



SAMMY



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Theater review: 'Sammy' at the Old Globe

October 5, 2009 | 7:17 pm



His shoulders are slumped from too many gigs, too many drugs and way too many women. The bags around his eyes droop nearly to the bottom of his cocktail glass. His whole body is haloed in the cigarette smoke that would contribute to his death from throat cancer at 64.

As channeled by Obba Babatundé, Sammy Davis Jr. finally concedes to the exhaustion that he's been postponing since his days as an adorable child dancer working the vaudeville circuit with his dad. The



About

**Mike Boe
Lisa Fun
Diane Ha
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Charles M
Suzanne
David Ng
Sherry Si**

moment comes fairly late in the second act of “Sammy,” the appreciative bio-musical written by Oscar- and Grammy-winner Leslie Bricusse and directed by Keith Glover, which had its world premiere Friday at San Diego’s Old Globe. But when it arrives it has the weight of an irrefutable showbiz truth.

Unfortunately, it’s a case of too little too late for the show, which mixes eager-to-please revue numbers with variety show sketches summarizing the high and low chapters from this triple-threat entertainer’s life. The musical’s book, to give you a sense of the subtlety involved, might as well have been printed in neon, though Davis (never one for skimping on style) would no doubt have preferred gold leaf.

Scenes appear and vanish relatively quickly, with each biographical segment attempting to top the previous one. These blasts from the past have only scant interest in burrowing beneath the surface. But they’re enlivened by Bricusse’s music, much of which is new, though some is borrowed from his impressive catalog with Anthony Newley, which supplied their friend Davis with some of his most memorable hits, including “Who Can I Turn To?” and “The Candy Man.”



Davis’ Harlem childhood is captured through the tussle between his grandmother (and surrogate mother), Rosa (a rousing if not maximally employed Ann Duquesnay), who thinks her grandson should be sent to school, and his father Sammy Davis Sr (Ted Louis Levy), a professional dancer who wants him to join his act. The number “Another Hot Day in Harlem” sets the locale and Keith Young’s choreography gives it a swanky lift-off, but the storytelling, which isn’t really interested in probing conflicts, falls flat.

It’s a tough road for young Davis, but the gigs draw attention to him, and a fateful early meeting with Frank Sinatra (Adam James) eventually blossoms into a career-boosting friendship. Then there’s a stint in the military, where racism (clumsily) rears its ugly head, followed by Davis’ conversion to Judaism. This latter development is presaged by a scene in which Eddie Cantor (Perry Ojeda), “Uncle Eddie” from the vaudeville circuit, gives “Samela” a Mezuzah.

The car accident that cost Davis an eye is understood as a metaphor for the reckless behavior that was the downside to his manic ambition. This theme is traced throughout his compulsive dalliances, which helped derail his second marriage to Swedish actress May Britt (Heather Ayers). And this self-destructiveness is supremely evident in the all-night carousing with his fellow Rat Packers as well as in his prodigal spending on a luxurious wardrobe that even his Vegas buddies found excessive.

Babatundé is a commanding performer, and as his character ages his portrayal becomes more convincing. But the production doesn’t quite allow us to see how this formidable talent could be considered “The Greatest,” the title of one of Bricusse’s songs, in which Sinatra and company refer to Davis as “the greatest entertainer the world has ever known.”

For those of us who knew Davis mainly through his appearances on late-night talk shows and cameos on TV sitcoms (as opposed to his cabaret triumphs and star turn in the 1964 Broadway musical “Golden Boy”), it would have been helpful to get a clearer appraisal of his unique showmanship—his unerring musical instincts that were honed since toddlerhood, his determination to hypnotize a crowd with his wiry moves and his likable stage neediness. But this is always a challenge for a work that

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wants to pay homage to a legend whose specialness is treasured precisely because, though it can always be parodied, it can almost never be duplicated.

One of the most psychologically compelling scenes in the show is also one of the most unflattering to Davis. It takes place at the Copa Room of the Sands Hotel in Vegas, and Davis is working beside Sinatra and Dean Martin (Troy Britton Johnson). With an ingratiating laugh and lumbering shtick, Babatundé italicizes the insecurity that kept Davis performing as fast he could even when he clearly needed to slow down.

But this less adoring view is swiftly absorbed into a sentimental narrative involving Davis' eventual marriage to Altovise Gore (Victoria Platt), who apparently rescued him from his demons. Bricusse is gentlemanly to Davis' loves, but Altovise seems to hold a sacred place in his heart.

Alexander Dodge's scenic design, lighted by Chris Lee to provide electric pizzazz, situates us where Davis was most at home—a glitzy theatrical venue. The production aims to capture the colorful vibrancy of nightclubs, and Fabio Toblini's costumes add to the fun, especially when the era turns psychedelic and groovy.

Ian Fraser, the music supervisor who also did the vocal arrangements, conducts the sizable orchestra, whose sumptuous sound fills every inch of the house. Kudos as well to music director Rahn Coleman, who also arranged the dance music.

But for all its expensive vitality, "Sammy" is ultimately too tame a show to knock us dead, which is something Davis set out to do every time he stepped onstage.

--Charles McNulty

"Sammy," Old Globe, 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park, San Diego. 7 p.m. Tuesdays-Wednesdays, 8 p.m. Thursdays-Fridays, 2 and 8 Saturdays, 2 and 7 p.m. Sundays. \$54-\$89. (619) 234-5623. Running time: 2 hours, 20 minutes

Photo: Top: Obba Babatundé Bottom: Babatundé and Ann Duquesnay surrounded by company. Credit: Don Bartletti/ Los Angeles Times

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THEATER REVIEW

A candy gloss on 'Sammy'

Conveying the talent that was Sammy Davis Jr. is one tough number

CHARLES McNULTY
THEATER CRITIC
REPORTING FROM SAN DIEGO

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DON BARTLETT/Los Angeles Times

KEEPING LATE HOURS: Obba Babatundé portrays Sammy Davis Jr. in a new musical at San Diego's Old Globe.

Rare 'Sammy' not seen here

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Globe's 'Sammy' a happy memory of a painful past

By [James Hebert](#)
Union-Tribune Staff Writer

2:00 a.m. October 5, 2009



Alonzo Saunders and Victoria Platt dance in a scene from The Old Globe's production of "Sammy." (David Brooks / Union-Tribune)



Tony nominee Obba Babatundé stars in "Sammy," Leslie Bricusse's musical based on the life of Sammy Davis Jr. at The Old Globe Theatre. (David Brooks / Union-Tribune) -

DETAILS

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The Old Globe Theatre

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Tickets: \$54-89

Phone: (619) 234-5623

Online: TheOldGlobe.org

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In its world premiere at the Old Globe Theatre, "Sammy" has visual splash, graceful and kinetic staging, and a committed lead performance by Obba Babatundé. But the show can feel relentlessly conventional, and while it brings up the deep conflicts and painful struggles in Davis' life it doesn't always seem willing to really engage with them.

The creator of "Sammy," the Oscar-winning composer and writer Leslie Bricusse, had a tall task in condensing the Davis legend to a 2½-hour musical. It so happens that Bricusse knew the late song-and-dance man about as well as anybody alive: Davis recorded some 60 tunes written by Bricusse (typically in partnership with Anthony Newley), including such signature hits as "Once In a Lifetime," "Who Can I Turn To?" and "The Candy Man."

"Sammy" includes those songs and five others from such works as the Bricusse-Newley musicals "Stop the World — I Want to Get Off" and "The Roar of the Greasepaint — The Smell of the Crowd," plus 15 new Bricusse compositions.

The familiar tunes and the versatile Babatundé's feel for Davis' blend of swagger and fragility help an audience reconnect with memories of the matchless performer, who began as a vaudeville child star and battled bigotry and his own demons to become a stage, screen and pop-music icon.

But speaking of familiar: It seems possible Bricusse was too close to Davis to give this show more perspective. In "Sammy," wives and lovers sing with a fetching wistfulness about Davis' wandering ways and driven personality, giving scant sense of the impact on people around him. (Though Davis, who died in 1990 at age 64, had a daughter and three adopted sons, there's only a glancing mention of kids.)

It becomes clear well before the climax — when Davis, receiving the 1987 Kennedy Center Honors, is called "The greatest person in the history of the world" by his grandma Rosa (the gifted Tony-winner Ann Duquesnay) and "The greatest entertainer the world has ever known" by Frank Sinatra and Co. — that "Sammy" is as much homage as fully realized life story.

Babatundé, to his credit, doesn't try to turn his performance into one long Davis impersonation. Nor does he need to: The man has serious skills of his own, including a deft touch on drums on the number "Gettin' My Act Together." Like Bricusse, he knew Davis well, and his tap talents and singing voice (appealing though maybe not quite so velvety as Davis') do his mentor proud.

The actor, a Tony nominee for his turn in the original "Dreamgirls," swings with infectious glee on "Gonna Build a Mountain," in which the Army-era Sammy even gets white-bread WACs moving to the beat. His Act 2 take on "What Kind of Fool Am I?" though, lapses into the maudlin and overwrought, and is one of Babatundé's few real misfires.

The story pinballs a little vertiginously from a landmark 1951 gig at Ciro's nightclub with the Will Mastin Trio — Sammy, his father Sammy Sr. and adoptive "Uncle" Mastin (Ted Louis Levy and Lance Roberts, both funny and engaging) — back to the '20s, and then ahead to Davis' final decades. Director Keith Glover and choreographer Keith Young (who has a curious additional credit for "musical staging") keep this all reasonably streamlined, and the dancing is good throughout.

This show is begging for a rethink, though, of such scenes as the one featuring "The Candy Man"; it's placed

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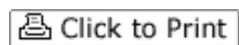
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Union-Tribune

[James Hebert](#); ;

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HOUSE SEATS BY JAMES HEBERT



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He's their (candy) man

By James Hebert

July 29, 2009, 4:14 p.m.

(Note: This will also run in the U-T's Sunday Arts section ...)

The Old Globe Theatre's next new musical has found its main man.

Obba Babatundé will play the title role in "Sammy," a world-premiere-work based on the life of the pioneering African-American entertainer Sammy Davis Jr.

The show, written and composed by Leslie Bricusse (who penned "The Candy Man" and other songs for Davis), opens its Globe run in late September.

Babatundé is a veteran stage and screen actor who made his first big splash in the original 1981 cast of "Dreamgirls," earning a Tony nomination for his portrayal of the songwriter C.C. White.

His other Broadway credits include "Chicago" and "Grind," plus such films as "The Notebook" and the remake of "The Manchurian Candidate" (whose 1962 original starred Davis' Rat Pack buddy Frank Sinatra).

Davis, who died in 1990, served as a mentor to Babatundé. Among their career links: In 1964, Davis starred as a prizefighter in the Broadway musical version of Clifford Odets' "Golden Boy," an adaptation that sparked a furor at the time over its interracial romance. Twenty years later, the first Broadway revival of the show starred Babatundé in the role Davis originated.

Among Babatundé's "Dreamgirls" cast mates on Broadway, incidentally, was Sheryl Lee Ralph, now onstage at the Globe in the world-premiere musical "The First Wives Club."

And speaking of that show: The Globe also has announced that it is extending the "Wives" run by one week. The show, scored by the Motown trio Holland/Dozier/Holland (who wrote and produced many hits for The Supremes, the girl group that helped inspire "Dreamgirls"), now runs through Aug. 30.

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U-T theater critic James Hebert covers the drama, comedy and backstage buzz of San Diego's theater scene.

