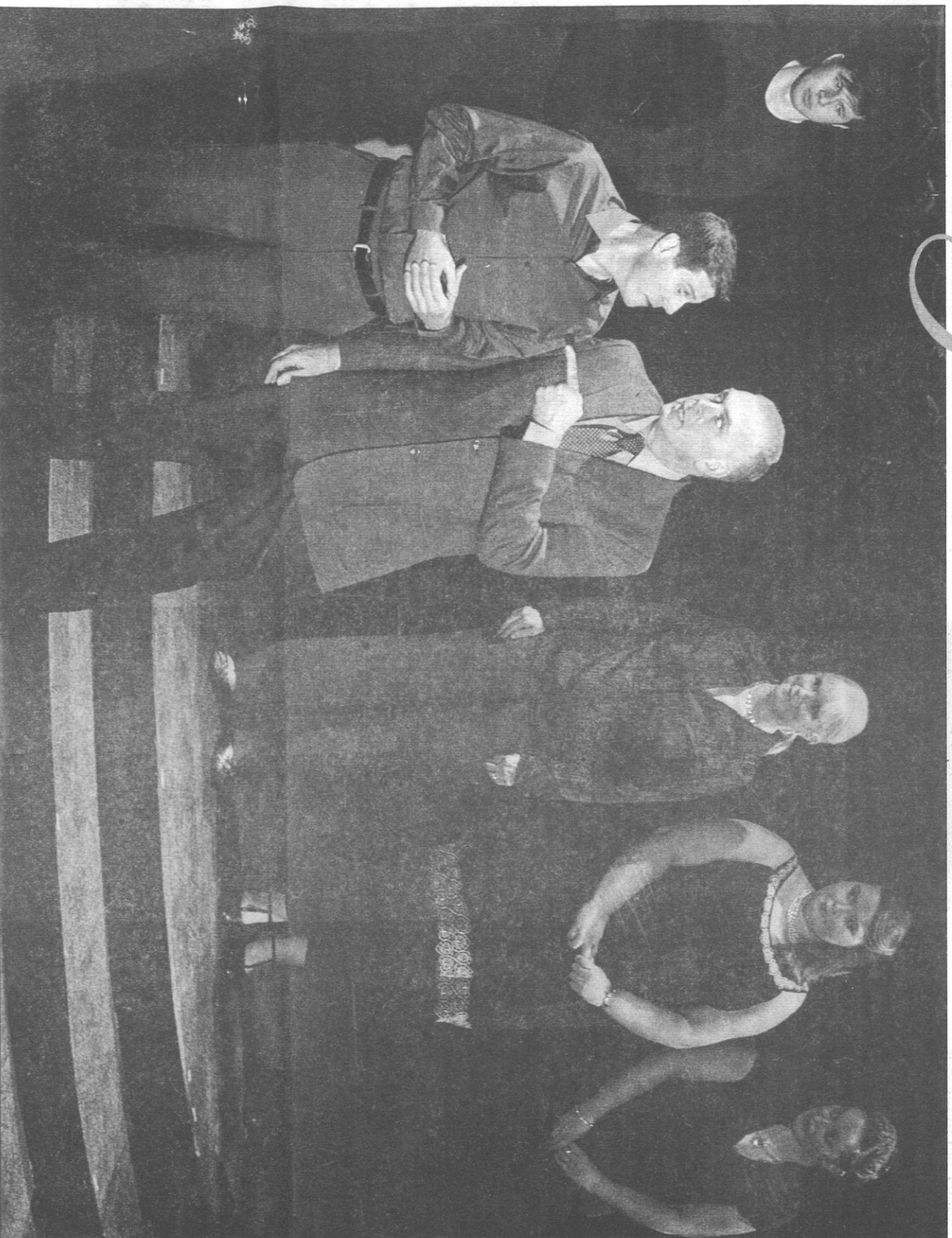


Arts & Entertainment



The cast of "Side By Side By Sondheim" rehearse a number. The show at the Cotuit Center for the Arts features Kevin Quill (from left) of Eastham, Todd Bidwell of Falmouth, Glenn Wall of Bourne, Laura Garner of Dennis, and Martha Paquin of Yarmouthport. The Stephen Sondheim revue is running through Sunday, February 20, in Cotuit.

