

THE PRODUCERS: ETERNAL SPRINGTIME

Foster, Oscar Return for Yet Another Run

by Iris Wiener

With more Tony Awards than any other show in Broadway history, *The Producers* has raised the bar for all productions to come. With music and book by legendary comedian Mel Brooks, the show is being remade for December release on the big-screen, featuring original stars Nathan Lane and Matthew Broderick.

But beyond even that, it is one of few shows that have successfully re-cast lead roles without losing its spark. The *Producers* currently stars two of Broadway's most delightfully versatile actors—Hunter Foster and Brad Oscar. The well-matched pair previously starred opposite each other in the show from June 2004 to January 2005.

After leaving the New York production, Oscar headed for the West End, where he took the role of Max Bialystock in the London production. Foster spent his time away acting in the off-Broadway comedy *Modern Orthodox*, and in *Mister Roberts* at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. The actors recently returned to *The Producers* as the unlucky theatrical producer and the pushover accountant.

"Everything is so random and crazy in the way it all happened for me," says Oscar, on his return as leading man Max Bialystock. He had worked previously in a number of supporting roles in



Brad Oscar and Hunter Foster in a scene from THE PRODUCERS Photo by: Paul Kolnik

Lane, and officially took the role in 2001. "This was always fantasy land; I grew up in D.C., so I always used to come up to the city with my parents and family to see shows. This is what I always wanted to do, so to have been able to...I am so appreciative because it is so special and so ridiculous in a way!" Oscar laughs. Indeed, when Oscar moved to New York in 1986, he found himself waiting tables on 42nd Street. "I got to see so much theater for free working at Charlie's," he says, winking.

Foster arrived in the Big Apple in the early 1990s. "Just like anybody, I started from scratch without knowing anything or anybody," he

a long list of starring roles that few are aware of. "When I was in the third grade I wrote a play about Dracula and I performed it. I was Dracula, it was four pages long, but it was a play!" he groans. "And I had a band when I was ten that I was singing in. We were so bad." If his bandmates could only see him now. With a Lucille Lortel nomination for his role in *Urinetown*, and Outer Critics Circle, Drama Desk, and Tony nominations for his memorable performance in *Little Shop of Horrors*, it's safe to say Foster won't have to go back to sucking blood. "The *Producers* is such a great show, and it's really a neat thing to be a part of something that's going to go down in history like *Hello, Dolly* and *The Music Man*. It's been pretty cool."

The *Producers* is presently playing at the St. James Theatre, 246 West 44th Street. For ticket information visit www.producersonbroadway.com.

Brad Oscar and Hunter Foster in a scene from THE PRODUCERS

Photo by: Paul Kolnik



shows such as *Aspects of Love* and *Sylvana Post*. He also did a fun, but less than fresh stint as Santa Claus in the Radio City Christmas Spectacular. Then, in the show's initial run, he was tapped to create the role of Franz Liebkind, the former Nazi who writes the fictional play, *Springtime for Hitler*.

He later understudied Bialystock with Nathan



Photo by: Paul Kolnik

Hunter Foster (center) in a scene from THE PRODUCERS

remember: "I just started auditioning, I didn't have an agent or anything." Somewhat shy, Foster is a natural in the light-footed shoes of Leo Bloom. And, he has absolutely no problem in the spotlight. He comes to *The Producers* after having starred as Broadway's original Bobby Strong in *Urinetown* and Seymour in *Little Shop of Horrors*.

"To go into Times Square and see my name and face up there on that billboard is still hard to wrap my mind around," Oscar says proudly of the show that garnered him a Tony nomination. "This show is pretty damn special, because not only is it hilarious, but it's also about a real relationship that forms between these guys, that special bond, and there's got to be some kind of emotion that the audience takes from this."

Foster says that his Broadway work comes after

