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CRITICOPIA REGIONAL THEATER

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Show Title	My Way
Subtitle	A Musical Tribute to Frank Sinatra
Total Rating	***1/4
Currently Running?	NO
Dates	Opened October 25, 2005; Ended January 7, 2006
Country	USA
State	Florida
City/Town	Sarasota
Theater Type	Regional
Producer/Theater Co.	Florida Studio Theater (Richard Hopkins, art dir)
Theater	Florida Studio Theater - Goldstein Cabaret
Theater Address	1241 North Palm Avenue
Box Office Phone	(941) 366-9000
Running Time	1 hr, 45 min
Genre	Musical Revue
Author	Conceived: David Grapes & Todd Olson; Book: Todd Olson
Director	Dennis Courtney

Director Dennis Courtney

Review Apparently, there's no end in sight of audiences in Southwest Florida eager for tributes to Frank Sinatra and his music. In Sarasota County alone, *My Way* has already played to full houses at a conservatory and a community theater. There's a restaurant/club that regularly features programs of Old Blue Eyes' standards by a Sinatra sound-alike, as well as imitators popping up in other venues from time to time. No wonder Florida Studio Theatre, which usually develops its own revues for its cabaret club, is in this case presenting the tried and true. Well accustomed to the show's format — a series of dramatized medleys of songs performed by four singers in varied groupings or doing solos tied together with biographical snips and banter, FST offers a justifiably confident version of Sinatra's "ways."

What a fine milieu: The cabaret stage, with its oft-used red velvet curtain-draped backdrop under an arch defined by tiny lights, simulates a night club. Tuxedoed Jim Prosser, at the grand piano stage right, makes a proficient and personable (as Sinatra would have said) saloon pianist.

Director Dennis Courtney could not have found a cast who work better together (especially as two couples interacting) yet remain distinctive as individuals. Stephen Hope comes closest to Sinatra's looks and vocal style, accentuated in his renditions of "Lady Is a Tramp" and the title song. He's usually paired in duos with sophisticated Kelly Atkins. "L.A. Is My Lady" and "Old Black Magic" gain from her attitude more than her voice, though.

Cute pompadored blond Jennifer Johns and young, dark-haired, earnest Michael Zahler take on most of the light-hearted duets, like "Love and Marriage." He goes against type with "I'm Gonna Live `til I Die." Same for Jennifer on "South of the Border." It's one of two songs to which she also dances with flair. Group numbers — like "High Hopes" among Favorites; "The Best Is Yet to Come" among Songs for Survivors — stand out in the medleys. Of the latter, the best applauded focus on Broadway, Cities, and Songs featuring the Moon. Connections between the musical themes and Sinatra's life and times never seem forced, thanks to a literate, informative script as well as choreographed connections.

Caution/Guidance

Other Critics

Miscellaneous

Awards

Cast Kelly Atkins, Stephen Hope, Jennifer Johns, Michael Zahler; Jim Prosser (pianist)

Technical Staff Set & Costumes: Marcella Beckwith; Lights: Allen L. Mack; Prod. Stage Mgr: Stacy A. Blackburn; Prod. Mgr: Bruce Price; Music Dir/Arrangements: Michael Sebastian; Choreog: Dennis Courtney

Critic Kilker, Marie J.

Date Reviewed October 2005