GENE M. MARCHAND/ENTERPRISE

Review

'Side By Side By Sondheim'

By MARILYN J. ROWLAND
 The Cotuit Center for the Arts' production of "Side by Side by Sondheim," directed by Mark LiCalisi, is the perfect antidote to a cold winter night.

Stephen Sondheim's songs are witty and intricate, sometimes taxing the mental agility of the listener, but always entertaining. The music, most written by Sondheim, some written by others, is engaging, taken from a number of different musicals, some very well-known, others more obscure. The set is elegant: a pair of chandeliers, a plush, red velvet curtain folded against the back wall, and two enormous grand pianos flanking the stage, played with style and precision by Elizabeth Beckel and Nancy Wendlandt.

But what makes this show so outstanding is the professional and authentic presentation by the cast: vocalists Laura Garner, Lily Mae Harrington, Martha Paquin, Kevin Quill, and Glenn Wall, and narrator Todd Bidwell. They not only sing each solo, duet, or ensemble piece with wonderful precision, expression, and tone, they become the characters in each vignette, bringing

the audience into one little world of musical theater after another.

Mr. Bidwell, for his part, offered just enough descriptive introduction to each piece or group of pieces to make it interesting and to tie the revue together. His debonair presentation added much to the show.

Wearing subdued shades of brown and blue in the first act, and more glittery clothes in the same shades in the second act, the cast radiated competence and confidence, and the songs, all 29 of them, flowed smoothly throughout both acts.

Glenn Wall and his real-life wife, Laura Garner, opened the show in a playful mood, she hidden behind him, and unexpectedly revealed.

Ms. Harrington, the youngest member of the cast (she is a senior at Nauset Regional High School) has a wonderful, powerful operatic voice and used it well throughout the evening. She and Martha Paquin were splendid in "If Momma Was Married," each exhibiting a lot of personality.

Mr. Wall and Ms. Garner followed with an entertaining "You Must Meet My Wife," from "A Little Night Music," calmly and serenely

sung by Mr. Wall, as Ms. Garner grows increasingly displeased.

"Little Things You Do Together" from "Company" featured Ms. Paquin and Mr. Quill as the young couple, receiving marital advice from the experienced, and cynical, older couple, Mr. Wall and Ms. Garner.

Ms. Paquin was delightful in "Getting Married Today," a very fast-paced tongue-twister from "Company," and Ms. Garner and Ms. Harrington were outrageously funny in the bawdy, "Can That Boy Foxtrot," from "Follies."

Mr. Quill had his turn in "Being Alive," from "Company," which he delivered with heartfelt sincerity.

Lounging provocatively on the piano, Ms. Garner returned for a hilarious, and very well-received, "I Never Do Anything Twice," from "The Seven Percent Solution."

The first act came to a rousing close with "You Could Drive a Person Crazy," from "Company," sung as a parody of the Andrews Sisters, by the three women. A creative video of the rehearsal for this upbeat and animated number may be seen on the CCTA's website, at www.artsouthcape.com.

There were many other great acts, including Ms. Garner's "Send in the Clowns," her "We're Gonna Be Alright" duet with Mr. Wall, Ms. Paquin's very funny and frantic "The Boy From...," and the amusing "Pretty Lady," featuring Mr. Quill, Ms. Harrington, and Ms. Paquin singing with awkward accents, but breathtaking harmonies.

"You Gotta Have a Gimmick," from "Gypsy" received the biggest roar of approval from the crowd, as each of the three showgirls demonstrated her own special way of getting attention.

The evening ended with two ensemble medleys, giving us another round of unforgettable Sondheim songs, including several from "West Side Story," to savor long after the evening ended.

The show continues Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays at 8 and Sundays at 2 PM, through February 20 at the arts center, 4404 Route 28, in Cotuit. Tickets are \$20, \$18 for seniors, \$15 for members, and \$10 for students. Group rates are available for parties of 10 or more. To purchase tickets, visit www.artsouthcape.com or call 508-428-0669.