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Export date: Fri Oct 30 4:08:48 2026 / +0000 GMT

Derek Marshall to bring Vegas Knights concert to Theatre Orangeville

Written By **Constance Scrafield**

Derek Marshall is bringing his delightful Vegas Knights concert to Theatre Orangeville, for the first time, from Sept. 19 to 22 at the Orangeville Opera House.

This suave, handsome and talented Mr. Marshall brings us the days of the Rat Pack, of the crooners and the jokes so beloved through the 1950s to the 70s.

Such names as Sammy Davis Jr., Dean Martin, and Frank Sinatra, as Vegas Knights are naturally part of the show but Mr. Marshall takes us on a much fuller collection of names, to include many more of the great soloists.

In a multi-person Google get-together with the Citizen were Derek Marshall, Chris McHarge his manager/director, co-creator of this show with Mr. Marshall and much more, and Theatre Orangeville's Amanda Doerrie, head of marketing and artistic director David Nairn.

They began by talking about the five-piece band that is accompanying Derek Marshall for the show, ?We brought in a couple of horns for this band,? Mr. McHarge told us.

?There is a lot of flow ? it's amazing how he pulls it out.?

For every production they book, they call on top musicians to play ?well in advance,? said Mr. Marshall and they remarked how lucky they feel to have so many talented musicians that they can call.

As a lighting and sound designer too, Mr. McHarge is the man backstage and Mr. Marshall is the man on the stage. The collaboration between Marshall and McHarge in writing this show has been a dream come true for the singer. They have toured the show in Canada and the US, taking it as well overseas to Germany.

Coming up with the idea of Vegas Knights, they wanted to include such luminaries as Tony Bennett, Elvis Presley, and Bobby Darin. About Bobby Darin, Mr. Marshall had an interesting story, in 1960, Darin came to Vegas at the age of 24. He performed at the Copacabana and ?crushed? the records for attendance set by all the very famous crooners and singers who had been there before.

What does it take to sing the music of so many brilliant and so famous a list of celebrities as these?

David Nairn offered humorously, ?Only Derek has the ego to play them ? it comes from love,? he added sincerely.

Telling the essence of it, Mr. Marshall told us all that he tries to be true to the music; that it means something: ?When I put it out, I have to be true to it. Then, I feel this love and think - man, we did it.?

People love this music that is still a strong memory for so many. They heard the music from their parents maybe, and now even the grandchildren know the old songs and the musicians who sang them from hearing them being played at home.

The music may still be heard for generations, they agreed. It is not just the music, these were ?our favourite shows? where so many of these stars sang them, as Mr. McHarge pointed out.

Derek Marshall grew up in Cole Harbour, Nova Scotia, just outside Halifax. He attended Dalhousie University for his Bachelor of Arts but wanted very much to be on stage. He liked to sing but was ?pretty shy,? he told us when he and Nicholas Arnold were doing ?Dean and Jerry: What Might Have Been? as Theatre Orangeville's season add-on show in 2019.

Coming from Nova Scotia to Ontario, he earned his Diploma of Applied Arts in the prestigious Musical Theatre Program at Sheridan College in Oakville.

He recalled working with David Nairn in 1996 at the Oakville Summer Theatre. He was in ?A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Forum? and told us how in awe he was of the great man. ?People were laughing and laughing through the show,? he said.

Another old connection to Theatre Orangeville from Mr. Marshall: years ago, he was playing Dean in the Rat Pack here.

Some of the songs carry serious messages, like The Candy Man and Mr. Bojangles. He commented that when ?you put people on the stage, anything can happen...? Stage performance is an exhilarating experience. So, hearing him say that when it is over and he goes off stage, there is a vacuum as though he wants to keep singing and keep the energy that has been part of the audience's reaction.

?It's through your own lens,? David Nairn remarked. ?Your approach to it is not impersonated. You take on Sammy ? this is Derek Marshall singing ? that is what is magical for me. This is timeless music.?

Mr. Marshall told us he feels honoured to be back at Theatre Orangeville, and that there is something really special about Theatre Orangeville. He is looking forward to opening the show with Fly Me to the Moon - that first song ? those first new notes coming from the stage to thrill the audience.

They remembered Mr. Marshall did a Valentine's special here. He informed us that Paul Anka wrote ?My Way? for Frank Sinatra as a translation from the song in French.

As to why we should fill the theatre to see this show, Mr. McHarge was clear: ?This is the best music ever recorded,? he declared. ?By the greatest stars that ever performed.? Derek Marshall promised an honest interpretation of the music.

He was supported by David Nairn, who said, ?Derek Marshall is one of the finest interpreters of this show ? Really it is our honour to have him doing this show here.? Mr. McHarge added, ?Derek understands this music. He starts with Sinatra.?

Vegas Knights is this year's ?add-on? to the regular season, which as David Nairn says, ?is to remind people it's time to go back to the theatre.? Running over an extended weekend, September 19 to 22, tickets are available at www.theatreorangeville.ca Or call the kindly folk in the Box Office at 519-942-3423.