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Opinion Only

THEATER REVIEW



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► 'SAMMY'

CONTINUED FROM E1

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SEE 'Sammy,' E3



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Posted: Sun., Oct. 4, 2009, 3:51pm PT

Sammy

(Donald and Darlene Shiley Stage; 604 seats; \$89 top) An Old Globe presentation of a musical in two acts with book, music and lyrics by Leslie Bricusse, with additional songs by Bricusse and Anthony Newley. Directed by Keith Glover. Choreography and musical staging, Keith Young. Music supervisor/vocal arrangements/conductor, Ian Fraser.

Sammy Davis Jr. - Obba Babatunde
Rosa Davis - Ann Duquesnay
Frank Sinatra - Adam James
Altovise Gore - Victoria Platt
May Britt - Heather Ayers
Sammy Davis Sr. - Ted Louis Levy
Will Mastin - Lance Roberts

By **[BOB VERINI](#)**

In an ideal world, the posthumous legacy of Sammy Davis Jr. (1925-90) would be as renowned as that of Elvis or Michael Jackson. He was that gifted. Alas, questionable late-life choices squandered America's good will toward the entertainer, while legal wrangling has kept his work out of the public eye. With its hack-work libretto by Davis intimate Leslie Bricusse, the Old Globe's tribute tuner "Sammy" is a fumbled rehab effort, though Obba Babatunde gives a limited but unmistakable taste of the genius.

The biography is so skimpily told, it might've been based on Davis' Wikipedia article. Against Alexander Dodge's dreary drops and characterless set pieces, Bricusse races through the key events with no pretense at interpretation: early vaudeville days; postwar nitery acclaim; the car accident and loss of an eye; conversion to Judaism; the dame-filled, booze-soaked Rat Pack years.

Davis' faith journey is reduced to a juxtaposed gospel number and Jewish party song. No time is spent in trying to understand the self-destructive spending and drinking patterns, or why a civil- rights pioneer would so insistently court white movie stars while turning his back on the black community and its music in favor of a famous Richard Nixon hug.

But there's plenty of time set aside for the Bricusse songbook. Tunes co-written with the late Anthony Newley are shoehorned in to reflect Sammy's various moods, with "Gonna Build a Mountain" and "Who Can

"I Turn To?" inserted decades before their actual composition. Meanwhile 14 new, mostly routine numbers don't compensate for the exclusion, in this Bricusse-centric universe, of "I Gotta Be Me" or Davis' other signature hits. One eagerly awaits Babatunde's "Mr. Bojangles," but all we're permitted is the opening vamp.

Yet the musical numbers aren't the problem. An orchestra of 13, pretty robust by regional theater standards, sells Ned Ginsburg's Nelson Riddle-inflected orchestrations with vigor under Davis associate Ian Fraser's baton, while longtime Sinatra impersonator Adam James captures plenty of ring-a-ding cool. (The less said the better about Troy Britton Johnson's Dean Martin.)

Choreographer Keith Young brings out multiple movement styles (though not specifically related to Sammy's career) from hot buttered Harlem jazz to Vegas pizzazz, with the aid of a lovely, leggy ensemble. One of helmer Keith Glover's cannier touches is to have tall, tall women constantly on hand to move props and cater to the star.

But "Sammy" has got to be about Sammy, from whose story Bricusse raises issues only to paper over or ignore them. A lifetime of fighting racism from every quarter is tossed off in two passing incidents. Women enter and exit leaving no impression. The 1960s' career nadir becomes a ridiculous psychedelic sequence in which swaying hippies sing "The Candy Man" to their drug dealers as a disoriented Davis totters about.

How did his family feel about his sybaritic lifestyle? Your guess is as good as any, for they're barely present. The criminally underused Ann Duquesnay is assigned a cliché matriarch persona, while Sammy's dad (Ted Louis Levy) and uncle (Lance Roberts) seem to be there because Bricusse couldn't figure out how to omit the Will Mastin Trio.

When all is said and done, "Sammy" is lucky in its star. Babatunde lacks the top notes to sell power ballads in the Davis style, and does less tap (or dancing, period) than expected. But the actor truly believes he's Sammy, and that conviction is enough to carry us along. He seems to understand Davis' demons even if the libretto doesn't, impelling our sympathies as the singer's career and personal life bafflingly disintegrate.

The stage is all Babatunde's when an eye-patched, wheelchair-bound Sammy determines to shake off the car accident and dance. By sheer force of will, he throws himself into a routine, falling with a crash but determined to rise again.

This tour de force performance is also a potent metaphor for the life force enabling this phenomenal entertainer constantly to bounce back from adversity with a defiant "Yes I Can." More of that creative thinking and guts, and this wan, dullish "Sammy" might've triumphed in the manner of its one-of-a-kind subject. **With:** Jenelle Engleson, Stephanie Girard, Lauren Haughton, Mary Ann Hermansen, Troy Britton Johnson, Keewa Nurullah, Perry Ojeda, Anise Ritchie, Alonzo Saunders, Sarrah Strimel.

Musical Numbers: "Once in a Lifetime," "Another Hot Day in Harlem," "The Biscuit's Better With the Butter," "Vaudeville," "Burlesque," "Gonna Build a Mountain," "Gettin' My Act Together," "The House o' the Lord," "Rosa's Prayer," "Who Can I Turn To?" "Charley Charm," "Black Sammy, White Sammy," "Something in Your Smile," "The Joker," "Livin' Large," "Singin' and Swingin'," "The Only Man for Me," "Slow Down, Sammy," "The Candy Man," "What Kind of Fool Am I?" "Salt & Pepper," "The Greatest," "The Good Things in Life."

Sets, Alexander Dodge; costumes, Fabio Toblini; lighting, Chris Lee; sound, John Shivers; orchestrations, Ned Ginsburg; music director, Rahn Coleman; stage manager, David Sugarman. Opened Oct. 2, 2009. Reviewed Oct. 3; runs through Nov. 8. Running time: 2 HOURS, 25 MIN.

Read the full article at:

<http://www.variety.com/story.asp?l=story&r=VE1117941301&c=33>

LEGIT

Posted: Sun., Oct. 4, 2009, 3:51pm PT

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Regional

Sammy

(Donald and Darlene Shiley Stage; 604 seats; \$89 top)

By BOB VERINI

An Old Globe presentation of a musical in two acts with book, music and lyrics by Leslie Bricusse, with additional songs by Bricusse and Anthony Newley. Directed by Keith Glover. Choreography and musical staging, Keith Young. Music supervisor/vocal arrangements/conductor, Ian Fraser.

Sammy Davis Jr. - Obba Babatundé
Rosa Davis - Ann Duquesnay
Frank Sinatra - Adam James
Altovise Gore - Victoria Platt
May Britt - Heather Ayers
Sammy Davis Sr. - Ted Louis Levy
Will Mastin - Lance Roberts



Obba Babatundé belts out a number as the titular Sammy Davis Jr. with Jenelle Engelson and Sarrah Strimel in the Old Globe's biotuner 'Sammy.'

In an ideal world, the posthumous legacy of Sammy Davis Jr. (1925-90) would be as renowned as that of Elvis or Michael Jackson. He was that gifted. Alas, questionable late-life choices squandered America's good will toward the entertainer, while legal wrangling has kept his work out of the public eye. With its hack-work libretto by Davis intimate Leslie Bricusse, the Old Globe's tribute tuner "Sammy" is a fumbled rehab effort, though Obba Babatundé gives a limited but unmistakable taste of the genius.

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VAR



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SAN DIEGO

Regional Reviews by Bill Eadie

Sammy

Also see Bill's review of [The Savannah Disputation](#)

I could listen to the superb Obba Babtundé perform songs made famous by his mentor, Sammy Davis, Jr. all night. It would even have been nice to see a one-man show featuring Mr. Babtundé performing and reminiscing as Mr. Davis. Unfortunately, Mr. Babtundé is portraying Mr. Davis in a Leslie Bricusse musical titled *Sammy*, which gave its world premiere performance on Friday, October 2, at the Old Globe Theatre. And, there's the small matter of a book involved.



Obba Babtundé

Actually, the star of *Sammy* is Mr. Bricusse, who is attempting a rare artistic feat by writing the book, music and lyrics to a new musical without help. Not many artists try to wear all three hats nowadays, and it would be a highlight of Mr. Bricusse's distinguished career if he could pull it off.

But, for the moment, Mr. Bricusse seems to have concentrated on writing songs and making his musical biography seem not to be a jukebox. There are eight songs in the show that Mr. Bricusse wrote for other purposes (some with the late Anthony Newley): "Once in a Lifetime," "Gonna Build a Mountain," "Who Can I Turn To?" "The Joker," "The Candy Man," "What Kind of Fool Am I?" "Salt & Pepper" and "The Good Things in Life." Mr. Bricusse has added fourteen new songs to this collection, and they are traditionally honed, break no new ground harmonically or lyrically, but they generally make for easy listening (credit Ned Paul Ginsburg's lush orchestrations and a thirteen-piece pit band under conductor Ian Fraser).

At this point, though, all the show's book does is to provide a means for hopping from one song to the next. One can obtain more insight into Mr. Davis' life from his [New York Times obituary](#) than from Mr. Bricusse's version of it.

Mr. Davis grew up in a vaudeville family (Ted Louis Levy plays his father and Lance Roberts plays his uncle, Will Mastin) and was raised by his grandmother (the estimable Ann Duquesnay) when he wasn't touring as part of the Will Mastin trio. He was never formally educated, but the effects of his childhood on his later life are barely mentioned. Instead, we hop along with Mr. Davis and his family through vaudeville, burlesque and hard times in the depression and World War II until Frank Sinatra (Adam James) offers him the opening slot IN Mr. Sinatra's nightclub act. The climb to celebrity goes steeply up from that point.

Along the way, Mr. Davis faces acts of racism and oppression, and while they bother him they don't seem to have any great effect on him (are you seeing a pattern here?). He also

demonstrates a talent for being a ladies' man (Mr. Sinatra coaches him in this regard in a song called "Charley Charm," one of the best of Mr. Bricusse's new ones), and he has an eye for white as well as black women. Hollywood mogul Harry Cohn (Troy Britton Johnson) stopped Mr. Davis from pursuing a relationship with Kim Novak and forced him to marry Loray White, a black dancer. Later, Mr. Davis would marry Mai Britt (Heather Ayers), a white woman, but would carry on affairs with Lola Falana (Keewa Nurullah) and Altovise Gore (Victoria Platt), both black dancers. After his marriage to Ms. Britt ended in divorce, Mr. Davis married Ms. Gore and remain with her for more than twenty years until his death.

Sammy Davis, Jr. had a career as a recording artist and a movie star, and he was nominated for a Tony Award for his role in the Broadway musical *Golden Boy*. But these career achievements are barely touched on in Mr. Bricusse's book, and Mr. Davis' most well-known association, as a Las Vegas entertainer who was part of the Rat Pack, is given one number that borders on embarrassing.

To be fair, the book is not all gloss. It covers the auto accident that resulted in the loss of an eye, his profligate spending, his problems with alcohol and drug use, his embrace of Richard Nixon. But, for each mishap or tragedy, it doesn't take much for Mr. Davis to bounce back. According to the book, all it took was a visit from Frank Sinatra to tell his buddy Sammy to knock off his drinking and drugging, and Sammy did.

