

## MUSICAL MAGIC BETWEEN THE STAGE & THE TABLES

by **Kim Piston**

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There Was Something in the Air That Night!

The night of March 24<sup>th</sup> that is, when Theatre-Go-Round Dinner Theatre opened their second performance at their new location, Costa d'Este Beach Resort and Spa. Entitled "The Best of ABBA; Thank You for The Music," this show may very well be the best of Theatre-Go-Round as audiences are saying thank you for an incredible performance.

The legendary harmonies of the Swedish pop group, formed in 1972, could not be better suited to the singing and talent and chemistry of Theatre-Go-Round's cast of four. Singers Beth McKenzie-Shestak, Brendan Wenger, and Gregory and Caitlin Harris shine brighter than ever in a flawless performance that has audiences on their feet, dancing and gleefully singing along to more than a dozen of ABBA's greatest hits.

The chart-topping music of ABBA made the group one of the most commercially successful acts in the history of popular music and has been revived many times over in professional theatre and film. In 1999, ABBA's music was adapted into the successful musical *Mamma Mia!* that toured worldwide. A film of the same name, released in 2008, became the highest-grossing film in the United Kingdom that year. The sequel, *Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again*, was released in 2018.

So, it's no mystery why TGR's Artistic Director, Jon Putzke, has chosen this tribute for his latest musical revue. But the way this performance has come together surprised even him.

"The level at which my company of singers performed here has elevated the potential of what we can tackle in the future. They are at the peak of their vocal capacity, and it's exciting to think of what future productions can be! After 11 years of doing this, it was obvious to me on opening night, with triple standing ovations, that "The Best of ABBA; Thank You for the Music" will have a long and healthy run."

Every single number in this performance is sensational as the group works their musical magic between stage and tables, creating an interactive atmosphere of excitement and fun. Beth Shestak's rendition of "Fernando," originally written and recorded by ABBA member Anni-Frid Lyngstad as a solo effort, is stunning and not quite a solo, as she was actively accompanied by the *entire* audience swaying and singing along with her from the first to the last nostalgic lyric. Also striking is her duet with Caitlin Harris of the 1980 hit and lead single for ABBA's studio album *Super Trouper*, "The Winner Takes It

All." Caitlin and husband Gregory Harris also perform a cleverly choreographed and befitting version of "The Name of the Game."

At some moments the boys stole the show. Brendan Wenger is cute as a button with his performance of "Does Your Mother Know," sashaying flirtatiously around the tables and wooing the ladies. "Take a Chance On Me" is memorable for the "take a chance, take a chance" rhythmic and challenging backup vocals, and the guys bring it on with impressive precision. Musical director, Gregory Harris, is also in top comedic form, undoubtedly fueled by his challenging theatrical schedule right now. He is also starring in Vero Beach Theatre Guild's "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum," and arrives at the TGR show directly following his Sunday matinee performance at The Guild, bringing all that energy from one stage to the next. Harris is laugh-out-loud entertaining and delightful, hosting a trivia challenge with champagne surprises between numbers, cracking up the audience and his fellow cast members.

Also, worth mentioning is the cast's groovy new look which pairs well with their hip new venue, thanks to TGR's gracious hostess and costumer, Margaret Putzke. The group looks sharp, colorful and vibrant which adds an element of dazzle to the entire performance. In fact, everything about this show is top quality including the elegant three-course meal that is included with all TGR performances and expertly prepared and served by Costa's award winning chefs and attentive service staff. TGR regulars will be impressed by the ever-increasing quality of the whole experience which rivals any big city dinner theatre. For newcomers, this is the time to "take a chance" on Theatre-Go-Round! You won't be disappointed. Great food, great singing and great fun will have you saying, "Thank You for the Music" and an evening well spent.