

10/28/2009

Total TheaterSM

CRITICOPIA REGIONAL

Show Title: That's Life

Subtitle:

Total Rating: ****

Previews:

Opened: October 20, 2009

Ended: January 2, 2010

Other Dates:

Country: USA

State: Florida

City: Sarasota

Theater Type: Regional

Company / Producers: Florida Studio Theater

Theater: Florida Studio Theater - Goldstein Cabaret

Theater Address: 1241 North Palm Avenue

Phone: 941-366-9000

Website: floridastudiotheatre.org

Running Time: 1 hr, 45 min

Genre: Musical Revue

Author: Conceived by Richard Hopkins, Rebecca Langford & Jim Prosser

Director: Dennis Courtney

Choreographer: Dennis Courtney

Review: Pop songs from 1948 to 1977 get coverage via crooning, showtune and nightclub/supper-club styles in *That's Life*. Three men and a woman not only harmonize and "fly solo" in those styles but also imitate or approximate hits by The Four Lads, Chordettes, and the venues or eras' star singers.

A thin thread of plot weaves each of the guys tunefully into flirting with the gal -- Eric Collins, all sweet and cuddly; Jeff Pierce, a take-charge host type though with a Dean Martin air of nonchalance; Arthur W. Marks, a sharp smoothie just on the brink of Blacksploitation sexiness. Pretty Stacey Harris may lead them all on with her "C'mon `a My House," but "Walking My Baby Back Home" gives Eric an early win of her heart. After the others accept this, they all cooperate whether as a harmonizing group or as backups for soloists.

Stacey's excellent solos recall Edith Piaf ("If You Love Me"— also essayed in French) and -- after Stacey has donned a stunning rhinestone-bedecked, red satin, slit-front gown -- "The Lady Is a Tramp" and Peggy Lee's "Fever." Jeff makes "Memories Are Made of This" his typical style. Arthur claims to have "That Old Black Magic" with good reason, but his Sammy Davis Jr. tribute "Mr. Bojangles" is the revue's show-stopper.

Fun songs include "Sh' Boom" and "Mr. Sandman." Though "I Can't Give You Anything But Love" doesn't give the revue its title, it's the nearest thing to a theme for most of the selections.

Throughout the tone is upbeat. Variety is supplied by the blocking and choreography by Dennis Courtney, often setting diverse scenes on FST Cabaret's small stage.

Jim Prosser plays a major role as onstage pianist, if not in the "dramatic" action of *That's Life*. As it goes through all the holiday seasons into the New Year, this revue celebrates happy times and, it is hoped, will mesh with a happy ending to '09.

Parental:

Other Critics:

Miscellaneous:

Awards:

Cast: Eric Collins, Stacey Harris, Arthur W. Marks, Jeff Pierce; Pianist: Jim Prosser

Technical: Set & Costumes: Marcella Beckwith; Sound: John Valines; Lighting: Shawn Watkins

Critic: Marie J. Kilker

Date Reviewed: October 2009

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Eric Collins, Arthur W. Marks, Stacey Harris & Jeff Pierceo
Photos by Amy Steinmetz