

Nov. 1, 2010

HOBOKEN TO HOLLYWOOD

If you were a fan of the late, great Frank Sinatra, you're just going to love "Hoboken to Hollywood: A Journey Through the Great American Songbook" which is now onstage at the Edgemar Center for the Arts and will be running through December, 2010. Produced by Peach Reasoner, based on the book by Luca Ellis, Paul Litteral and Jeremy Alridge and directed by Jeremy Alridge, the production stars Luca Ellis as "The Crooner." It focuses on one day during a taping of the Frank Sinatra television show in 1965 when both video tape and TV color broadcasting were new.

During the show, Luca (Sinatra) reminisces about his appearances with Harry James and Tommy Dorsey before making it big in Hollywood. This gives him and the audience a chance to hear some of his early hits like "I'll Never Smile Again."

Though named in the program as only "The Crooner," Luca Ellis sounds so much like the late "Ole' Blue Eyes" you'd swear that it was Frank himself. You aren't really certain until "Dwight" calls the crooner "Frank." A few of the many Sinatra hits that Ellis performs are "That's Life," "You're Nobody Until Somebody Loves You," "Stardust" and "Young at Heart," to name just a very few were among the many Sinatra hits.

Those of you who saw "Louis & Keely, Live at the Sahara: A Vegas Holiday" know Ellis' portrayal of Sinatra in that hit show was hailed by critics.

Accompanied by my friend and neighbor Bev Blank, I enjoyed the performances of other cast members: Al Bernstein as Dwight (the show's director), Pat Towne (really funny as Andy, the harried stage/floor manager), Franci Montgomery as Darlene (a girl singer), Chandler Hills as the Announcer of the television show (he brought back memories of Don Wilson) Anna Hanson as Lisa, and Aaron Star as the TV show's Cameraman #1. Jeff Markgraff was so realistic in the role of Nelson Riddle, Sinatra's arranger and show conductor that until I read the program, I thought he was the band's conductor. I last saw Markgraff in "Carmen Miranda-The Lady in the Tutti-Frutti Hat," in which he played multiple roles. Backing the stars is a 12-piece band conducted by Paul Litteral, one of the book's authors.

A show-stopper of the evening was Pat Towne (Andy) and Luca Ellis (The Crooner) doing a hilarious duet of "My Way!" The Edgemar Center of the Arts is located at 2437 Main Street, Santa Monica CA90405. The performance schedule is Fridays and Saturdays at 8 pm; Sundays at 3 pm. Tickets are \$34.75. "Hoboken to Hollywood" is a DON'T MISS!