

BY BARBARA YORESH

Oh, what a way to ring - that is sing - in a brand new year! And if it's done Theatre-Go-Round dinner theatre style, then you can be sure that the musical memories of the latest show - "Milestones & Memories" - will evoke the best of years gone by as well as bestow a glow of gratifying enjoyment for the coming year.

Once again Theatre-Go-Round artistic director and impresario extraordinaire Jon Putzke has come up with a captivating new musical revue which he previewed to a packed house of highly appreciative New Year's Eve revelers at the 14th Avenue Steakhouse in Vero Beach's historic downtown district.

Although the show officially opens on Jan. 12 at Theatre-Go-Round's new home at the Quilted Giraffe restaurant located at 500 S. U.S. Highway 1 in Vero Beach, Putzke offered a two-show sneak preview on New Year's Eve to audiences who wanted a musical welcome to 2014 in addition to a special a la carte dinner menu.

Opting for the second 8:30 p.m. seating for dinner and a 10 p.m. show, we knew that "Milestones & Memories" would offer a virtual cornucopia of musical hits spanning a 50-year period from the big band/WWII era of the 1940s through the 1980s.

What we were delighted to also see were the equally multiple ways in which the show touched the hearts and souls of audience members, who were singing along and by show's end, were literally dancing at their table sides to the beat of "Celebration."

This is a show that audiences relate to and I predict that it will become a Theatre-Go-Round classic.

With veteran vocalists Patty Carreau, Eleanor Dixon, Beth-McKenzie-Shestak and Shamara Turner starring in this latest revue - plus the technical expertise of sound technicians Todd Morgan and John Sutherland and orchestrations by Jeff Michaels - it seemed like a veritable "no-brainer" that Putzke would once again assemble a block-busting assortment of songs sung right.

No disappointments this night! The Theatre-Go-Round "family" of performing professionals invariably hit every right note - literally and figuratively. The vocal prowess and experience of the ladies continues to shine with each new show and while each in her own right could lay claim to being a "diva," the songstresses nonetheless become a perfectly balanced ensemble cast given to glorious four-part harmonies while intermittently soloing their individual talents.

The blending of their gorgeous voices was particularly evident on "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy" made popular in the 1940s by the Andrews Sisters and in "Don't Cry for Me Argentina" from the Broadway hit *Evita*.

When asked prior to the preview opening of "Milestones & Memories" whether the 40-song, 50-year medley was intended to jog the memories of audiences, Putzke "plead guilty" and admitted that in conceiving the show, he had great enjoyment researching 50 years of facts and fun to tie together with songs.

"Yes, that was my intent. But with the title 'Milestones & Memories' I wrote the show a little differently this time. I approached it with the thought that the music chosen was one half of the title - the memories. Music always evokes memories in some form or another.

"It was the milestones that I wanted to truly highlight as well. So I wrote and inserted much more dialogue in this show than I usually do. The decades are linked together with the ladies sharing with the audience and each other many wonderful world-changing events that took place during each decade as well as lots and lots of fun trivia that should bring some great laughs as well," Putzke said.

But does the year or era in which a song is composed invariably reflect that timeframe or do composers generally stick to universal themes such as "love?"

"Composers of songs, I believe, are definitely influenced musically by the times they are composing in. However, I also believe that lyricists tend to stick to more universal themes which are a key factor in a song gaining popularity with the masses," Putzke said.

Although the big band sounds of the 1940s are generally unmistakable, Putzke noted that a song from the 1960s was done by a smaller group of musicians and has a distinctively "electronic" sound as well.

"But when it comes to adding the lyrics, what you may hear lyrically in the '40s can very easily be the same lyrics you hear in the '60s because they're writing about universal themes," Putzke said.

Putzke said songs like "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy" and "Apple Blossom Time" are quintessentially of the '40s - much like "Three Coins in the Fountain" and "Rock Around the Clock" are 1950s classics. The 1960s had great diversity in the emergence of various rock 'n roll genres and the 1970s are perhaps best defined as the "disco" era.

No matter what time or place, Putzke agrees that "music is the universal language of the world. You don't even need lyrics to convey a message or a feeling. You hear a lullaby and it evokes a definite response to it emotionally. Or you hear a track of rock 'n roll songs without the lyrics and again, you immediately respond to a time and place you were at the time you first heard it."

As the final moments of 2013 wound down I was left in the afterglow of such wonderful music with the comforting realization that the brand-new year offered the possibility to make so many new milestones and memories. Happy New Year, everyone!

"Milestones & Memories" will officially open on Sunday, Jan. 12 at the Quilted Giraffe and perform Jan. 26, Feb. 9 and 23, March 9 and 23 and April 6. Dinner on these dates is served at 4:30 p.m. with the show at 6 p.m. Cost per person is \$55 for a three-course dinner, show, tax and gratuity. The menu for "Memories & Milestones" offers an entree choice of carved tenderloin of beef or Maryland crab cakes.

"Milestones & Memories" will perform at the Quilted Giraffe on the aforementioned dates and alternate with "Disco Divas" which performs there on Jan. 19, Feb. 2 and 16, March 2, 16 and 30.

Reservations are required. For more information, call the Theatre-Go-Round Dinner Theatre box office at 772-252-9341. Visit the theatre website at www.theatregorounddinnertheatre.com.