

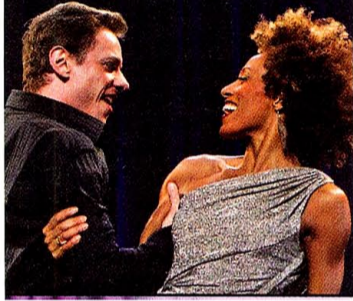


## LEGIT

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Twyla Tharp's tuner "Come Fly Away" revisits Sinatra's music — again.

### B'way Review

#### Come Fly Away

(Marquis; 1,611 seats; \$126.50 top)

A James L. Nederlander, Nicholas Howey, WAT, Terry Allen Kramer, Patrick Catullo/Jon B. Platt, Jerry Frankel, Ronald Frankel/Marc Frankel, Roy Furman, Allan S. Gordon/Elan McAllister, Jam Theatricals, Stewart F. Lane/Bonnie Comley, Margo Lion/Daryl Roth, Hal Luftig/Yasuhiro Kawana, Pittsburgh CLO/GSFD, Spark Prods., Weinstein Co. and Barry & Fran Weissler presentation of a musical in two acts with concept and book by Twyla Tharp, vocals by Frank Sinatra. Directed and choreographed by Twyla Tharp. Sets, James Youmans; costumes, Katherine Roth; lighting, Donald Holder; sound, Peter McBoyle; musical supervision, Patrick Vaccariello; conductor, Russ Kassoff; additional orchestrations and arrangements, Don Sebesky and Dave Pierce; production stage manager, Rick Steiger. Opened March 25, 2010. Reviewed March 19. Running time: **1 HOUR, 45 MIN.**

With: Laura Mead, Charlie Neshyba-Hodges, John Selya, Karine Plantadit, Rika Okamoto, Keith Roberts, Matthew Stockwell Dibble, Holley Farmer, Hilary Gardner.

Ensemble: Alexander Brady, Todd Burnsed, Carolyn Doherty, Heather Hamilton, Meredith Miles, Eric Michael Otto, Justin Peck.

By **STEVEN SUSKIN**

**T**he unceasingly creative force of nature called Twyla Tharp returns to town importuning audiences to "Come Fly Away," but her third Broadway dance revue only intermittently gets off the ground. This despite an impressive dance corps, a handsome production, a fine swing band and Ol' Blue Eyes croonin' away from limboland. Frank Sinatra's seductive voice and Tharp's sexy moves are well matched, building to some impressively climactic peaks. General audiences, though, might well run out of stamina before the dancers do.

Tharp surprised Broadway in 2002 with the smash "Movin' Out," movin' in following a troubled try-out for a three-year run that grossed \$100 million. But "Movin' Out" had the songs of Billy Joel, plus a thread of a storyline that provided an emotional link to boomer audiences. "Come Fly Away," which first appeared last fall at Atlanta's Alliance as "Come Fly With Me," follows strangers in the night; they find each other in a bar, dance, fight and dance some more. Songs associated with Sinatra provide ambiance and nostalgic appeal, but this alone might not draw the same crowds as Joel or

those other Jersey Boys. Sinatra took Broadway by storm when he opened in 1942 at the Paramount — just two blocks down from "Come Fly Away" — but that was nearly 70 years ago.

Choreographer and singer have a long association; the 1982 ballet "Nine Sinatra Songs" was one of Tharp's biggest crossover draws. Dancers here are topnotch, especially John Selya and Holley Farmer as the romantic couple; Keith Roberts and Karine Plantadit as the sexy couple; Charlie Neshyba-Hodges and Laura Mead as the athletic/comedic couple; and Matthew Stockwell Dibble continually breaking in on the others. (Company consists of 10 principals, six ensemble and eight alternates who play Wednesday and Saturday matinees.) Hottest spots of the evening are Roberts and Plantadit's steamy duets to "That's Life" and "One for My Baby," both from the Tharp/Sinatra ballet.

While the dances grow more intense and intriguing in the second act, the audience seems noticeably less attentive as the songs cascade by. As the night wears on, Tharp has the men take off their shirts, with one of them dancing around for 20 minutes in red underpants. In another mystifying touch, the only dialogue heard during the evening — at least at the press preview attended — were a bunch of ad libs in French.

Russ Kassoff's 21-piece band sounds great in arrangements adapted from recording tracks, but with a caveat: There seems to be a significant amount of canned music mixed in. "Body and Soul" features an impressive sax solo, but a look at the bandstand shows only one musician playing; the others sit with horns on hand while the house is flooded with strings. "My Way" — with 14 dancers and vibrant contributions from set designer James Youmans and lighting designer Donald Holder — is also boosted by strings and an evocative-but-phantom harpist. On-stage singer Hilary Gardner supplements the vocals by Sinatra, who shares above-title billing with Tharp.

"Come Fly Away" seems unlikely to grab repeat customers the way "Movin' Out" did. "Nine Sinatra Songs," which after 28 years is still performed by dance companies, has a running time of about 30 minutes. "Come Fly Away" crams 34 Sinatra songs into one evening, but not four times as effectively.