Sammy, at least in its present form, might be re-titled *Sammy: A Life in Snippets*. And re-titling the show might be a good idea, because Mr. Davis already used the name *Sammy* for a 1974 limited run appearance he made with the Nicholas Brothers at what is now known as the George Gershwin Theatre.

One of the good things about a snippets approach to the story is that the ensemble gets to shine in smaller roles. Ms. Ayers and Ms. Platt are especially effective among a crew of tall, long-legged women as the two women Mr. Davis married willingly. Perry Ojeda does a nice turn as Eddie Canter, and Mr. Britton-Johnson does a cagy imitation of Dean Martin in the dismal Rat Pack number.

As Frank Sinatra, Adam James has lots of experience, having performed Off-Broadway in *Our Sinatra* and in other Sinatra shows regionally. He does a credible job of approximately Sinatra's vocal style, but there's little of Sinatra's charisma in his lines, so mostly he walks on, says something, and then walks off again.

But Mr. Babatundé transcends it all. Onstage for most of the show and in many of the musical numbers, it is a wonder that his energy doesn't sag. And when it is just Mr. Babatundé in the spotlight singing to the audience as Sammy Davis, Jr., all is bliss.

Sammy performs September 19 – November 8, 2009 at the Old Globe Theatre. Tickets (\$54 - \$89) are available by calling (619) 23-GLOBE or online at [The Old Globe's website](http://www.oldglobe.org).

The Old Globe presents the world premiere of *Sammy*, book music and lyrics by Leslie Bricusse, with additional songs by Leslie Bricusse and Anthony Newley. Directed by Keith Glover with choreography and musical staging by Keith Young, scenic design by Alexander Dodge, costume design by Fabio Toblini, lighting design by Chris Lee, and sound design by John H. Shivers and David Patridge. Ian Fraser is the music supervisor/vocal arranger/conductor, Rahn Coleman is the music director/dance music arranger, and Ned Paul Ginsburg is the orchestrator. Casting by Tara Rubin Casting. Stage Manager David Sugarman.

With Obba Babatundé, Ted Louis Levy, Lance Roberts, Ann Duquesnay, Adam James, Heather Ayers, Jenelle Engleson, Stephanie Girard, Lauren Haughton, Mary Ann Hermansen, Troy Britton Johnson, Keewa Nurullah, Perry Ojeda, Victoria Platt, Anise Ritchie, Alonzo Saunders, and Sarrah Strimel.

Photo: Craig Schwartz

See the [current season schedule for the San Diego area](#).

- [Bill Eadie](#)

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Top Speed

He marries, has affairs, does drugs, hugs Nixon, isn't chasing his lost mother.

Alexander Dodge's glitzy set for the Old Globe's *Sammy* includes stately, showcase-windowlike structures framed by rows of blinking lights. They feature props for the scene, or people who pose, in Fabio Toblini's classy period costumes, and sometimes sing. The polished black structures roll on and off. It doesn't take long to see that the musical, based on the life of Sammy Davis Jr., resembles the showcases. The life of an amazing entertainer rolls by, but from afar and at top speed. Watching *Sammy* feels like window-shopping from a passing car.

"Your whole life just moves too fast," his wife May Britt tells Davis. The musical follows suit, with no time for development. Leslie Bricusse's book creates such a shallow, itemized portrait that Davis remains a one-note character: he's an orphan, a four-year-old wunderkind, has a car crash (loses an eye and his sense of balance; his struggle to overcome both, if told in detail, could have revealed more about the man); he marries, has affairs, does drugs, hugs Nixon, isn't chasing his lost mother after all, earns Kennedy Center Award, finale, and curtain.

Name performers usually have a signature song. Davis had a handful, most of them written

by Bricusse, often with Anthony Newley: "Once in a Lifetime," "Who Can I Turn To?" "The Candy Man," "What Kind of Fool Am I?" Davis could sell a song like few others. When Obba Babatundé sings them, however, he's been encouraged to over-sell music that needs no extra hype.

The iconic numbers also create a problem. They dwarf those written specifically for the show. New songs — the ones sung to Davis, in particular ("Slow Down Sammy," "Black Sammy, White Sammy") — feel flat, and often preachy, by comparison.

Some portrayals verge on cartoon (Dean Martin, Sinatra, Eddie Cantor), and the women never rise above generic (an exception: Ann Duquesnay, outstanding as Davis's grandmother Rose). Babatundé's Davis has the hunched shoulders, the bebop head-nod, the firm grin, and manic energy down. And he sings and dances (and plays drums, for that matter) with bountiful gifts. Babatundé entertains throughout and deserves the jump-to-your-feet standing ovation the audience gives him. But in his nearly three-hour performance, Babatundé is, at best, only like Sammy Davis Jr. The hit-and-run script — scenes often just setups for the next song — never gives him the time to be the great entertainer.

THEATER REVIEW

JEFF SMITH



Obba Babatundé, Jenelle Engleson, Sarah Strimel in *Sammy*

Sammy, book, music, and lyrics by Leslie Bricusse
Old Globe Theatre, Simon Edison Centre for the Performing Arts, Balboa Park
Directed by Keith Glover; cast: Obba Babatundé, Ted Louis Levy, Lance Roberts, Ann Duquesnay, Adam James, Troy Britton Johnson, Mary Ann Hermansen, Heather Ayers, Alonzo Saunders, Victoria Platt, Keewa Nurullah; scenic design, Alexander Dodge; costumes, Fabio Toblini; lighting, Chris Lee; sound, John H. Shivers, David Patridge
Playing through November 8; Tuesday and Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. Thursday through Saturday at 8:00 p.m. Matinee Saturday and Sunday at 2:00 p.m. 619-234-5623.

Frozen by Bryony Lavery
Ion Theatre Company, Sushi Performance and Visual Art, 390 11th Avenue, downtown
Directed by Claudio Raygoza; cast, Dana Hooley, Matt Scott, Sunny Smith, Jared D. Herholtz; scenic design, Raygoza and Scott; costumes, Courtney Smith; lighting, Raygoza; sound and music, Joe Huppert
Playing through October 31; Thursday and Friday at 8:00 p.m. Saturday at 6:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. 619-235-8466.



Frozen

* * *
 In Bryony Lavery's *Frozen*, a researcher asks Ralph if he feels any remorse for raping and murdering seven young girls. Dead-faced Ralph says no. He's just sorry "it's not legal."

Lavery based her play on the findings of psychiatrist Dorothy Otnow Lewis. In *Guilty by Reason of Insanity*, Lewis contends that profound abuse in childhood damages the brain's cerebral cortex and hippocampus. One result: an inability to determine right from wrong. Thus the root causes of crime, she says, are neurological. They make serial killers "ill, not evil." Lewis doesn't absolve murderers — she advocates lifetime imprisonment without parole — but says they deserve our forgiveness.

"I think you're lucky if forgiveness visits you," the playwright said in an interview, "and you're in agony if it doesn't." Lavery makes *Frozen*, and an ability to forgive Ralph, her test case.

Each of the play's three characters is frozen: remorseless Ralph, Agnetha (a forensic psychologist, loosely based on Dorothy Lewis, in denial about a recent loss), and Nancy (whose ten-year-old daughter Ralph raped and suffocated). You could almost say the murder literally damaged Nancy's left brain. Good and evil blur, and she's never felt less alive. Her other daughter's bromides about forgiving and "letting go" ring hollow.

In Ion Theatre's stark, deeply moving production,

Matt Scott gives Ralph the cold logic of an irrational mind. His thoughts would make sense in a parallel universe of cruelty. As the years pass, Agnetha and a visit by Nancy create an aperture back to a moral view. In one of his best efforts ever, Scott thaws from fierce to fragile, and Ralph's re-entry shock becomes his undoing.

Director Claudio Raygoza has staged the piece on the perimeter. Scenes unfold on small stages and surround the audience with pain. The languid pacing of scenes, however, includes gaps and pauses more empty than pregnant. Sunny Smith, emotionally apt as Agnetha, would improve if she quickened her words, as would the production in general.

They say serial killers have

100 times more rage than "normal" people (whoever they are). Nancy Shirley begs to differ. In Dana Hooley's excellent portrayal, the slaying of her daughter jumped Nancy into the cycle of violence. Her blast-furnace seething compares with Ralph's, and Hooley more than suggests that, if given the chance, Nancy wouldn't just murder Ralph; she'd relish it. How Hooley moves from blackout retribution to the open-eyed Nancy at the end is one compelling reason, among many, to see *Frozen*, which must close this weekend. ■

San Diego Arts

"Samy" at the Old Globe Theatre

Can't Help Lovin' That Man

By Welton Jones

Posted on Sat, Oct 3rd, 2009

Last updated Sat, Oct 3rd, 2009

As the abundance of adoration for Sammy Davis Jr. continues to swell in Leslie Bricusse's massive tri Globe, there comes the moment when everybody just gives up and calls him the greatest entertainer

It's hard to evaluate such a claim, of course. But Davis certainly was one of a kind.

The old golf-handicap gag about him being a tiny one-eyed black Jew doesn't even cover the whole s wiry, not at all handsome and tiresomely pushy.

But he did things that astounded audiences. He didn't so much dominate his material as obliterate it, compared to the form.

Davis was only 64 when he died of cancer in 1990, but he was a veteran of 60 years in the show busi debut at 4 with his father and his Uncle Will Mastin. It was the early appearances with the Will Mastin television screens that launched Davis on a superstar career that climaxed in his uber-hip Las Vegas Dean Martin as "the Rat Pack."

Davis danced a lot and sang in a surprisingly supple and resonant baritone but it was his sheer anim through all those handicaps into legend.

Bricusse flat-out worships the guy. He's written book, music and lyrics for this show, called inevitably seven additional songs that he wrote with his old partner, Anthony Newley.

That's 23 different numbers, some with reprises. And that, plus all the usual biographical arc, makes

The songs, in busy, brass-and-percussion arrangements by conductor Ian Fraser, are heavy, either s rutting bathos or soaked in cloying angst.

The handsome female chorus spends over half the show in prototypical choline outfits, strutting and stud potency. The mythology of excess dissipation is tired and a bit musty now but Bricusse doesn't s

A big, bold show like this needs some conflict but all Bricusse can find are a couple of old stalwarts, s bigotry.

The booze and the pills make for some production numbers while the prejudice stuff is limited to a cc dialogue scenes. Back in the day, Davis seemed to soar untouched above such things. Probably not.

It's unlikely that a better choice for the title role than Obba Babatundé' could be found. (I've loved his 1982.)

Both his singing and his dancing are quite adequate; he's captured the star's buoyant charm and irreverence to look like Davis. The part should be forever his.

Not so Adam James, who has neither the pipes nor the look of Frank Sinatra, though he does have the down pat. Troy Britton Johnson is likewise as Dean Martin, with lots less to do. But Perry Ojeda is a valet assuming anybody remembers.

Ted Louis Levy as Sammy Davis Sr. and Lance Roberts as Will Mastin are genial and useful. Ann Dusenberry the role with dignity and an astounding if erratic voice.

None of the other ladies in Davis' life – Kim Novak, May Britt, Lola Falana, etc. – are played with much realism. The nine ladies of the ensemble are the true spine of the show.

In a show essentially devoid of subtlety, choreographer Keith Young finds some surprising quiet and balletic duo for Babatundé' and Mary Ann Hermansen as Kim Novak. Otherwise the dances are cheerless. To the period. The period.

Director Keith Glover, on the other hand, just struggles to keep some sense of time and place alive. Given Alexander Dodge's set design – various corners in the Land of Glitz – and Chris Lee brooding, it's probably the best plan for a stage director.

