



CULTURE CLUB

JERSEY BOY

Bob Crewe was a man ahead of his time - think David Geffen set in the 50's and 60's. He was Fabulous and Flamboyant at a time when those words were code. Known as "the Fifth Season" (working with Frank Valli and *The Four Seasons*), he fashioned a group of street tough New Jersey guys into the top selling group.

Bob Crewe finally gets his time in the spotlight in the musical *Jersey Boys*, based on the music and careers of *The Four Seasons*. Veteran Broadway actor Jonathan Hadley will be playing Crewe when the show comes to Portland. The role offered an opportunity for Hadley, "It was the first time I'd played a gay role, so when I took this part I came out at the same time, and it's all good." (Crewe self-identifies as bisexual.)

Hadley has been on the road in the role for the past five years. This is his second time playing the Crewe character. He had played the role when the show was being developed in workshops, but declined to play it on Broadway, choosing instead to go to graduate school.

When the opportunity to play Crewe came about with the touring cast, he was excited to play the part. He points out the show is "testosterone driven" and yet, "I get to play this wonderful character amidst all that, and it's a fun way for some people to be introduced to a gay man."

One of the things he values is the way his "Paul Lynde type" character is totally accepted in the macho universe he inhabits because of his talent. "They describe him as having the best ears in the business."

Some people emphasize the difficulty in touring. Not Hadley, "I like investigating new cities, and this will be the first time I've been to Portland. Not only that, but I love bringing this show to new people, and watching how they enjoy it." The show itself isn't static. They were recently in the Bible belt, "and we took out some of the more offensive curse words."

While there is a certain amount of nostalgia, Hadley notes that the audience is made up of "kids of high school age who are just discovering the music."

When it comes to advising young people starting out, he thinks it's wise to be cautious about announcing your sexuality. "There is still a stigma. America can't handle a leading man who is gay. On the other hand, actors like myself, who play featured or character roles are more free in that regard."

He does see hope, "Adam Lambert was the first openly gay recording artist to top the charts. It's just now starting to happen." And he is very positive about the future. "I'm so impressed with those who are already out and say, 'who cares, I'm already out, this is me.' It'll be interesting to see what happens for them. I think [people in the future] will see them as pioneers."

Jersey Boys is presented by Fred Meyer Broadway Across America and plays July 18th through August 12th at Keller. For tickets or information 503-241-1802 or see BroadwayAcrossAmerica.com/Portland.

"CAN'T TAKE MY EYES OFF YOU," SCORED FRANKIE VALLI A GOLD RECORD IN 1967. FEW PEOPLE KNOW THAT IT HAS A GAY HISTORY. HADLEY SAYS, "BOB CREWE WROTE THE LYRICS, AND BASICALLY THEY WERE INSPIRED WHEN ONE NIGHT HE WAS PACING THE FLOOR AND COULDN'T COME UP WITH LYRICS TO A SONG, AND HE LOOKED INTO HIS ROOM AND THERE WAS HIS LOVER SLEEPING ON TOP OF A FUR BEDSPREAD, AND THE LYRICS JUST CAME."

LEFT: Jonathan Hadley as Bob Crewe
Photo by Joan Marcus

RIGHT: The Vagabond Opera
and Abney Park
Photo by Ben Z. Mund Photography

Reach out with your events to Arts & Entertainment Editor Ken Hoyt.
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