buffalo, is a rare privilege, and perhaps a once in a lifetime opportunity.

*Dame Edna: Back with a Vengeance*, plays through Sunday.



## Squeeze Box

In her one-woman show, *Squeeze Box*, playwright/actress Ann Randolph takes her audience on a wild ride through the world of a women's homeless shelter and a runaway romance with an accordion player. She plays all of the characters through the twists and turns of her story, based on her own experiences working at a women's shelter in California, and ends with a life-affirming epiphany.

After seeing the Los Angeles production, director/writer Mel Brooks and his late wife, actress Ann Bancroft, loved the piece so much that they signed on as producers and were determined to take the show to New York, which they did. *Squeeze Box* played the Acorn Theatre on Theater Row Off-Broadway. The plan was for a film version to be made with Miss Bancroft playing "Brandy," a particularly vocal and opinionated homeless woman. Though that idea sadly evaporated with Bancroft's death, Randolph is still working on the screenplay.

"Mel Brooks and Ann Bancroft were wonderful to me," says Randolph. "They were directly available, called me with ideas and helped me shape the play. More than a producer, she was my collaborator; her death was a terrible loss."

Still, Randolph forges ahead with the same indomitable spirit that inspired her to write the monologue in the first place.

"I love that the production here at the Alleyway is a co-production with Empire State College, because that means students are coming to see it—more than just the traditional theater subscribers. I like the idea that people who might eventually work in social services are seeing the play and that they are really pulled-in by what they see. Audiences have been so responsive and wonderful! They're getting it!"

*Squeeze Box* continues at Alleyway Theatre through February 19.

To respond to this article, e-mail [editorial@artvoice.com](mailto:editorial@artvoice.com) or write to: Artvoice, 810 Main St., Buffalo, NY 14202

## Ghosts

In *Ghosts*, Studio Arena Theatre has elected to take on one of the greatest and most important plays in all of dramatic literature. By the time the first lines are spoken, the dice have already been cast for tragedy to explode in Henrik Ibsen's play. As the play begins, Mrs. Alving is commemorating the tenth anniversary of her husband's death by building an orphanage in his memory. The late Captain Alving, it would seem, was a great man and a pillar of the community. But nothing in this play is what it seems to be on its surface. Quickly, the ghosts of Mrs. Alving's past return to haunt her present, and the cloth of social respectability that she has spent a lifetime weaving begins to unravel. What begins as a story of duty, social propriety, and loyalty, quickly evolves into a tale of deceit, infidelity, venereal disease, incest, and euthanasia. To its original 1881 audience, the play was shocking—like opening up a public sewer, one critic famously wrote.

Ibsen was unable to flinch away from the concerns that he saw at the center of contemporary life, and his work would, as much as that of any other playwright, herald the arrival of the Modern Drama. 19th century audiences were accustomed to sensational stories as recounted in countless melodramas of the era, replete with purloined letters, secret wills, runaway marriages, and evil landlords. But in *Ghosts*, Ibsen cut directly into some of the most frightening and ugly truths about the consequences of the social values of the era. In his tragedies about ordinary bourgeois families whose lives become grist for the mill of middle-class social propriety, Ibsen achieved true greatness as a playwright, and so earned his place, alongside Shakespeare, Sophocles, and Chekhov, as one of the greatest dramatic writers who ever lived.

*Ghosts* begins previews on Friday, February 10.

If you fell in love with  
*Jeffrey...*

Laughed so hard you cried during  
*The Most Fabulous  
Story Ever Told...*

Then you can't miss the  
epic comedy of Paul Rudnick's

# Valhalla

Opening February 24th

886-9239

[www.buffalobua.org](http://www.buffalobua.org)