Which brings us back to Leslie Bricusse. He's nothing if not earnest and sincere. But his dialogue – “business trick I've never learned.” – sounds like notes for further pondering and his lyrics – “Sammy fixin'!” – often seem right out of the rhyming dictionary.

Ultimately, though, he's certainly done his duty for Sammy Davis Jr. Nobody is likely to do more.

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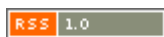
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Dates	: 7 p.m. Sundays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays; 8 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays; 2 p.m. through Nov. 8, 2009.
Organization	: Old Globe Theatre
Production	: Play
Type	
Region	: Balboa Park
Ticket Prices	: \$54-\$89
URL	: www.oldglobe.org
Venue	: Old Globe Theatre, Balboa Park, San Diego

About the author: [Welton Jones \(mailto:welton@sandiego.com\)](mailto:welton@sandiego.com) has been reviewing shows for 52 years as of Octo UNION-TRIBUNE and, now, eight for SANDIEGO.COM where he wrote the first reviews to appear on the site.

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[Leslie Bricusse pays tribute to old pal Sammy Davis in a new musical](#)
 September 18th, 2009, 1:11 pm • [Post a Comment](#) • posted by [Paul Hodgins](#)



I had a fascinating chat this morning with **Leslie Bricusse**, the Oscar- and Grammy-winning British writer-composer-lyricist. Bricusse, 78, is at San Diego's Old Globe this week, working on the fulfillment of a longtime dream: a musical about his old friend, the late Sammy Davis Jr. It's called, simply, "**Sammy.**"

Their relationship was professional as well as personal: Davis recorded more than 60 of Bricusse's songs, including "Candy Man" and "What Kind of Fool Am I?"

In the early '60s Bricusse burst onto the scene, penning two shows with Anthony Newley, "Stop the World, I Want to Get Off" and "The Roar of the Greasepaint – The Smell of the Crowd." During his busy six-decade career he has worked with Henry Mancini, John Williams, John Barry, Jule Styne, Jerry Goldsmith, Lionel Bart and Andre Previn. Bricusse wrote songs and/or screenplays for "Doctor Doolittle," "Scrooge," "Goodbye Mr. Chips," "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory," "Victor Victoria," "Peter Pan," "Babes in Toyland" and "The Pied Piper."

Bricusse's "Sammy" makes its world premiere this weekend at the Old Globe. Read my interview:

Q. Tell me about how you met Sammy Davis.

A. When "Stop the World, I Want to Get Off" opened in London, Sammy was in town to do a one-man show at the Prince of Wales Theatre. We opened at the Queens, which was just down the street from him. He had a week before he opened so he came to see "Stop the World." After the show he introduced himself to us and we all had dinner together that night. He told us he loved the music, and he was the first person to record the songs from the show. He did an extended-play album – four of the songs. He had a big hit with "What Kind of Fool Am I?" So from then on, out of friendship, really, never any professional plan, he wanted to have first listen to everything I did.

Q. Talk about how the idea for this musical about Sammy's life came about.

A. When Sammy died in 1990 I decided to bring out a songbook of all the stuff of mine that he'd done. I also included a half-dozen other songs he'd made famous or had a hit record with. It started with that. But this isn't just a

song-and-dance show; it deals with the heavy issues of Sammy's life and career: the battles he fought; the racism he encountered; losing his eye. That was a crucial thing. He thought he'd never dance again.

Q. You spent a lot of time with Sammy. What was he like?

A. He was the best fun in the world. He was a truly funny man. And (he was) outrageously, ridiculously generous. You had to hold him back. There's a sequence in the show called "Living Large." It's about the great financial problems in his life. I always say that Sammy was both the hero and the villain of his own life. His talent was the hero and his excess was the villain. He had a lot of problems that he never quite resolved.

Q. How did you end up bringing this project to fruition at the Old Globe?

A. Several years ago I had met (Old Globe executive producer) Lou Spisto in London. I was writing a project with an English playwright about the last days of Peter Sellers. He was interested in that. I met Lou again in February of this year. This time I was working on a show with Frank Wildhorn, "Cyrano." Lou asked, "What else are you doing?" I told him about the Sammy idea. He called me back the next day and said, "We've got to do this!"

Q. How hard was it to cast the role of Sammy? (The Globe debut production features Tony-nominated Obba Babatunde.)

A. Years ago we lived just around the corner from Sammy in Beverly Hills. He turned up at my house late one night and said, "Meet my young friend Obba." Sammy was his mentor. He has the essence of Sammy, which none of the people we auditioned could equal because he knew the man and he can get inside the character. He does physical stuff that's just pure Sammy. It's quite extraordinary. He's got the whole package: he can sing, dance, he's funny. And, of course, Sammy was his idol.

Q. Are there plans to take the show to Broadway?

A. I never try to predict what will happen to any project, ever. There are so many factors. Does the public like the subject matter, the way you handle it? I was talking to a TV bigwig and he said, "Nobody under 35 knows who Sammy Davis is." Well, you'll hear angry denials of that from younger people. Someone from the ("Sammy") orchestra said, "You'll be surprised how many people will be coming out from New York." Sammy had a much bigger public than we realize. He still does.

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Obba Babatundé (left) as Sammy Davis, Jr., with Jenelle Engleson and Sarah Strimel in "Sammy." (Photo by Craig Schwartz)

The Candy Man Cometh

THE SHOW: "Sammy," a world premiere musical, at the Old Globe

Sammy Davis, Jr., "a 5-foot-two typhoon," spent 60 of his 64 years in show business. It seemed he could do anything: sing, dance, act (onstage, screen and television), play multiple instruments, woo innumerable women. But did he ever feel satisfied? What really drove him to repeated self-destruction and self-renewal?

We never find out in the fast-paced, lightweight musical homage penned by his old pal, Leslie Bricusse who, with the late Anthony Newley, created some of Sammy's signature songs: "What Kind of Fool Am I?," "Who Can I Turn To?," "Once in a Lifetime," "Gonna Build a Mountain," "The Candy Man."

For this unabashed tribute, the Oscar and Grammy-winning Bricusse included eight previously written numbers (including all of the above) and added 15 new ones. But none of latest creations can hold a candle to those singalong show-stoppers, though Bricusse still has a way with words (he actually writes lyrics with perfect rhymes... what a concept! Practically unheard-of in modern songwriting).



The story is all too familiar: mega-talent burns self out on sex, drugs, infidelity, alcohol, over-spending and over-extending. Picks self up. Repeats. It's hard to feel for the guy. He had everything, repeatedly, and repeatedly threw it away. With all the seminal events in his life - good and bad - flying by at breakneck speed (the accident in which he lost his eye, racism in the Army, conversion to Judaism), we hardly get a chance to catch our collective breath, let alone get under the skin of the man. And it takes an awfully long time at the outset to engage us in the narrative.

The show opens with an overture (something you rarely see/hear any more; one of several elements that make the

musical seem old-fashioned). The action begins at Ciro's on Sunset, Oscar night, 1951. It ends in 1989, at the Kennedy Center, where Sammy becomes a Lifetime Honoree for his 50 years in the business. (He died of throat cancer in 1990.)

So, it's a combo platter: part biopic, part jukebox musical, part through-sung (melo)drama (most of the story is told in song), part sentimental remembrance. And some of it works just fine.



For one thing, Obba Babatundé is terrific. He has all the requisite talent: he can croon, tap, act, and play a mean drum solo. He's charming and appealing, but not hyperbolically larger-than-life like the icon he's playing. That's too much to ask or expect. To everyone's credit, he's not trying to impersonate the performer, just give a feeling of his sensibility and his drive. And that he accomplishes with panache. The same approach is successfully taken in portraying Frank Sinatra (Adam James) and Dean Martin (Troy Britton Johnson). Less felicitous are the attempts at Eddie Cantor (Perry Ojeda), Kim Novak (Mary Ann Hermansen) and Lola Falana (Keewa Nurullah).



The female ensemble is gorgeous and gifted (lots of long legs, that look great in those Vegas showgirl getups, among other fabulous costumes by Fabio Toblini). As the comedy duo that gave Sammy his big boost at age 4 - his father, Sammy Davis, Sr., and "Uncle" Will, forming The Will Maston Trio - Ted Louis Levy and Lance Roberts are delightful, in quips and dance. As the tough-but-tender Rosa Davis, the grandma who raised Sammy when his Mama left him behind, Tony winner Ann Duquesnay is formidable, but seems out of her vocal range at times.

Some of the score feels derivative; "Burlesque" is like "You Gotta Have a Gimmick"; "The House of the Lord," a Gospel number, trades on stereotypical "Fiddler" moves in the Jewish section; and "Black

Sammy/White Sammy” does similar things in the racial domain. Some of the stronger new numbers are: “Gettin’ My Act Together” (which includes Babatundé’s killer drum solo); “Charlie Charm,” a cute comic ditty sung by Frank and Sammy; the clever-lyric “Living Large” (“Shopping till you’re dropping is like stopping every show”); “Singin’ and Swingin’,” a self-explanatory Frank/Dean/Sammy song. Of the known numbers, generally well woven into the storyline, “Once in a Lifetime,” “Gonna Build a Mountain” and “The Joker” work best.

But the tempo, tone and emphasis need re-thinking. Bricusse’s book and Keith Glover’s direction keep the pace a tad frenetic; we rarely have time to think.. Keith Young’s choreography is great fun and effectively establishes time periods (though we’ve certainly seen that drugged-out psychedelic scene more than a time or two). Chris Lee’s lighting works wonderfully. There were a few sound problems on opening night, but the orchestrations (Ned Paul Ginsburg), dance music arrangements (Rahn Coleman) and Vocal Arrangements (Broadway veteran Ian Fraser) are excellent.

I think the show has legs, but it needs to dance to a more distinctive, focused tune.

THE LOCATION: Old Globe Theatre in Balboa Park. 619-23-GLOBE (234-5623); www.theoldglobe.org

THE DETAILS: Tickets: \$54-\$89. Tuesday-Wednesday at 7 p.m., Thursday-Saturday at 8 p.m., Sunday at 7 p.m., Saturday-Sunday at 2 p.m., through November 8.

Related post: [Ambitious musical ‘Sammy’ to premiere at Old Globe](#)

THE BOTTOM LINE: GOOD BET



Omar Metwally (left) and T. Ryder Smith in "Creditors." (Photo by Craig Schwartz)

The Green-Eyed Monster Reawakens

THE SHOW: “Creditors,” a new adaptation of a Strindberg play, commissioned by the La Jolla Playhouse

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THEATER REVIEW: 'Sammy' is a wow, but book still needs work

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PAM KRAGEN - pkragen@nctimes.com | Posted: Wednesday, October 7, 2009 9:20 am | Loading...

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Obba Babatundé as Sammy Davis, Jr. in the world premiere of "Sammy," a new musical by Leslie Bricusse at The Old Globe, September 19 - Nov. 8, 2009. Photo by Craig Schwartz





Right up front, it must be said that the crowd-pleasing musical "Sammy" will sell plenty of tickets in San Diego, thanks in large part to the tireless efforts of its star, Obba Babatundé. Leslie Bricusse's new musical about the life of the late entertainer Sammy Davis, Jr. is a showcase of Babatundé's spectacular dancing, singing and even drumming skills.

However, the musical is a mixed bag in its world premiere at the Old Globe Theatre in Balboa Park. Running 2 1/2 hours and encompassing 23 songs, the musical delivers lots of big-wow showstopping dance numbers, but it rarely delves beneath the surface of the high and low points of Davis' remarkable 60-year career.

