Ruben Studdard stars in ‘Ain’t Misbehavin’

By Wade Allen
Managing Editor

Ruben Studdard, 2003 “American Idol” winner, along with a cast of four others started in “Ain’t Misbehavin’,” on Jan. 13 at GPAC.

The production was a part of the Broadway and More Series. Performing in front of a sold out crowd, but not the stars because they have been used to performing to 60,000 people for quite some time now.

“For many people that love jazz music and music from the 30s and 40s, ‘Ain’t Misbehavin’” delighted the crowd who gave the cast a round of applause after each musical number.

An orchestra consisting of a clarinet, tenor sax, alto sax, trumpet, trombone, bass, drums and a piano provided the music for the songs.

According to Patrice Covington, who played Patrice in the production, the costumes that the performers wore were exact replicas of the ones worn over 30 years ago when the show opened on Broadway.

Covington was pleased to be a part of the ensemble but was quick to point out that this was not her first tour production. She portrayed Wanda in the national tour of “Beehive,” the 60s musical.

Her ultimate dream is to be a Broadway performer but, according to Covington, her dreams are constantly changing.

“Actually my dream was to work for Disney. Then, when I did that, it was to be on a national tour. But I have always wanted to be on Broadway,” Covington said.

While Covington admits that Studdard’s name sells tickets, she pointed out that he was not the only gifted one that would be taking the stage.

“There’s so much more…so much more talent involved,” Covington said. “It’s just a wonderful, wonderful show.”

Sharing a dressing room with a superstar is not always easy, but for Covington, it seems nothing but natural.

“We have to act as much like a family as possible,” she said. “My bestest is Trenyce.”

Covington is referring to Trenyce Cobbins, who shares her dressing room and provides many parts of the comic relief for the production.

Cobbins is full of life and energy and really engaged herself with the audience. With her quick hand motions and pasted smile, she entertained the audience.

Also starting in the show were Frencie Davis and David Jennings.

“Beehive,” the 60s musical, is filled with many stars because they would be upstaged by a younger talent. Butala said. “We have to act as much like a family as possible,” she said. “My bestest is Trenyce.”

Tea and Preston joined the group in 1984. Tea has been a founding member of the group since the inception of the group, they’ve known Patrice and, her dreams are constantly changing.

“I never use that,” Butala said. “I never wanted to be that role.”

They’ve been seasoned in performing with music icons of the world and Butala is a part of the Broadway and More Series.

Butala said. “We can sing with Bing Crosby and Danny Kaye. We can sing with Diller to this day and we can sing with Diller to this day and we can sing with Diller to this day.”

According to Patrice Covington, the production of the show ends on May 19 and then it is back to New York City for her to find another production to star in.

“I want to get something lined up. My agent’s working with that. Find a project so there won’t be a gap when this show ends,” she said.

The Broadway and More Series at GPAC rolls on when the Dublin Philharmonic Orchestra takes the stage on Jan. 27.

For more information or tickets to upcoming productions, you may call the GPAC box office at (919) 521-6361.

The goal of the group, according to Preston, is to provide a quality show and provide a quality show and to prove it.

Over the course of the 48 years since Butala has been participating, the group has had many changes in the production, but the group has maintained gaining millions of fans worldwide.

But upon speaking with 68-year-old founding member Tony Butala, you’ll soon realize that worldwide acclaim has not affected the attitudes of him or the group.

“It’s a labor of love,” Butala said.

The legendary Butala is accompanied by 53-year-old Mark Preston and 54-year-old Donavan Tea, both seasoned entertainers.

The group dazzled a crowd of more than 800 at GPAC on Dec. 9 at 7 p.m. with their hits of the 60s and 70s, while keeping with it a lively spirit and performing many favorite Christmas songs.

The audience erupted in applause when all members of the group took to the stage and in the audience during many of their numbers, taking photographs with fans and shaking hands.

“The audience is an invisi- ble wall,” Tea said. “We go out and see them. There’s something about human contact that never goes out of style.”

At one point during the show, the group performed “Twelve Days of Christmas” and invited members of the audience to participate, bringing 12 people.

“This is something you won’t see at the Andy Williams Christmas show and something you won’t see at the Kenny Rogers Christmas show,” Preston said.

Tea and Preston joined the group in 1984. Butala said. “We have great memories of that,” he added.

“The goal of the group, according to Preston, is to build a busy schedule throughout the year, and Tea guesses that about one-third of their shows are at universities.

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Jennings. When Jennings performed his song “The Viper’s Drag,” the crowd responded with an enormous round of applause.

During the song, Jennings smoked an entire cigarette while walking around the stage, at one point approaching a member of the audience and offering them a puff of the cigarette.

When the audience member reached for it, Jennings quickly jerked it back and inhaled a plume of smoke.

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