

Poignant story, musical homages round out TheatreZone February productions

TheatreZone, Naples' professional Equity theater, is in full swing in February with three engaging productions that each have deep roots in musical history and the powerful talents of renowned musicians.

Bright Star

With a Tony-nominated score and lyrics by Steve Martin and Edie Brickell, Bright Star is inspired by a true story set in the mountains of Asheville, North Carolina, and involves a disappearing infant. Martin and Brickell's Grammy-winning collaboration on the 2013 bluegrass album Love Has Come for You inspired the musical, and the folk story of the "Iron Mountain Baby." TheatreZone performances of Bright Star are Feb. 10-20.

The plot re-tells the "Iron Mountain Baby" legend and creates a new sequence of events that reimagines the ending.

A synopsis of the story involves the meeting of literary editor Alice Murphy and a young soldier just home from World War II. He awakens her longing for the child she once lost. Haunted by their unique connection, Alice sets out on a journey to understand her past and what she finds has the power to transform both of their lives.

The musical received critical acclaim from its Broadway performances and a

national tour. Charles Isherwood of The New York Times wrote, "The shining achievement of the musical is its winsome country and bluegrass score. The complicated plot is divided between two love stories that turn out to have an unusual connection. The songs are yearning ballads and square-dance romps rich with fiddle, piano and banjo."

USA Today noted that the 2016 Broadway production "holds its own in what may well prove to be the richest Broadway season in decades."

"Audiences will be treated to extraordinary music with Martin's banjo wizardry reflected in the score," says Mark Danni, founding artistic director of TheatreZone. "They will be carried through an emotional rollercoaster of calamity and comedy before arriving at a happy ending."

Bright Star tickets are available for 7:30 p.m. on Feb. 10 through 12, and February 17 through 20. Matinees are staged at 2 p.m. on Feb. 12, 13, 19, and 20.

The Mersey Beatles - Favorites of Naples

TheatreZone follows up Bright Star with two February concerts, including The Mersey Beatles, returning to Naples Feb. 22 with an all-new "Favorites of Naples" show for 2022. Beautifully designed costumes and replica guitars, amps and drums help to create an authen-



tic look and sound of the Beatles.

"The real showstopper is the way in which The Mersey Beatles perform dozens of the Beatles greatest songs so naturally," says Mark Danni. "There is no script, just great music and a desire to capture the spirit of The Beatles."

Like the original Fab Four, The Mersey Beatles are a band from Liverpool. The childhood friends share a love of Beatles music and will perform hits spanning 40-plus years, with special emphasis on the songs TheatreZone's audiences love best.

The Mersey Beatles tickets are available for 4 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. on Feb. 22.

Mack is Back: The Music of Bobby Darin

Mack is Back: The Music of Bobby Darin (Feb. 24) stars the acclaimed entertainer Chaz Esposito, who inspires audiences to snap their fingers and sing along to chart-busters such as "Beyond the

Sea," "If I Were a Carpenter," "Artificial Flowers," "Dream Lover," "Splish Splash," and more. Esposito's performance honors the legacy of Darin's career, which spanned genres and generations.

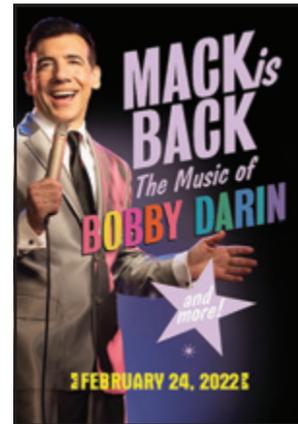
Theater critics, family members, authors, and archivists are unanimous in singing Esposito's praises for his homage to Darin. The New York Sun calls him "terrific and brilliant." The official Bobby Darin archivist exclaims, "The band is wailing, Chaz is singing and the audience is clapping in time to Mack the Knife. I felt Bobby in the house. Bravo Chaz!" Darin's brother states that Esposito gives "an accurate, memorable portrayal." Darin's biographer says, "Chaz rekindles the passion and genius of Bobby Darin with verve and energy."

Mack is Back is staged at 4 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. on Feb. 24.

TheatreZone tickets range from \$50-65 depending on selected seats, with premium seats available at \$85. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit TheatreZone or call 888-966-3352 ext. 1.

TheatreZone is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3), professional Equity theater located in-residence at the 250-seat G&L Theatre on the Community School of Naples campus, 13275 Livingston Rd., Naples.

For information and tickets visit <https://theatre.zone>. ■



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