Fewer sound-alike songs and more plot development would help the audience feel more empathy for Davis' character, who is portrayed here as a fiercely talented free spirit who's driven to perform, but also an unapologetic womanizer, spendthrift and (for a time) drug abuser.

Bricusse, who was close to Davis for nearly 30 years, wrote the musical's book, lyrics and score.

Most of the songs are new, but several are from musicals and collaborations with Anthony Newley in the '60s and '70s. A few of the better numbers that advance the plot are "The Only Man For Me," a trio sung by the many women in Davis' life; "Charlie Charm," where Davis takes lessons in style from Frank Sinatra; and "Black Sammy, White Sammy," where Davis struggled with his racial identity.

But other songs --- such as "Another Hot Day in Harlem," "Burlesque," "The Greatest" and "Livin' Large" ---- feel like filler. And some songs by other writers that were defining hits for Davis ("Mr. Bojangles," "I Gotta Be Me" and "That Old Black Magic") are not in the show. Also, two musical numbers in the second act need work ---- the "Candy Man" '70s disco drug party is corny and clichéd, and Sammy's big emotional breakthrough number, "What Kind of Fool Am I?" goes on for too long.

Directed by Keith Glover and choreographed and musically staged by Keith Young, the show still has some rough edges, in particular some jumpy scene transitions. Also, characters in the show overlook Davis' flaws because he was such a "great entertainer," but it's a harder job for the audience, who didn't know him personally, and often see a character onstage who's controlled by his demons. Understanding what drove Davis to perform, to persevere in the face of extreme prejudice and career setbacks, to womanize and to nearly destroy his career are never explained by the character of Sammy himself.

Besides Babatundé's performance, which is spectacular in all ways except for some melodramatic acting in the second act, the show has other strong points: Young's choreography is creative, sensuous and eye-popping; secondary performances (particularly by Anne Duquesnay as Sammy's grandma, Rosa Davis, and Adam James as a cool, confidant Frank Sinatra) are strong; Fabio Toblini's costumes are gorgeous (except for Sammy's garish '70s-era jumpsuit); vocal arranger/conductor Ian Fraser's big

orchestra sounds grand; and Alexander Dodge's simple but effective scenic design moves the story along nicely (though the giant can-can dancer legs and huge Richard Nixon mask look like "Spamalot" props).

The musical's frame is a 1951 post-Oscars party at Hollywood's Ciro's nightclub, where Davis is performing with his longtime vaudeville stage partners ---- father Sammy Davis Sr. and uncle Will Mastin ---- and telling his life story to the star-studded audience. From there, it hops back in time to Davis' childhood (Bobatunde plays the characters at every age), where Mastin and Davis Sr. persuade Rosa Davis to let 4-year-old Sammy join them on the vaudeville circuit (without formal schooling, Davis grew up barely able to write).

Raised without a mother and exposed at an early age to bawdy burlesque shows, Davis is portrayed here as a young man fixated on beautiful white women, a preference that would later have long-term consequences on his career.

The musical skips quickly through Davis' conversion to Judaism (with the weird gospel/"Fiddler on the Roof"-style tune "The House of the Lord"); his World War II service as an entertainer (he was beaten by white officers opposed to Roosevelt's racial integration policy); his enduring friendship with Sinatra (who fostered Davis' career through many ups and downs); a car wreck that cost him his left eye; his disastrous relationship with film star Kim Novak (studio heads forced him to marry a black woman he didn't know to calm the public furor); his marriage to Swedish film star May Britt; the Rat Pack days in Vegas with Sinatra and Dean Martin; his incessant womanizing (notably with singer/dancer Lola Falana and Altovise Gore, who would become his second wife); his excessive spending; his infamous hug with President Richard Nixon that infuriated many white Americans; and his descent into drug and alcohol addiction in the '70s. The musical wraps up with Davis' late career comeback and his Kennedy Center Honor, just a few years before his 1990 death.

Bobatunde doesn't really look or sing like Davis, but he talks, dances and carries his body just like him, and director Glover has surrounded Bobatunde with Amazonian showgirls who give the illusion that Bobatunde is as short as the 5-foot-2 Davis. The dancing scenes (particularly a "Vaudeville" number with Ted Louis Levy and Lance Roberts, as Davis Sr. and Will Mastin, respectively) are outstanding, and Bobatunde's energy never seems to flag, despite being onstage for virtually every minute.

"Sammy" has promise, but it still needs work. It's obvious that the show's writer, Bricusse, loved and understood his close friend, Davis. A better developed book would help the audience share in the love.

"Sammy"

When: 8 p.m. Thursday-Saturdays; 2 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays; 7 p.m. Sundays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays; through Nov. 8

Where: Old Globe Theatre, Balboa Park, San Diego

Tickets: \$54-\$89

Phone: 619-234-5623

Web: theoldglobe.org

Posted in Theatre on *Wednesday, October 7, 2009 9:20 am* | Tags: Entertainment Preview, Nct, Theater

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THEATER REVIEW

'Sammy' a wow, but needs work

By **PAM KRAGEN**
pkragen@nctimes.com

It's obvious the crowd-pleasing musical "Sammy" will sell plenty of tickets in San Diego, thanks in large part to the tireless efforts of its star, Obba Babatundé. Leslie Bricusse's new musical about the life of the late entertainer Sammy Davis Jr. is a showcase of Babatundé's spectacular dancing, singing and even drumming skills.

However, the musical is a mixed bag in its world premiere at the Old Globe Theatre. Running 2 1/2 hours and encompassing 23 songs, the musical delivers lots of big-wow showstopping dance numbers, but it rarely delves beneath the surface of the high and low points of Davis' remarkable 60-year career.

Fewer sound-alike songs and more plot development would help the audience feel more empathy for Davis' character, who is portrayed here as a fiercely talented free spirit who's driven to perform, but also an unapologetic womanizer, spendthrift and (for a time) drug abuser.

Bricusse, who was close to Davis for nearly 30 years, wrote the musical's book, lyrics and score.

Most of the songs are new, but several are from musicals and collaborations with Anthony Newley in the '60s and '70s. A few of the better numbers that advance the plot are "The Only Man For Me," a trio sung by the many women in Davis' life; "Charlie Charm," where Davis takes lessons in style from Frank Sinatra; and "Black Sammy, White Sammy," where Davis struggled with racial identity.

But other songs — such as "Another Hot Day in Harlem," "Burlesque," "The Greatest" and "Livin' Large" — feel like filler. And some songs by other writers that were defining hits for Davis ("Mr. Bojangles," "I Gotta Be Me" and "That Old Black Magic") are not in the show. Also, two musical numbers in the second act need work — the "Candy Man" '70s disco drug party is corny and cliched, and Sammy's big emotional breakthrough number, "What Kind of Fool Am I?" goes on for too long.

Directed by Keith Glover and choreographed and musically staged by Keith Young,



Obba Babatundé stars in "Sammy" at the Old Globe. Photo courtesy of Craig Schwartz

"SAMMY"

WHEN 8 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays; 2 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays; 7 p.m. Sundays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays; through Nov. 8

WHERE Old Globe Theatre, Balboa Park, San Diego

TICKETS \$4-\$89

INFO 619-234-5623
www.theoldglobe.org

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Besides Babatundé's performance, which is spectacular in all ways except for some melodramatic acting in the second act, the show has other strong points: Young's choreography is creative, sensual and eye-popping; secondary performances (particularly by Anne Duquesnay as Sammy's grandma, Rosa Davis, and Adam James as a cool, confidant Frank Sinatra) are strong; Fabio Toblini's costumes are gorgeous (except for Sammy's garish '70s-era jumpsuit); vocal arranger/conductor Ian Fraser's big orchestra sounds grand; and Alexander Dodge's simple but effective scenic design moves the story along nicely (though the giant can-can dancer legs and huge Richard Nixon mask look like "Spamalot" props).

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The musical skips quickly through Davis' conversion to Judaism (with the weird gospel/"Fiddler on the Roof"-style tune "The House of the Lord"); his World War II service as an entertainer (he was beaten by white officers opposed to Roosevelt's racial integration policy); his enduring friendship with mentor Sinatra; a car wreck that cost him an eye; his relationship with film star Kim Novak (studio heads forced him to marry a black woman he didn't know to calm the public furor); his marriage to Swedish film star May Britt; the Rat Pack days in Vegas with Sinatra and Dean Martin; his incessant womanizing (notably with singer/dancer Lola Falana and Altovise Gore, who would become his second wife); his excessive spending; and his descent into drug and alcohol addiction in the '70s. The musical wraps up with Davis' late career comeback and his Kennedy Center Honor, just a few years before his 1990 death.

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"Sammy" has promise, but it still needs work. It's obvious that the show's writer, Bricusse, loved and understood his close friend, Davis. A better developed book would help the audience feel the same way.

NORTH COUNTY TIMES

October 8, 2009

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GAY & LESBIAN TIMES

October 22, 2009

'Sammy'

Called by many "the greatest entertainer the world has ever seen," Sammy Davis, Jr. broke down more than a few barriers in his career as singer, dancer and entertainer.

Davis was a showbiz kid, born in 1925 to vaudeville dancers. After his parents split, the 4-year-old Sammy went on the road with his father Sammy and "uncle" Will Mastin, where he began his career.

The Old Globe Theatre presents the new musical bio *Sammy* through Sunday, Nov. 8. Keith Glover directs.

Leslie Bricusse, who knew Davis well, wrote book, music and lyrics (and many of Sammy's greatest hits, among them "What Kind of Fool Am I," "Gonna Build a Mountain," "The Candy Man"); he and Anthony Newley wrote 15 additional songs for the show, which has Broadway ambitions. That's a lot of music – 23 songs – but none of the new songs can compare to the ones everyone will come to hear.

The show boasts a great cast, headlined by Broadway veteran Obba Babatundé (*Dreamgirls*, *Jelly's Last Jam*), who traveled with Davis for some years. He doesn't imitate (who could?) as much as try to distill the essence of the man. It's a tall (or short, in this case) order, and Babatundé triumphs.

Sammy's grandmother Rosa Davis (Ann Duquesnay) provided his center, the home he could always return to. Duquesnay's big, round voice sounds like home should feel, and she steals the show whenever she's onstage.

Davis led an eventful life during a pivotal period in the nation's history, and Bricusse tries to get it all in – the accident that cost him his left eye, the racism, his controversial marriage to Swedish actress May Britt, his conversion to Judaism – but the inclusionary instinct (scattershot approach?) leads to a one-over-lightly approach that left me wishing for less celebrity bio and more under-

standing of why this man mattered.

The show also suffers from tech overload, with sets that seem in constant motion. Alexander Dodge's sets aren't that evocative in the first place; moving them only concentrates the attention on that fact.

Sammy has a future: it has a subject that will interest many, a great cast and fine choreography. It needs tightening and focus. But even as it stands, it's good entertainment.

Sammy plays through Sunday, Nov. 8, at the Old Globe Theatre. Shows Sunday, Tuesday and Wednesday at 7 p.m.; Thursday through Saturday at 8 p.m.; matinees Saturday and Sunday at 2 p.m. For tickets, call 619-23-GLOBE or visit www.TheOldGlobe.org. ●



(l-r) Troy Britton Johnson as Dean Martin, Obba Babatundé as Sammy Davis, Jr. and Adam James as Frank Sinatra in the world premiere of *Sammy*, a new musical by Leslie Bricusse at The Old Globe, through Sunday, Nov. 8.

