

## In News Weekly - April 19, 2006

### 'Do, Re, Mi' is so last century

William Henderson

Young gay couple leaves Rodgers and Hammerstein in the dust to sing out the musical anthems of the last ten years; Their ensemble, Broadway 25, performs at Club Cafe April 28 & 29.

Steven SanSoucie was more Donna Summer than "Don't Cry For Me Argentina" when he met his future husband, Rob Wendel, a piano player and singer, who spent summers playing Broadway musical tunes at the Front Porch in Ogunquit, Maine.

After five such summers doing "Do Re Mi," by request of course, and often letting go of opportunities to expose Front Porch clientele to the younger, perhaps even hipper, Broadway shows, he and SanSoucie decided to form Broadway 25, with a bias for shows that debuted within the last 10 years.

Last year's debut sold out its Club Cafe and Jimmy Tingle's run in Boston and led to the current Broadway 25 ensemble group of eight singers, many of who share Wendel's passion for Broadway musicals. Even SanSoucie, who has, since meeting Wendel, been bitten by the Broadway bug, is passionate for the songs now, he said, during a recent telephone interview, emphasizing that unlike other current groups singing Broadway in Boston, the group is by no means a cabaret.

"We're not portraying [the songs] as they were sung in the shows," SanSoucie said. "We've added our own flair, our own movement, our own choreography."

Of course, the biggest transition from the Broadway stage to that of Club Cafe's back room is that many of the songs, originally written for one or two singers, have been rewritten and reimagined with the entire group in mind thanks to

"There's just a lot of funny stuff," said Wendel, describing one song he calls "Avenue Q" meets "Brokeback Mountain."

The songs selected for this current show come from a range of musicals, some familiar - "Rent," "The Full Monty," "Dirty Rotten Scoundrels," and others perhaps not so familiar - "Light in the Piazza," "When Pigs Fly," and "Naked Boys Singing." But exposing an audience to shows they've never seen, let alone heard music from, is part of the fun, said SanSoucie.

"Before each song we give it a 30-second introduction, which is helpful for some people who may not know at what point in a given show the song is taken from," said SanSoucie. "We want to make sure they get a complete understanding of the song."

While Wendel decides which songs to include and in which order to present them - and while they can't be seen as a total show in and of themselves, they are assembled to flow, sometimes by emotion, sometimes by vocalization patters, and always with the audience's total enjoyment kept in mind-the group brings to him their ideas and choices for songs, and it is from these that he makes his decisions.

As a fairly young group, they are still looking for new talent to join them at the start of each show cycle. With another show planned for October or November, Wendel said auditions for it will be held sometime between mid-May and mid-June, with enough time built in to ensure that any new voices selected blend seamlessly with those already belonging to the group. An ear for harmony and a feel for comedy - that's the name of the game when choosing new singers, he

Wendel's efforts. It could take upward of six hours to rework a song to make it more group-friendly, but it's necessary when at any one time, upward of eight people will be on stage.

As with last year's Broadway 25 "You Can't Stop the Beat," a title cribbed from "Hairspray," this year's "Heart and Music" comes from the musical "A New Brain," one of 26 from which the show derives its musical numbers.

The current group members include SanSoucie and Wendel, as musical director, as well as Keri Boisclair, Robin Burrage, Cindy Dedo, Dan Martin, Thomas McDowell, Steve Perry, and Debby Rawson, each of whom bring with them previous experience and a willingness to experiment with burlesque and comedy. That's part of putting together a review, said Wendel.

said.

"We're definitely not all 'Stormy Weather' in Broadway 25. Our songs require rhythm, and some come with really bouncy piano accompaniment, more up-tempo things," said Wendel. "I want people to know that when they come to our show, we try to do a real mix. Call it a Broadway smorgasbord. You never know what we'll do next." "Y "

See Broadway 25's show, "Heart & Music" Saturday, April 29 at 7 p.m. and Sunday, April 30 at 7:30 p.m. at Club Cafe, 209 Columbus Avenue. Tickets are \$18 and can be purchased online at <http://www.broadway25.com/>, with any remaining tickets available at the door prior to the performance.