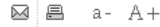


Theatre Review



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By Wayne Barcomb

One of the little jewels in Sarasota's theatrical crown is Florida Studio Theatre's Goldstein Cabaret. From the moment you walk into the intimate, cozy room, you feel relaxed and know intrinsically that you're going to have a good time.

Over the many years I lived in Boston, I had the pleasure of reviewing and enjoying similar settings, but none managed to create (at least for me) the same aura that emanates from the Goldstein. Even when the shows have been only fair (a rare occurrence), an evening inside this delightful cabaret is time well and pleurably spent.

The current production, "That's Life," not only is no exception, it gets the season off to a rollicking start with nonstop high energy entertainment from start to finish. Featuring the stylish old favorites of the '50s, '60s and '70s, the show delivers an aura of nostalgia with such numbers as "We Will Have These Moments to Remember," "Standing on the Corner," "Mr. Sandman," "Walkin' My Baby Back Home," "Rags to Riches," "That Old Black Magic" – you get the idea.



The cast of "That's Life" – Eric Collins, Arthus Marks, Jeff Pierce and Stacy Harris – offers high energy entertainment from beginning to end.

I didn't count them, but there must be more than 30 such delightful numbers throughout the production. And not once does the show get "schmaltzy" with these golden oldies, thanks to the high octane energy of the performers.

An evening consisting of a long trip down memory lane could easily become repetitive and tiresome in the wrong hands. Happily, this production is in good hands. And with the always sprightly accompaniment of pianist Jim Prosser, flew by so fast, it left me wanting more.

Each of the four performers has his and her own style. Eric Collins may possess the best pure voice, but at times his efforts at mugging to evoke humor during some of the playful byplay doesn't work and seems extraneous – trivial given the quality of his singing.

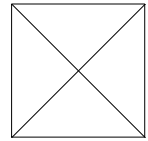
Jeff Pierce, the Dean Martin look-alike, has lots of easy-going style, both in his banters with his colleagues and with members of the audience. His solos don't have the resonance of the others, but his high energy personality is a delight to watch.

Arthus Marks delivered the high point of the evening with a show-stopping rendition of Mr. Bo Jangles. He prefaced the number by paying tribute to Sammy Davis JR's rendition of it and proceeded with a performance that would have made Sammy proud. He nailed the song and the mood, evidenced by the audience's boisterous response. The song and Marks' delivery of it were clearly the high point of the evening.

Stacy Harris at times seemed subsumed under the high octane of the men, but she has plenty of style and blended particularly well in her numbers with Eric Collins. She prowls the stage, both seductive and brassy, a constant presence.

As always, Marcella Beckwith deserves kudos for costumes and scenic design. Other contributors are Music Director John Franceschina, sound John Valines, lighting Shawn Watkins, and direction and choreography Dennis Courtney.

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