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Theater Review: Sammy

Posted by [admin](#) on 10/21/09 • Categorized as [Dance](#), [Music](#), [Theater](#)

Theater Review: Sammy

By Charlene Baldrige



complements Old Globe Theatre

Sammy Davis, Jr. (1925-1990) was an energy-infused hoofer and a far better, more expressive singer than most people remember. He was also known for his impressions, which he performed as an adjunct to dance and song. Along with Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin he was a member of the infamous Rat Pack. His appetites and excesses, among them fashion, women, cigarettes and whiskey, were no secret.

British musical theater composer Leslie Bricusse first met Davis when Davis came backstage in London after seeing Bricusse and Anthony Newley's musical, "Stop the World – I Want to Get Off." Davis recorded four songs from the musical, including "What Kind of Fool Am I?," which received the 1962 Grammy Award for Best Song. According to Bricusse, Sammy kept singing his songs daily during the remaining 30 years of his career.

Fitting tribute is paid to Davis in the world premiere musical “Sammy,” with book, music and lyrics by Bricusse and additional songs by Bricusse and the late Newley. Tony Award-nominated Broadway star Obba Babatundé, who calls Davis his mentor, portrays Davis, who never rested, never stopped moving. The same can be said for Babatundé in this demanding role. There are few moments of repose vocally or physically, and if the show has a flaw, excess is to blame.

Babatundé, who is small in both girth and stature, may be an even better singer than Davis was. An excellent dancer, he inhabits Sammy, his moves and gestures, if not quite yet his mesmerizing, assured magnetism.

Babatundé possesses grand sexual energy, however, and his song and dance number (“Something in Your Smile”) with Mary Ann Hermansen as his early love (but never his wife) Kim Novak, fairly sizzles in Keith Young’s choreography and musical staging. The production is enhanced vocally by Heather Ayers as Sammy’s second wife, May Britt, and Keewa Nurullah as Lola Falana, a later inamorata. Adam James impresses as Frank Sinatra and Troy Britton Johnson is fine as Dean Martin. James and Babatundé’s duets, “Charley Charm” and “Salt and Pepper” are highlights of the show.

Bricusse’s economical book tells the story of Sammy’s life, from his first road trip with the Will Mastin Gang at age 4 to his Kennedy Center Honors in 1987. Though Sammy encounters racism in the armed forces, Las Vegas and Hollywood, the show is fairly sunny until Act II, when Sammy’s predilections lead him to drugs (“The Candy Man”), alcohol and debauchery. Sinatra forces Davis to look at his life, and Babatundé brings down the house with his eleventh hour ballad, “What Kind of Fool Am I?”

Thankfully, Bricusse does not explore Sammy’s throat cancer, apparent cure, recurrence and tragic removal of his entire voice box. Instead, Grandma Rose (Ann Duquesnay), Sammy’s last wife Altovise (Victoria Platt) and the excellent company pay tribute to “The Greatest,” and Sammy sings us out on “The Good Things in Life,” with dance and a few economical moves and gestures indicating the man who said he could and did, breaking racial barriers for entertainers that came afterward, including the late Michael Jackson.

As directed by Keith Glover, “Sammy” is still flabby, based on the October 2 opening, but thoroughly entertaining. There is no talk of further life. One cannot imagine any production without the remarkably indefatigable Babatundé.

“Sammy” continues at the Old Globe Theatre, Balboa Park, through November 8 with performances 7 p.m. Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Sundays; 8 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays; 2 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays; \$54–\$89, www.theoldglobe.org or (619) 234-5623.

Charlene Baldridge is a freelance arts writer and member of San Diego Critics Circle.

Tool Box:



Leave a Response

Babatundé captures Sammy Davis Jr.

By CHARLENE BALDRIDGE | VILLAGE NEWS

Over the course of more than 60 years in show business, Sammy Davis Jr. (1925-1990) went from 4-year-old vaudevillian to the Kennedy Center Honors because he always knew he could. He overcame the loss of an eye and racism along the way, trailblazing for others who came along afterwards. Without becoming maudlin over the entertainer's tragic death from throat cancer or overemphasizing his lifelong excesses in clothes, women, cigarettes and booze,

Leslie Bricusse's musical tribute, "Sammy" (playing at the Old Globe Theatre in its world premiere through Nov. 8) presents the story in most affecting fashion, even before one learns that in Davis' first film role, at 8, he played a small African-American boy who dreams of becoming president.

Bricusse also resists the temptation to become a character in his own book; instead he frames the entertainer in an economical pastiche of his life in dance and song.

Tony Award nominee Obba

Babatundé, who claims Davis as his mentor, portrays Sammy. A grand performer, Babatundé is small of stature and girth, as Davis was. He is an apt portrayer of Davis, who is said never to have been still. Rife with characters, movement, 23 musical numbers (some by Bricusse and others by Bricusse and Anthony Newley) and a lively 13-piece orchestra conducted by Ian Fraser, "Sammy" seldom rests either. If one felt exhausted at the end of the show on opening night, Oct. 2,

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SAMMY

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imagine the toll on Babatundé, who appears vocally and physically indefatigable. It's an amazing challenge fully met, and one must admit there are moments of repose within songs, places where Babatundé sings quietly and even more beautifully, but he is still singing.

Other characters include Sammy's grandmother (Ann Duquesnay), his father (Ted Louis Levy), Will Mastin (Lance Roberts) Eddie Cantor (Perry Ojeda), Frank Sinatra (Adam James), Dean Martin (Troy Britton Johnson) and Sammy's women, played by Mary Ann Hermansen, Heather Ayers, Victoria Platt and Keewa Nurullah. All this and an ensemble of topnotch singers/dancers, with choreography by Keith Young, direction by Keith Glover, orchestrations by Ned Paul Ginsburg and further conducting duties, music direction and dance music arrangements by Rahn Coleman.

In addition to four songs from Bricusse and Newley's "Stop the World — I Want to Get Off" ("What Kind of Fool Am I?," "Gonna Build a Mountain," "Once in a Lifetime" and "Someone Nice Like You") the show also includes "The Candy Man" and "The Only Man for Me," a trio for wife and mistresses. Babatundé and Hermansen's song and dance number, "Something in Your Smile," fairly sizzles.

Some might carp that the show suffers for lack of the Davis-recorded cover of Jerry Jeff Walker's "Mr. Bojangles," which he always included in his act. Some might even imagine, as this listener, that snatches of the tune are heard in the 11th-hour orchestration. Instead, the production ends with Bricusse's tribute song, "The Greatest," and then, more quietly, with Babatundé singing "The Good Things in Life" from



PHOTO BY CRAIG SCHWARTZ

Obba Babatundé as Sammy Davis Jr. in the world premiere musical "Sammy," at The Old Globe through Nov. 8.

Bricusse and Newley's "The Good Old Bad Old Days."

There are a few too many "Ta Da!" moments in Act I, and the Act II drug scene seems over long, as if we don't know what the Candy Man sells. Clocking in at 2 hours and 45 minutes "Sammy" is a bit flabby, but overall, the show is a wealth of entertainment and a fitting tribute to the amazing Sammy Davis Jr.

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Old Globe's 'Sammy' is a loving tribute to entertainer

BY JOSÉ A. LÓPEZ

Sammy Davis Jr. was a child prodigy, a gifted triple-threat performer (a singer, dancer and actor) who started thrilling vaudeville audiences at the age of 4.

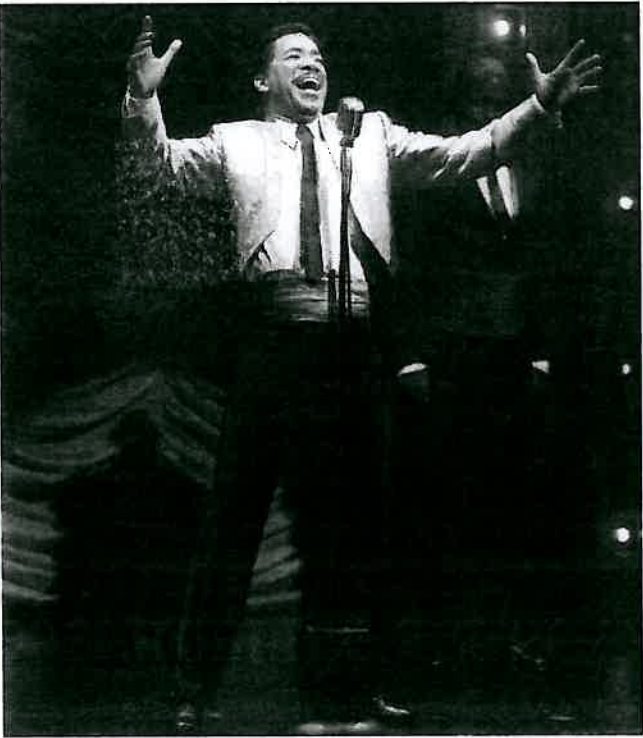
He was a pioneer of African-American civil rights; his talent helping him break through racial barriers, although not without backlash. He was the suave member of the Rat Pack, a hard-drinking, hard-living prodigy who reinvented himself over the course of a career that lasted nearly six decades. Along the way he battled society and his own demons to emerge as “Mr. Entertainment.”

Now, Sammy Davis Jr. is the subject of the latest Old Globe Theatre world premiere. “Sammy,” a new musical based on the life of the iconic entertainer, plays through Nov. 8. It provides an adulating look at the late legend, who died of lung cancer in 1990 at the age of 64.

The musical is the work of two-time Oscar winner and Grammy-winning songwriter Leslie Bricusse, who provides the play's book, music and lyrics. Davis and Bricusse were good friends, with Davis recording 60 of Bricusse's songs over the course of his career, including “What Kind of Fool Am I?” and “The Candy Man.”

Those songs, along with 21 others, including newer compositions by Bricusse and longtime collaborator, the late Anthony Newley, form the backbone of “Sammy,” directed by Keith Glover. The two-and-a-half hour production stars Obba Babatundé, a noted performer in his own right, and a protégé of Sammy Davis Jr.

While several noted actors have tried to channel Davis, Babatundé forges his own path, forgoing every easily recognizable mannerism that one identifies with Davis. What he presents, instead, is a nuanced performance, one that brilliantly captures the essence of the well-known showman. It's a subtle representation, one that sneaks up on you over the



Obba Babatundé, who counted Sammy Davis Jr. as a mentor, does a good job of fleshing out his character in “Sammy,” in a performance that never falls into stereotype.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY CRAIG SCHWARTZ

course of the play. By the end, it's not hard to envision that it's Davis on the stage.

Especially stunning is Babatundé's rendition of “The Joker,” the show-stopper that closes the first act. Davis, after he's threatened by Columbia Pictures' president Harry Cohn to stop seeing white actress Kim Novak, interprets the tune in

such a way that it appears to be both a threat and a cry of helplessness.

Not really a straight forward bio-play, “Sammy” presents a collection of key moments in Davis' life. It begins at the legendary post-Oscar bash of 1951, where his performance with his father and “uncle” as part of the Will Mastin Trio bowl over the stars.

From there the play goes back to Harlem in the 1920s, the neon lights of the Apollo Theatre blazing as his father (Ted Louis Levy) and Mastin (Lance Roberts) try to convince Davis' grandmother (Ann Duquesnay in a powerful performance as Rosa Davis) to let the 4-year-old go on tour with them.

