

How We Got to Jersey? brings the story behind Jersey Boys to Orangeville

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Two Canadian performers who spent years stepping into the shoes of Frankie Valli are bringing the stories behind their journey to Theatre Orangeville this month.

How We Got to Jersey: A Tale of Two Frankies, created and performed by Jeff Madden and Adrian Marchuk, will take the stage at Theatre Orangeville from Sept. 25 to 27.

Part concert and part personal storytelling, the production takes audiences behind the scenes of Jersey Boys while exploring how Madden and Marchuk, two performers from small-town Ontario, each found themselves playing one of early rock and roll's most recognizable voices.

How do two guys from small-town Ontario end up touring the world, playing one of the greatest rock and roll singers of all time? Marchuk said. And how do they do it, having the time of their lives, and being good buds, and then best enemies, and then back to good buds?

I think if anybody wants to know what it's like to be an actor in Canada, this show will give them a great insight into that, Madden said. It'll show you how taking on a job can change your life in many ways -- ways that you wouldn't necessarily anticipate -- good ways, challenging ways. It's got something for everyone. It's got incredible music. It's got nostalgia, and it's got this hopefully heartwarming story that is very human that connects us to the audience and connects to their own lives.

The show features music made famous by Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons, including Sherry, Big Girls Don't Cry, Walk Like a Man and Can't Take My Eyes Off of You, alongside stories from Madden and Marchuk's careers and experiences performing in Jersey Boys.

Neither performer originally expected the role of Frankie Valli to become such a significant part of their careers. Their paths to Jersey Boys began like many acting jobs -- with an audition -- but quickly became a whirlwind that included travelling to New York for fittings and Nashville to work with original Four Seasons member Bob Gaudio before rehearsals began.

The two would go on to perform as Frankie Valli during the Toronto production of Jersey Boys, with the experience continuing to follow them long after the production ended. Both continued to be asked to perform the music at concerts, corporate functions and other events, occasionally crossing paths with each other.

The idea for How We Got to Jersey emerged years later when Marchuk was asked to pitch concert ideas for a venue. Remembering that both he and Madden had played Frankie Valli, he proposed a show where the two could perform the music while sharing stories from their experiences.

They were asking for ideas, so I said, okay, you could do this idea, and then you could do this idea, and then I was like, Oh, third idea, third idea, third idea -- Jeff and I were both Frankie in Jersey Boys, Marchuk said. We could come up and sing songs and tell stories from that. They're like, Great, let's do that idea.

Madden joined the project, and the production came together in just three months.

Rather than simply recreating Jersey Boys, the resulting show became their own story.

Through music and personal memories, Madden and Marchuk explore what it was like to unexpectedly land a career-changing role, perform before thousands of people, meet the artists they were portraying and navigate the demanding realities of life as working actors.

Their individual experiences also give the production its central twist: audiences get to see two performers who understand the unusual experience of playing the same demanding role sharing the stage together. This production is one of its kind, unique to their journeys together, and how they were shaped by the experiences they shared.

“No two other people could do this show,” Madden said. “You could find two other Frankies, and they could put together their own show. But it wouldn’t be this show, it wouldn’t be this perspective. It wouldn’t be what it was like to do it in Toronto in the winter of 2008 and through 2009 and into 2010. It’s ours and only ours. That makes it special. Getting to relive these moments, these high moments of our lives, on stage, together in front of the audience - it’s thrilling. It’s absolutely thrilling.”

For Marchuk, the Orangeville performances also mark a return to familiar territory. Early in his career, he appeared in several Theatre Orangeville productions, including *Anne of Green Gables*, and is excited to return to the community with a production built around a journey that has followed him and Madden for nearly two decades.

With a mix of familiar music, humour and stories from behind the curtain, Madden and Marchuk hope *How We Got to Jersey* gives Orangeville audiences more than a trip back through the music of Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons.

At its heart, the production is a story about two performers looking back on the unexpected opportunity that changed their careers, the challenges that came with it and the friendship that ultimately brought two Frankies together on the same stage.

To buy tickets, visit: theatreorangeville.ca/show/how-we-got-to-jersey-a-tale-of-two-frankies.