



Symphony celebrates rock on Broadway

By Keith Powers / Contributing writer

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Carole King, Led Zeppelin, ABBA, Styx, Tina Turner and other rockers have found a second life on the Great White Way.

HYANNIS – To all of you children of the '60s and '70s – and the Barnstable Performing Arts Center was packed full of them Sunday afternoon: Here's betting you never thought that the rock 'n' roll anthems of your youth would translate so smoothly to the Broadway stage.

They do.

It used to be your parents' parents' Broadway – Rodgers and Hammerstein, Gershwin, Lerner and Loewe. Not anymore. And since steeping in nostalgia does everyone good once in a while, the Cape Symphony Orchestra, with guest conductor Peter Mansfield, helped an enthusiastic, sold-out room full of boomer-somethings to traipse through the years gone by Sunday afternoon.

But not with oldies – well, yes, with oldies. But oldies that are hits right now, on the Broadway stage. Carole King, Led Zeppelin, ABBA, Styx, Tina Turner and other rockers have found a second life on the Great White Way.

Mansfield was joined by three stage veterans – LaKisha Jones, Anne Runolfsson and Rob Evan – and the stalwart Cape Symphony players. Each of the soloists had strengths and weaknesses, and thoroughly explored both. But there was no denying the waves of enjoyment that ran through the matinee crowd – the finale of three such sellouts for this program.

Young choristers from Nauset and Dennis-Yarmouth high schools, and the Cape Cod Academy, joined in some numbers with light choreography and backing vocals. The symphony played like the true professionals they are: It's not easy performing three shows in about 24 hours, providing accompaniment to miked-up soloists stealing the scene on your own stage.

Mansfield, an experienced arranger who has worked with the Boston Pops for years, led off with his own medley of show tunes. Then the fast-paced variety show began, with the three soloists taking turns introducing and performing hits from "The Wiz," "Beautiful," "Mamma Mia," "Jersey Boys," "Rent" and

others. There's a reason they call these "jukebox musicals."

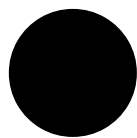
Jones, who capitalized on her "American Idol" success to build a stage career, had some of the best moments. She channeled Aretha in "(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman," with Maxwell taking over the piano, the orchestra simply sitting and listening like the rest of the audience. Her audacious vocals and dancing – let's just say she's "all about the bass" – made "Proud Mary" a treat. Whitney Houston's "I Will Always Love You" (written by Dolly Parton) brought the hall to its feet.

Runolfsson sang like the trouper she is, switching from bubblegum ("Good Morning Baltimore," from "Hairspray") to rousers ("Defying Gravity," from "Wicked") without a sweat. Evan had his moments as well: How long did he hold that note in "Stairway to Heaven"? Seemed inhuman. And he climbed up to an impressive falsetto in Bonnie Tyler's "Total Eclipse of the Heart," even though that duet, with Runolfsson, was stripped to its undies and bathed in bathos.

The orchestra found some interest in the staccato/pizzicato arrangement that energized "Defying Gravity," and Rhiannon Banerdt (the electric violin solo from "Total Eclipse"), Zachary Sheets (the familiar flute spot in "Stairway to Heaven"), Elizabeth Mitnik Doriss (oboe solos in the overture and other moments) joined the well-utilized horn section for highlights.

But a performance like this is less about what happens onstage and more about what has happened in the past. There's nothing like a Broadway musical to package that all up in a neat, nostalgic bundle.

The next Cape Symphony performance features music about Don Quixote, by Telemann, Ravel and Richard Strauss, with guest soloists Philip Lima, baritone, and Zuill Bailey, cello, on April 7 and 8 the Barnstable High School Performing Arts Center. Tickets and information: www.capesymphony.org or 508-362-1111.



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Entertainment & Life

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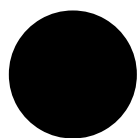
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