During the course of the musical you see snippets of his life: the car accident that cost him his left eye; his first meeting with Frank Sinatra (Adam James, holding his own interpreting another icon); and his complicated love life, which included May Britt (Heather Ayers) and Lola Falana (Keewa Nurullah).

There are times when the pacing of “Sammy” feels spotty, which may be a result of there being so much ground to cover in a long life with only limited time to do it.

Themes, such as the racism he encounters while entertaining the troops during World War II and his embrace of Richard Nixon (during a trippy tie-dyed sequence that feels out of place with the rest of the play) feel somewhat rushed, and some of the characters are introduced so briefly (such as Novak, for example) that the audience doesn't wholly feel their impact at the conclusion of the musical as they comment on Davis' impact on their lives.

There is a lot to recommend in “Sammy” both for those who are fans of Davis' work and those who would like to know more. Highlights include the entertaining dance and the re-creation of the Rat Pack's Las Vegas cabaret show, complete with a boozy Dean Martin (Troy Britton Johnson).

Tickets for “Sammy” are \$54-\$89. For more information, go to www.TheOldGlobe.org.

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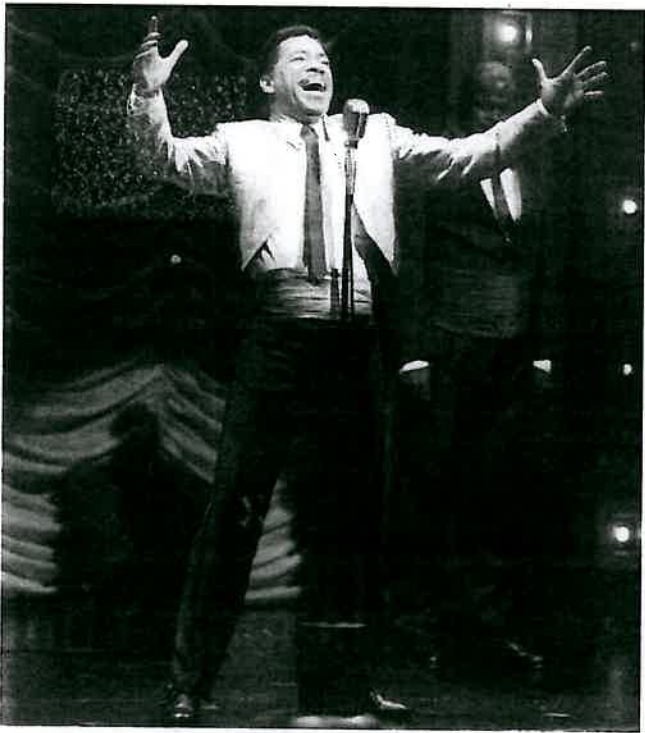
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Sammy

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accentuating the positive in los angeles theater.



Say the name Sammy to anyone over a certain age and the first (and perhaps the only) person to come to mind will be the one and only Sammy Davis Jr. It's therefore entirely fitting that Davis's musical biography, now playing to audience cheers at San Diego's Old Globe Theatre, should be titled Sammy. Just Sammy. Simply Sammy. A name that is synonymous with entertainment.

And first-class entertainment Sammy (The Musical) is, its book, music and lyrics written quite fittingly by the man who provided Sammy Davis Jr. with more hit songs than just about anyone else in his career—Leslie Bricusse.

In the title role, Obba Babatundé gives a star-making fireball of a performance. The triple-threat Babatundé may not be a dead ringer for the real Sammy, but by the final curtain, it would be hard to say where our memories of the actual Sammy end and Babatundé-as-Sammy begins. In Sammy, Babatundé has been given the role of a lifetime, and again and again he knocks the ball out of the ballpark, way out.

Sammy's life and legend, it's all there, starting from his early years in vaudeville with his dad Sammy Sr. and "uncle" Will Mastin as part of the Will Matsin Trio. (Early for Sammy means starting at the ripe old age of three, which may be one reason why Grandma Rosa wasn't crazy about the idea of her grandson going on the road.) A later meeting with 10-years-his-senior Frank Sinatra ("Look me up when you get to New York"), a World War II tour of duty in the integrated entertainment Special Services unit (where the previously sheltered Sammy learned about prejudice for the first time), post-war gigs in a segregated Vegas—all of this is a prelude to the stardom that was eventually Sammy's.

We see Sammy bounce slowly back from the car accident which took his left eye and robbed him temporarily of his center of balance, disastrous for a dancer. We witness his conversion to Judaism. We also observe his relationships with some of the world's most beautiful women, beginning with movie star Kim Novak, who saw the man and not his color. ("Is he a Negro? I hadn't noticed.") Columbia studio head Harry Cohn put an end to that relationship, which was followed by an arranged marriage to the more racially appropriate Loray White.

Sammy's later marriage to blonde Swedish film star May Britt, his relationship with voluptuous Lola Falana, and his third (and twenty-year) marriage to dancer Altovise Gore get the lioness's share of attention in Act Two.

As conceived by Bricusse, Sammy is a more traditional "book musical" than say Jersey Boys or Ray Charles Live, an approach which works, though you won't be hearing "Mr. Bojangles" or "I've Gotta Be Me" since only songs by Bricusse (or by Bricusse and Anthony Newley) are performed. This omission hardly matters, though, since so many of Sammy's greatest hits were Bricusse compositions. The Bricusse and Bricusse/Newley hits are performed not simply nightclub style, but also as commentary on Sammy's life and to move the story forward.

Babatundé's show-stopping rendition of "Once In A Lifetime" begins Sammy's show biz journey. "Gonna Build A Mountain" becomes Sammy's battle cry as he combats prejudice and aims for stardom during his WWI military service. "Who Can I Turn To?" has an eye-patched Sammy wondering if he can ever dance again. "The Joker" is sung as Sammy's reaction to Harry Cohn's interference in his love life, and ends Act One with a bang. "The Candy Man" features a 1960s Sammy in Afro and bellbottoms. "What Kind Of Fool Am I?" serves as an older Sammy's look back and the highs and lows of his life.

Other songs ("Another Hot Day In Harlem," "Getting My Act Together," "Livin' Large") are new Bricusse creations, proving that the composer has not lost his touch at the age of 78.



Director Keith Glover does exciting work here, and he is blessed with an all-around terrific cast. Ted Louis Levy and Lance Roberts provide sensational support as Sammy Sr. and Will Mastin, and when Batatumbé, Levy, and Roberts are executing choreographer Keith Young's snappy tap numbers, ovations are in order. Ann Duquesnay is a warm and wonderful Rosa Davis (Sammy's grandma), singing the sassy "The Buscuit's Better With The Butter." Adam Jones, who's made a successful career with Sinatra tribute shows, proves just why with "Charley Charm" and "Singin' And Swingin'," the latter with Troy Britton Johnson, spot-on as Dean Martin. (Johnson also portrays Harry Cohn and Sgt. Jennings.) Mary Ann Hermansen is a gorgeous and gorgeous-voiced Kim Novak, she and Babatundé dueting "Something In Your Smile," from Dr. Dolittle. Heather Ayers does touching work as May Britt, and joins sexy Keewa Nurullah (Lola Falana) and the beautiful, elegant Victoria Platt (Altovise Gore) in paying musical tribute to Sammy in "The Only Man For Me," an Act Two highlight. (All three women are fabulous singers.) Completing the outstanding ensemble are Janelle Engleson (WAC), Stephanie Girard, Lauren Haughton (WAC), Perry Ojeda (Eddie Cantor), Anise Ritchie, Alonzo Saunders (Murphy), and dance captain Sarrah Strimel (WAC).

Alexander Dodge has designed some stunning sets, which take us from Harlem to Vegas to Hollywood, and Fabio Toblini's costumes capture the various eras of Sammy's life to perfection. Chris Lee's lighting has just-right Vegas pizzazz. David Partridge's sound design couldn't be better, as the music of Sammy fills the Old Globe, the show's 13-piece orchestra conducted in masterful fashion by Ian Fraser.

Sunday evening's performance was awarded a standing ovation which began even before the first ensemble members had entered the stage to take their bows. No wonder. Sammy not only pays a well-deserved tribute to one of show biz (and America's) greats, it entertains from start to finish. When Rosa and Altovise lead the cast in the show's penultimate number, "The Greatest," we realize that indeed, for the past two and a half hours, we've been in the presence of one of the true giants of 20th Century entertainment.

Old Globe Theatre, Balboa Park, San Diego. Through November 8. Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 7:00, Thursdays and Fridays at 8:00, Saturdays at 2:00 and 8:00, Sundays at 2:00 and 7:00. Reservations: 619 234-5623 www.oldglobe.org

--Steven Stanley
October 4, 2009

Photos: Craig Schwartz

theater review

"Sammy" at the Old Globe Theatre

Mr. Bojangles

BY CHARLENE BALDRIDGE

Photo Courtesy: Estate of Sammy Davis



Sammy Davis, Jr. (1925-1990) was an energy-infused hooper and a far better, more expressive singer than most people remember. He was also known for his impressions, which he performed as an adjunct to dance and song. Along with Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin he was a member of the infamous Rat Pack. His appetites and excesses, among them fashion, women, cigarettes and whiskey, were no secret.

British musical theater composer Leslie Bricusse first met Davis when Davis came backstage in London after seeing Bricusse and Anthony Newley's musical, "Stop the World – I Want to Get Off." Davis recorded four songs from the musical, including "What Kind of Fool Am I?," which received the 1962 Grammy Award for Best Song. According to Bricusse, Sammy kept singing his songs daily during the remaining 30 years of his career.

Fitting tribute is paid to Davis in the world premiere musical "Sammy," with book,

"SAMMY"

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music and lyrics by Bricusse and additional songs by Bricusse and the late Newley. Tony Award-nominated Broadway star Obba Babatundé, who calls Davis his mentor, portrays Davis, who never rested, never stopped moving. The same can be said for Babatundé in this demanding role. There are few moments of repose vocally or physically, and if the show has a flaw, excess is to blame.

Babatundé, who is small in both girth and stature, may be an even better singer than

Davis was. An excellent dancer, he inhabits Sammy, his moves and gestures, if not quite yet his mesmerizing, assured magnetism.

Babatundé possesses grand sexual energy, however, and his song and dance number ("Something in Your Smile") with Mary Ann Hermansen as his early love – but never wife – Kim Novak, fairly sizzles in Keith Young's choreography and musical staging. The production is enhanced vocally by Heather Ayers as Sammy's second wife, May Britt, and Keewa Nurullah as Lola Falana, a later inamorata. Adam James impresses as Frank Sinatra and Troy Britton Johnson is fine as Dean Martin. James and Babatundé's duets, "Charley Charm" and "Salt and Pepper," are highlights of the show.

Bricusse's economical book tells the story of Sammy's life,

FROM PAGE 20

SAMMY: Flabby but entertaining tribute with song and dance

from his first road trip with the Will Mastin Gang at age 4 to his Kennedy Center Honors in 1987. Though Sammy encounters racism in the armed forces, Las Vegas and Hollywood, the show is fairly sunny until Act II, when Sammy's predilections lead him to drugs, alcohol and debauchery. Sinatra forces Davis to look at his life, and Babatundé brings down the house with his eleventh-hour ballad, "What Kind of Fool Am I?"

