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‘Broadway Nights On Tour’ (BN04)

The Times

LOCAL/STATE

'Broadway Nights' popular with audience

REVIEW

By Lane Crockett

Broadway Nights is becoming somewhat of a tradition with the Shreveport Symphony, and that's a good thing.

Generally a Pops Series offering, the show moved to the orchestra's main season when the pops offerings were canceled. Judging by the near sellout at The Civic Theatre, it matters not whether it's pops or main season.

Created by singer Craig Schulman, *Broadway Nights* is a revue of musicals. In each edition, Schulman keeps a few showstoppers and then adds on new material. This is the fourth *Broadway Nights* to visit the symphony.

And coming back for the fourth time Saturday night were tenor Schulman and soprano Kim Crosby, who originated the role of Cinderella in Stephen Sondheim's *Into The Woods* and starred as Sarah Brown in the Broadway revival of Frank Loesser's *Guys and Dolls*. Joining them on this tour was Cris Groenendaal, who originated the role of Andre in Andrew Lloyd Webber's *The Phantom Of The Opera* and then went on to sing the Phantom about 860 performances. Oh, yes, Schulman has sung the lead role of Jean Valjean in Claude-Michel Schönberg's *Les Misérables* more than any other performer.

On the podium was guest conductor Sue Anderson, who has worked with the Broadway and touring companies of *The Pirates Of Penzance*, *Me and My Girl* and *Cats*. She also happens to be married to Groenendaal.

What you get with *Broadway Nights* is glorious singing from the people who have been there – and you didn't even have to fly to New York City. It would be an understatement to write that this trio sounded great. They sounded really great when their combined voices gave out renditions of *Life Upon The Wicked Stage*

from Jerome Kern's *Show Boat*, a beautifully poignant Sunrise, Sunset from Bock and Harnick's *Fiddler On The Roof* and the rousing *Brotherhood Of Man* from Loesser's *How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying*.

Those were satisfying trios, but the stunning one was the dramatic offering of the exciting and haunting *They Call The Wind Maria* from *Paint Your Wagon* by Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe. That definitely ranked as one of the evening's highlights as the three voices beautifully blended together.

One sequence gave each singer a showstopper. Schulman began it with an emotionally powerful *Bring Him Home* from *Les Misérables*, followed by Crosby's romantic *Unexpected Song* from [Lloyd] Webber's Song And Dance and concluded with Groenendaal's bravura *The Music Of The Night* from *The Phantom Of The Opera*.

The revue ranged from the elegant, sophisticated sounds of Cole Porter to the down-to-earth tones of Loesser.

Another of the evening's highlights was a duet with Crosby and Schulman on the lovely *Sun And Moon* from *Miss Saigon*, another score from Schönberg. Then there was Schulman's clever *If I Were A Rich Man* from *Fiddler On The Roof* and Groenendaal's heartfelt crooning of Kern's *All The Things You Are* from the composer's failed musical, *Very Warm For May*.

The orchestra seemed to have a great time playing Broadway under Anderson's spirited direction. Hey, the musicians will get back to Beethoven later. Saturday night, they were loose and fun and laid back.

Here's hoping the tradition will continue and a fifth installment of *Broadway Nights* will find itself back here.