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A stellar treatment of 'They're Playing Our Song'

THEATER REVIEW: Stellar treatment for Hamlish's gem

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IRVING – They may be playing your song in *They're Playing Our Song* – if you like the tuneful music of [Marvin Hamlish](#).

The composer of "The Way We Were" and [A Chorus Line](#) created several other shows for Broadway. This is certainly his most personal, even autobiographical. It's about a successful composer who falls in love with his new lyricist, and it was written with [Carole Bayer Sager](#), his main squeeze at the time. Songs about writing songs aren't necessarily fun, but they are in this case. They have great melodic hooks and alternate nicely between bouncy good cheer and romantic mournfulness.

It helps, of course, that *They're Playing Our Song* has a book written by [Neil Simon](#) back when he was actually funny. One-liners abound. You may feel guilty about laughing aloud, they're sometimes so obvious. But laugh you will.

The small cast – just a chorus of six besides the two leads – made this a hugely popular show when it was new nearly 30 years ago. But it hadn't had a revival hereabouts for a good while until Lyric Stage's, reviewed Sunday. The show still looks and sounds fine when done as well as this version directed by Len Pfluger.

You could hardly find anyone better to play Sonia, the lyricist, than Stacia Goad-Malone. Her voice sails smoothly through Mr. Hamlish's melodies, and she's amusing, exasperating and touching by turns, as she should be. Most crucially, she has the dizzy, manic energy and the big heart to bring Sonia alive onstage.

Paul Taylor sings and acts just as well in the role of Vernon, the composer. The character is supposed to be neurotic and insecure, despite his success. Mr. Taylor captures those qualities all too well, sometimes jeopardizing our sympathy for the hero. It doesn't matter at all when he opens his mouth to sing, though. Musically, this is the best role for him in years.

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RICKY MOON/Special Contributor
Stacia Goad-Malone and [Paul Taylor](#) excel in the romantic musical *They're Playing Our Song*, presented by Lyric Stage at Irving Arts Center.

They're Playing Our Song is always an entertaining musical, but hardly a perfect one. Those three men and three women who play the main characters' inner voices have nothing to do but sing backup occasionally and provide some dance interludes. They don't really solve the problem of how to fill up a show where there are only two characters.

Thus *They're Playing Our Song* has lots and lots of dialogue – funny and well-delivered, in this case. Lyric Stage's production is good enough that we care about what happens between Sonia and Vernon as they talk and talk and get together and break up. It all works until the end, when we expect a big finale and instead get more talk.

At least we have all those Hamlisch tunes still playing in our heads as we head out the door.

- Through March 1 at Irving Arts Center's Dupree Theater, 3333 N. MacArthur Blvd., Irving. Runs 155 mins. \$22 to \$29. 972-252-2787 or www.lyricstage.org.

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