

## People &amp; Places

NANCY SHOHEET WEST

ARTS

## Ethnic comedy monologue strikes a common chord

**H**is show is called "My Mother's Italian, My Father's Jewish & I'm in Therapy!" but the responses from his audiences reaffirm time and again for comic Peter Fogel that you don't need to meet any of those three criteria for the material to strike a familiar chord.

"This show works with audiences in Florida, where it began, but it works just as well in Baltimore, in Phoenix, in Pennsylvania, in Canada, and in South Africa," said Fogel as he wrapped up a tour in Bucks County, Pa., and prepared for a five-week run at the Regent Theatre in Arlington that started this week.

"In Arizona, a woman told me her ancestors came over on the Mayflower, but she still found it just as funny as everyone else does."

Fogel didn't write the two-hour one-man monologue; that honor goes to award-winning humorist Steve Solomon, who has performed the show himself many times.

The production won "Favorite New Play" from Broadway.com and won the "Broadway Theater Fans Choice Award" on BroadwayWorld.com.

But eventually Solomon and his producer, Philip Roger Roy, wanted to find someone else to take it on the road. Fogel, an actor whose credits span decades and include more than 10 television programs including "Married With Children," "Unhappily Ever After," and "Men Behaving Badly" as well as commercials — "I was the risk ring-around-the-collar guy!" he points out — saw the show in Florida and knew he could do it justice.

"It's not a plug-in kind of thing where you can stick just anybody in to read the lines," Fogel said. "The actor who does has to have that combination of his background of Jewish and Italian and New York. The play requires one actor to do more than 20 voices. I'm someone who can go back and forth through dialects and characters, just as Steve does."

The two men had so much in common that it was easy for Fogel to adopt the persona created by Solomon. "He grew up in a culturally diverse neighborhood in Brooklyn, and I did. We are both stand-up comedians, and we both have an ear for dialect," Fogel said.



PHILIP ROGER ROY

Peter Fogel opened his run in "My Mother's Italian, My Father's Jewish & I'm in Therapy!" in Arlington this week.

success as a corporate trainer, author of books on career improvement, and motivational speaker, and is the host of an Internet radio show, "Boomer Humor Radio."

"This show somehow brings it all together for me," Fogel said of "My Mother's Italian."

"There's nothing like a live audience in a theater. When you've got 500 people all wanting to laugh... there's no hiding. You have to be on your game for every performance."

But doing a show whose premise he loves makes it easier. "Despite the title referring to people who are Jewish and Italian, the universal theme is family whom you love and who drive you crazy. And you deal with it by learning to accept your family for what it is and having patience and understanding, and most of all finding the humor in daily situations. People of all races, creeds, and colors see the show and say, 'This is exactly like my family.'"

Fogel is performing at the Regent Theatre, 7 Medford St. in Arlington, through May 19, with seven shows a week, Wednesdays through Sundays; tickets are \$45 to \$55, with group and military discounts available.

For tickets or more information, go to [www.regentheatre.com](http://www.regentheatre.com) or call 781-646-4849.