



CELEBRATE MOM  
MOTHER'S DAY : MAY 10

Your Town. Your Voice.

# News~Sentinel.com

comments

## Review: Touring Broadway show 'Jersey Boys' opens at Embassy Theatre

By James Grant of The News-Sentinel  
Wednesday, April 15, 2015 - 1:17 pm

To quote from one of Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons biggest hits, the best way to sum up the opening performance of "Jersey Boys" last night at Embassy Theatre is "Oh, what a night!"

The song "December 1963 (Oh, What a Night)," which was played several times throughout the show, acted as a sort of theme for the telling of the story of the group.

Like the song's refrain, "Oh, What a Night," the play seemed to recall the life and times of the group as one long cherished remembrance of something special.

The show was fast-paced and filled with a lot of humor that brought a much-needed lightness to the darker aspects of the story.

Having seen the 2014 movie version of "Jersey Boys," the play worked much better using this lighter tone, and the faster pace and more liberal use of music also help make the play a much more joyful experience than watching the film.

Cartoon images projected on the LED screen at the rear of the stage throughout the night also added to the lightness of the mood of the show.

The play, which was told from the perspective of the various members of the Four Seasons, cleverly wove the story of the rise of the group from its rough beginnings in New Jersey to the heights of fame as they sold millions of records and the struggles they encountered along the way with the glorious soundtrack of the hits of Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons.

Songs like "Sherry," "Big Boys Don't Cry," "Walk Like a Man" and "Dawn (Go Away)" filled the theater with the heavenly harmonies and beautiful falsettos that embody the classic catalog of this Rock and Roll Hall of Fame combo.

The show began to the instrumental strains of "December 1963 (Oh, What a Night)" while a group of dancers and a rapper performed a modern version of the '70s classic.

While the opening staging of the dancers and musicians conjured up images of Elvis Presley singing "Jailhouse Rock" in the movie of the same name and clearly evoked the feel of the 1950s, the modern take of the song seemed a little out of place with the retrospective feel of the rest of the show.

Luckily my uneasiness went away as the cast portraying Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons soon strolled onto the stage to sing and the rest of the night was a fun-filled journey back in time.

The role of Valli was played Tuesday night by Miguel Jarquin-Moreland, who shares the role with Hayden Milanes.

Jarquin-Moreland did an admirable job with role, bringing an earnest charm that made his character very likeable and sincere. He seemed to have the audience in his corner throughout the performance.

While his voice lacked the power and character of the real Valli, Jarquin-Moreland was still rather effective in evoking Valli's singing style and made the songs come to life in his own right.

The rest of the cast was also top notch and seemed to make their characters come to life with humor and all seemed to possess true vocal abilities as they each sounded convincing as members of one of the most unique pop groups of all time.

With a singer as distinctive as Valli, it's hard for actors to capture how truly different and fresh his vocals and the songs of the Four Seasons sounded then and now, but the cast Tuesday night did a good job of conveying the feel of the group's music.

The only thing that could have been improved was that at times the cast members' vocals, especially that of those portraying the Four Seasons, seemed to be a little buried in the mix, thus at times robbing some of the impact of the music.

The backdrop onstage for the whole evening, an industrial-looking crosswalk that appeared as if it was made of iron and steel, seemed to represent the presence of New Jersey that clearly followed the group members throughout their lives and career.

As the show's co-writer Rick Elice said when talking about the play, the bond between the characters was like iron and the ever present iron stage seemed to represent the group's



### More Information

#### Broadway at Embassy

**WHAT:** The touring production of the hit Broadway musical "Jersey Boys" plays in Fort Wayne.

**WHEN:** 7:30 p.m. Wednesday-Sunday, with matinees at 2 p.m. Saturday and Sunday

**WHERE:** Embassy Theatre, 121 W. Jefferson Blvd.

**COST:** \$20-\$95. Tickets are available at the Embassy box office 10 a.m.-6 p.m. weekdays and before shows, at Ticketmaster outlets, [www.ticketmaster.com](http://www.ticketmaster.com) and 1-800-745-3000.

firm foundation and bond with not only each other but with its home state of New Jersey.

The one thing that really helped propel the story and keep the show entertaining was the fast-paced and seamless moving of set pieces by various cast members as they entered and exited the stage.

Characters breezed into and out of the stage like ghosts from the past as they highlighted various scenes from the Four Seasons' life.

The whole show seemed to flow well and was brisk and funny and at moments touching.

The packed house seemed to thoroughly enjoy the show and the musical high point for the audience, and I as well, was the song "Can't Take My Eyes off You," which was made much more appealing by the background story of the struggle to get the song released and played on the radio.

The audience roared its approval at the end of the song and again at the end of the night with a standing ovation.

Jama Federspiel of Fort Wayne, who sat beside me Tuesday night, was also quite thrilled by the performance.

"I really liked it," Federspiel said of the show. "It makes me think of my childhood. It makes me think of 'American Bandstand' and my mom dancing around in her bare feet."

"It could have been louder as a whole and the dialogue could have been louder," she added.

"It was as good as I thought it would be," Federspiel said. "I really liked the guy who played Frankie. He's really cute."

Much like the eternally popular play and movie "Grease," "Jersey Boys" evokes the same feeling of celebration of youth and highlights the joys of a bygone era.

The music of Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons still shines through and the rags-to-riches story of success and all the consequences of that fame and its effects on the group members seems to resonate with audiences as it certainly did Tuesday night at the Embassy.

Their story also resonated with me as I left the theater humming the unforgettable soundtrack in my head.

Another line from the song "December 1963 (Oh, What a Night)" summed up my feelings as I walked out into the cool evening breeze, "as I recall it ended much too soon."