



Highly Recommended AN EVENING WITH DANNY KAYE

“You know, it took me ten years to become an overnight sensation,” quips the sensational Danny Kaye, the springy curls of his hair bouncing as he waltzes around the stage, kicking and laughing along with the audience.

The stage, dressed simply yet elegantly with a vanity, a heap of packing trunks, and a classic Shure microphone, is Kaye's playground, surrounded by huge posters of his most famous films. But anyone who knows their theatre history knows that it couldn't be Danny Kaye himself, who died in 1987 — no, it's Brian Childers, the Helen Hayes Award-winning actor who has practically written the book on portraying the

classic Hollywood star. He performed *Danny and Sylvia: A Musical Love Story*, first seen here at American Century Theater, before it went on to a nearly three year run off Broadway.

Kaye had a lengthy stage career before he ever signed his five film contract with MGM, and Childers tells Kaye's life story with the help of video clips streamed seamlessly on a projector alongside performances of the classics, including a jaw-dropping recitation of countless classical composers in *Tchaikovsky*.

Of course, Childers' voice is sublime, running the gauntlet between smooth, mellow tones and wild, Vaudeville-esque impressions and scatting, but that's not the true magic of this show. *An Evening with Danny Kaye* calls for charm and charisma, but more importantly requires an actor with the ability to selflessly give himself over to the memory of a beloved 40's actor. Childers hits every mark, meets every expectation, at once comedian and crooner, as smooth and slick as his suits and shoes, all with a healthy dose of slapstick.

And just as Kaye was renowned for appearing side-by-side with the inimitable Bing Crosby, so too is Childers accompanied by a delight of his own: enthusiastic music director Jeffrey Biering. Biering, who tickles the ivories with both panache and patience for the erratic star, even joins in vocally for a quick duet of “Sisters”, quipping “Well, someone's gotta do it,” — and he does it well, indeed.

An Evening with Danny Kaye is more than just a trip down memory lane — it's a time capsule, cracked open in Theatre Two, allowing audience members of all ages a peek inside. The young are charmed and entertained, while those who can remember Kaye's performances are able (and encouraged) to join in — truly, I have never felt more connected with a performance than in hearing nearly every audience member present singing softly along with the briefly somber Childers in a haunting rendition of “Molly Malone.”

Dust off your wingtips and take a spin with Childers and Biering at Arlington's American Century Theater — you'll leave with a jaw sore from laughing, a skip in your step, and a song in your heart.

An Evening with Danny Kaye . Directed and choreographed by Stephen Nachamie . Featuring Brian Childers . Music direction: Jeffrey Biering . Produced by American Century Theater . Reviewed by Maddie Ardillo.