

Engaging, Elegant, Packed With Style

MIRILYN J. ROWLAND
 Cotuit Center for the Arts' production of "Side by Side by Sondheim," directed by Mark LiCalsi, is the perfect antidote to a cold winter night. When Sondheim's songs are so intricate, sometimes lacking the mental agility of the modern era, but always entertaining. The music, most written by Leonard Bernstein, some written by others, is engaging, taken from a variety of different musicals, from the very well-known, others obscure. The set is elegant: a pair of chandeliers, a 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. What makes this show so compelling is the professional and authentic presentation by the cast: vocalists Laura Garfield, Lily Mae Harrington, Mark Paquin, Kevin Quill, and Glenn Wall, and narrator Todd Bidwell. They not only sing each duet, or ensemble piece with wonderful precision, expression, and tone, they become characters in each vignette, bringing the audience into one world of musical theater after another.



GENE M. MARCHAND/ENTERPRISE

A pair of local couples are playing key roles in the Cotuit Center for the Arts performance of "Side By Side By Sondheim." Those lending their talents to the show are actors Glenn Wall and his wife, Laura Garner, of Bourne, as well as narrator Todd Bidwell and his partner, Mark LiCalsi, the show's director, who live in Falmouth.

... 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, more glittery clothes in the second act, Bidwell and Ms. Garner fully 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.

...er" 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 outrageous-

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

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"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.artsonthecape.com or call 508-428-0669.

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