

Wonderettes Sizzle At The Strauss

By: Di Saggau

Photos by: Nick Adams

Talk about a fun holiday musical revue, "Winter Wonderettes" is the perfect example. It's showing now at The Herb Strauss Theater on Sanibel, and believe me you don't want to miss it. The cast consists of four dynamic singers with distinct personalities and voices who harmonize like a quartet of angels. They sing and dance and never stop moving for 90 minutes and have the audience laughing out loud as they win our hearts. During intermission, chatting with Artistic Director Justin Cowan, he confirmed that this is a personality driven show. You're going to love 'em.

Cast members are Cassandra Nuss, Samantha Rotella, Anne Chamberlain and Annie Freres. They play employees of Harper's Hardware putting on a musical Holiday Happening for the entire staff. Their harmony renditions of "Snowfall" and "Winter Wonderland" are absolutely beautiful. Freres seduces with "What Are You Doing New Year's Eve?", and wins our hearts with "Christmas Will Be Just Another Lonely Day." Chamberlain is a scream with "Suzy Snowflake" and "Donde Esta Santa



Claus?" Rotella lends her rich voice to "All Those Christmas Cliches" and Nuss has a memorable version of "This Christmas." The gals are excellent singers and delightful comics.

The cast has fun bringing audience members on stage including a man they call "Bob" from the store's plumbing department. Freres shamelessly flirts with him throughout the show. Other unsuspecting theater goers end up ringing bells and one man sits in for Santa. It's a lot of fun.

"Winter Wonderettes" is a bright, shiny, clever Christmas present that opens to reveal 25 endearing holiday tunes delivered by a sparkling cast. There's even a snowfall that, in spite of its beauty, reminds everyone why they love sunny Florida.

Director Michael Stanek is also the choreographer and he deserves a big hand for a show that is fast paced and fantastic. The colorful sets, costumes and impressive lighting add a great deal of pizzazz to the show. I'm sure you have figured out by now that I truly loved this show. If it doesn't get you in the holiday spirit, nothing will.

"Winter Wonderettes" is a joyous experience and it plays through December 31, at BIG ARTS Herb Strauss Theater, 2200 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel. For tickets log on to www.BIG ARTS.org or call 472-6862 or 395-0900. Tickets are \$42 for adults and \$20 for children. If you're wondering what to do New Years Eve, there is a special performance Saturday, December 31, which includes appetizers and a champagne toast with the cast of the show. Tickets are \$75 for this performance and it begins at 9 p.m.



Here's a "heads up" for you. Next at the Strauss is the Tony Award Winning Musical "Dirty Rotten Scoundrels", starting January 13, followed by "Das Barbecu". a witty Texas fable based on epic Wagnerian Opera, February 17, and the heartwarming comedy "Over The Tavern" March 23. Mark your calendars now.

