

Oct. 25, 2010

GO! FROM HOBOKEN TO HOLLYWOOD: A JOURNEY THROUGH THE GREAT AMERICAN SONGBOOK



Photo by James W. Thompson

The big-band show in this musical (book by Luca Ellis, Paul Litteral and Jeremy Aldridge) is staged as a behind-the-scenes live taping of a late-1960s television special with a star identified in the program only as "The Crooner." James Thompson's

authentic set comes with sound booth, TV cameras, microphones, lighting, a spacious bandstand and stage, overhead video screens and neon applause signs. Adding to the realism is lots of backstage banter, numerous gaffes, miscues and retakes, and some well-placed comedy and drama played out between director Dwight (Al Bernstein) and his overworked and underappreciated assistant Andy (Pat Towne). There are also cheeky commercial breaks for Shmimex watches and the all-new Ford Mustang. Musical director Litteral and his nattily dressed 12-member band (Jessica Olson's costumes are entirely on cue) combine into a flawless, robust performance redolent of the best of Ellington or Basie. Luca Ellis is a knockout from start to finish as the Crooner. How good is he? If you close your eyes while he sings familiar tunes such as "That's Life," "New York, New York" and "Fly Me to the Moon," you'd swear the Chairman himself had come back for one last encore. As masterfully woven together by director Aldridge, the material is so good that the applause signs aren't really needed. Edgemar Center for the Arts, 2437 Main St., Santa Monica, Fri.-Sat., 8 p.m.; Sun. 3 p.m.; thru Dec. 15. (310) 392-7327. (Lovell Estell III)

