

The Simon and Garfunkel Story

Okee dokee folks... There are times when you wish that a show was happening more than one night so you can tell other folks to go see it. The Simon and Garfunkel Story is one of those shows. Tonight at The Providence Performing Arts Center "The Simon and Garfunkel Story" showed why this duo has been loved for just about sixty years.

When the lights went down at PPAC, the screen on the back wall started showing factoids about Simon and Garfunkel. One of those boasted that they are the most famous/successful folk/rock duo's in music history. As the writing on the wall faded the music began with two voices and a guitar. The duo were coming right out of the gate with the "Sound of Silence". From the first notes of the song you could tell that these two have nailed the Simon and Garfunkel harmonies. Partway through the song the band of electric guitar, bass, drums and keys joined in and gave a full sound to the duo.

As I was waiting for the show to start I could hear folks around me musing on what to expect from the show. Was it a jukebox musical or was it a concert? It may have been a little of both, but leaning more heavily on the concert side, though it actually was more of a tribute show with some oral history woven in. After the "Sound of Silence" the Simon and Garfunkel "portrayers" started telling the story of the famed duo from their friendship in school, growing up just blocks from one another to their actual musical beginnings as Tom & Jerry.

Ironically, the actors/musicians playing Simon and Garfunkel (Brendan Michael Smith as Art and Jonah Bobo as Paul) are friends who started out playing Simon and Garfunkel music together in High School (you can listen to my podcast with Brendan Michael Smith about this). From the audience point of view the duo gave the appearance of the real Simon and Garfunkel without really trying. They just kind of naturally resemble them. That added with the spot on nuances that Brendan Michael Smith adds to his performance to accent the Garfunkel character and you could almost swear you were seeing the real thing. The costumes were very simple- turtle necks, vests, jackets and they only changed very quickly a couple of times.

The show starts in the late 1950's when Tom & Jerry release their first single called "Hey Schoolgirl" and takes you through their career song by song. A historical reference is given by the rear screen as pertinent, old news clips and graphics danced across the wall.

The first half of the show wrapped with the audience singing "feelin' groovy" along with the "59th Street Bridge Song". That set was just about an hour and had more deep cuts in the mix. The second half started with "Mrs. Robinson" from The Graduate and culminated with the famed Central Park Concert that drew 500,000 people to watch the duo reunite. This set was longer than the first, clocking in at about 80 minutes and encompassed more of the duo's bigger hits, but closed with The Everly Brother's "Bye Bye Love". Just before the duo retook the stage for their encore the band played a medley of Paul Simon's hits while more factoids about the duo were projected. They left the most awe-inspiring song for the encore. "Bridge Over Troubled Water" was performed flawlessly by Brendan Michael Smith with Jonah Bobo adding the backing harmonies. This song truly moved the audience. They played one more that had the audience joining in with "la da di, la da da da da di..." as they finished the show with "The Boxer".

As I have already mentioned I wish there were more nights of this show to see. If you are a Simon and

Garfunkel fan and missed this show, you missed something special. If you just like great music, you missed something great. Rarely do I ever come away from a show fully satisfied that it was done with near perfection. This is one of those rare times.

That's it for now. Don't forget you can listen to my podcasts at: motifri.com/rootsreportpodcast. You can also find my concert photographs at motifri.com/fuzeksfotos. Thanks for reading and listening.
johnfuzek.com