Thankfully, Bricusse does not explore Sammy's throat cancer, apparent cure, recurrence and tragic removal of his entire voice box. Instead, Grandma Rose (Ann Duquesnay), Sammy's last wife Altovise (Victoria Platt) and the excellent company pay tribute to "The Greatest," and Sammy sings us out on "The Good Things in Life," with dance and a few economical moves and gestures indicating the man who said he could and did break racial barriers for entertainers that came afterward, including the late Michael Jackson.

As directed by Keith Glover, "Sammy" is still flabby, based on the October 2 opening, but thoroughly entertaining. There is no talk of further life. One cannot imagine any production without the remarkably indefatigable Babatundé. ♦

Charlene Baldrige is a freelance arts writer and member of San Diego Critics Circle.

why they both lust for her despite their vituperative dialogue. The plot deepens and the dialogue becomes more dangerous in this 90-minute intermission less play. While the acting is very good, I was unsettled by the staccato speech rhythms expressed by both Smith and Meisle. They did not seem to belong to this turn of the century (20th) time, and I didn't feel the savage wit that was intended. However, the play does allow you to consider your own relationships and how you treat the people you love.

Write Out Loud is becoming a mainstay of the San Diego theatre scene, as *From Russia With Love* last Monday attested. The Old Town Theatre was almost full with a lively, appreciative audience. **Veronica Murphy, David S. Cohen, Jason Heil, Walter Ritter, Michael Grant Hall and the inimitable Dora Khnova** read works by Nabokov, Tolstoy Chekov, and Khnova herself. Khnova immigrated to the US from the USSR in 1992, without speaking a word of English. She has published a book since her arrival, and she tells her story with wit and warmth. A rare treasure. It was good to see David Cohen on the stage; his mellifluous voice is perfect for readings.

Then it was on to *Sammy*, at the Old Globe Theatre, playing through November 8. My knowledge of the late, great Sammy Davis, Jr. is limited in comparison to some fans who know every detail of the man and his stage magic, however my knowledge has been increased. Sammy, played with warmth, nuance and prodigious vocal and dancing talent by **Obba Babatundé**, opens the show in a blue light depicting a star with the soaring *Once in a Lifetime* and you are drawn to the man who was put on stage at the age of four and left it 60 years later. The prolific and mega-talented **Leslie Bricusse** wrote the book, music and lyrics for the show, in some numbers like *Who Can I Turn To* sharing the writing with Anthony Newley. The set is terrific and not over the top, the costumes are sharp and gorgeous, and I have never seen so many pairs of beautiful legs on the Globe stage. **Ann Duquesnay** as Sammy's grandmother Rosa Davis will give you goose bumps. Bricusse is adding and subtracting to the production on a regular basis, and it is good to know this, as there are pieces missing that are needed to flesh out Sammy's life. We know he didn't do well with women, until he married the serene Altovise Gore; we know he fell into drugs and consequently great sadness, which is portrayed in a somewhat over the top rendition reminiscent of Hair; we know he had a terrific relationship with Frank Sinatra played with great success by **Troy Britton Johnson**, but I left the theatre wondering who Sammy *really* was and why he rose meteorically to stardom. Some of the best scenes are with Sinatra, and when the Rat Pack gets together, the magic will move you. Terrific orchestra conducted by **Ian Fraser**, this show is a foot-tapping sentimental and loving portrayal of the inimitable Mr. Bo Jangles.

Theatre News

Please join the Actors Alliance on Sunday, October 11 at The Theatre, Inc. for a performance of *Fires In Heaven*, at which the generous **Douglas Lay** will give funds raised (and it's pay what you can) to the Alliance. Thank you Doug, we love you! And, on Monday October 19, we are holding the Annual Meeting of the Alliance at The Theatre, Inc. 899 C Street, when **Darko Tresnjak** will join me in conversation about life in the theatre around the United States and the globe. The event runs from 7-9pm, we will provide goodies to eat, and you will be the first to hear about an exciting new announcement from the Alliance!

Please join us on October 12 at the Old Globe for the Celebrity Sonnets, commencing at 7:30pm. Actors Alliance members can get in for \$5! It will be rich and rewarding evening, with a plethora of talent on the stage.

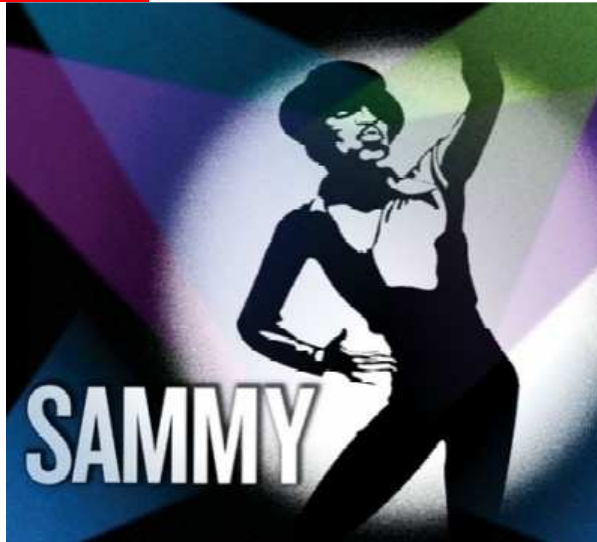
The Lion King is coming to town, opening at the Civic on October 13, I am interviewing one of the actors, so will share the story with you next week.

Sideman closes at Diversionary this weekend, will see it Saturday. *Things We Want* at NVA also closes. A couple of great productions! *9 Parts of Desire* from Mo'olelo opens October 8 at 10th Avenue Theatre. *Dog Act* from Moxie, their first (and reprised) production at the Rolando Theatre opens on October 15. Ion opens *Frozen* at Sushi also on October 15 and *Joyful Noise* opens at Lamb's on October 16. *Talley's Folly* with **David Ellenstein and Amy Biedel** opens at the North Coast Repertory on October 17. I feel exhausted just writing these, let alone seeing them all! We are blessed!

Sadly, I will have to miss a number of productions between October 23 and December 29 as I will be joining Kim (on 10/23) who is already in New Zealand while he takes a research sabbatical. We will miss you all, however, plan on seeing plenty of theatre in NZ and I will continue my column, giving a "down under" face to theatrical productions. More next week, until then, love, Jenni

Review: SHOW Commentary (** As seen 10/6/09)

SD OLD GLOBE Theatre:



"The Greatest"

SAMMY

Following some early-on Previews '*bumps-on-the-road-to-completion*', the present pre-Broadway tribute musical to *Sammy Davis, Jr.* – **SAMMY** – seems to be well on its way to a Broadway success! **SAMMY** – a new musical is based on the life of *Sammy Davis, Jr.* with a book, music and lyrics by *Leslie Bricusse*, and additional songs by *Anthony Newley*. Directed by *Keith Glover*, with the choreography and musical staging by *Keith Young*, from the opening scene, on Oscar Night in 1951, at CIRO's on Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood, Broadway veteran *Obba Babatunde* headlines as **Sammy Davis, Jr.** and like his mentor, *Obba* has been entertaining audiences since he was a child. A skilled actor, singer and dancer, **Sammy Davis** once said of *Babatunde*, that... "*I feel safe knowing that with cats like Obba, when I get out of this business, I am leaving it in good hands.*"



The Opening ... “Vaudeville” and “Burlesque”

As much a ‘tour-de-force’ in the role of ‘Samela’ (as Sammy was often called by his close friends), **Abba Babatunde** triumphed with the great hits...ONCE IN A LIFETIME, GONNA BUILD ME A MOUNTAIN, THE JOKER, THE CANDY MAN, WHAT KIND OF FOOL AM I, and this viewer’s favorite...WHOM CAN I TURN TO (as Sammy recovers his fighting spirit, after the loss of his eye in a traffic accident). Such an accomplished actor-singer and dancer, **Obba** shares the stage with a banquet-of-riches in the ‘women’ of his life. The cast features Tony Award Winner **Ann Duquesnay**, as grandma ROSA DAVIS (**Ann’s** own Broadway credits include “Bring In ‘Da Nose, Bring In ‘Da Funk”, “Hot Feet”, “It Ain’t Nothing But The Blues”, “Jelly’s Last Jam” and “Blues In the Night”) ... a power role, powerfully done! **Ann’s** quiet, controlled song ROSA’S PRAYER, following Sammy’s car accident ... though brief, was heartbreaking!





Many images of ... OBBA BABATUNDE as ‘Sammy Davis, Jr.’

The principal divas in Sammy’s life included ...*Mary Ann Hermansen* (as *KIM NOVAK*) especially in a lyrically beautiful dance duet (*choreographed by Keith Young*) with *Obba* in SOMETHING IN YOUR SMILE. Statuesque and stunning *Keena Nurullah*, with a super belt voice, is LOLA FALANA....scoring vocally, along with *Heather Ayers* (as *MARY BRITT*) and *Victoria Platt* (as *ALTOVISE*) in THE ONLY MAN FOR ME ...each framed picturesquely in the three moving modules used throughout the production. Striking as Sammy Davis, Jr’s final wife ALTOVISE is the elegant *Victoria Platt* (*she even looks like her*)*Altovise* is very fondly remembered here in San Diego for her appearance in **Rob Appel’s** Gospel Show “Applause! Applause!” some years back at the Spreckels Theatre. *Victoria Platt* does a poignant vocal with *Heather Ayers* (as *MAY BRITT*, *Sammy’s earlier wife and great ‘love’ of 7-years*) in SLOW DOWN SAMMY. These four dressed-to-the-nines divas share the stage with another eight gorgeous and shapely dancers, as the ‘*window-dressing*’ for the ups and downs of the ‘*greatest entertainer*’ showgirl-dancing at every transition from scene to scene.



Early days of rehearsals on SAMMY

In the male support department, *SAMMY* features **Ted Louis** (as *SAMMY DAVIS, SR.*) and **Lance Roberts** (as *WILL MASTIN*)...both rock the show from the outset (with *Obba*) as the Sammy-career-building **Will Mastin Trio**. **Adam James** and **Troy Britton**, as Sammy's life-long friends, **FRANK SINATRA** and **DEAN MARTIN**, along with *Obba*, do a trio *showstopper* in the vocally-charged Las Vegas *SINGIN' AN' SWINGIN'* at their Las Vegas Sands Hotel debut! So readers can fully appreciate that a potential hit musical, is *not just* the talents on stage, but also the *Creative Team* that executes...the Broadway glitz – the 'bells & whistles' (if you will) on stage. These are the juices of the eye-poppin' Scenic Designs of **Alexander Dodge**, the elaborate costumes of **Fabio Toblini**, all lit effectively by **Chris Lee**, with spot-on Sound Design by **John H. Shivers** and **David Patridge** (remember these names). Music Director **Rahn Coleman** and Conductor **Ian Fraser**, led the crisp, socko-sounding orchestra of 13 musicians! *SAMMY* director **Keith Glover** returned to **The Old Globe** for this show, having previously directed his own work "*Thunder Knocking on the Door*" – winner of the American Theatre Critics Association's Osborn Award, and he has authored a new adaption of the Sammy Davis, Jr. vehicle, *GOLDEN BOY* (based on the original by Clifford Odets and William Gibson). **Glover** has his work cut-out for him, and undoubtedly will continue to make the necessary improvements, some show editing, *etc.*....to move the production upwards and onwards!



(Left) Ted Louis and Lance Roberts with Obba Babatundé (Right) ...and with Ann Duquesnay

*(As noted by Globe's Executive Producer **Lou Spisto**) "The opportunity to work with Leslie Bricusse, and tell the story of the great **Sammy Davis, Jr.** was something we couldn't pass up. Bricusse contributed to Sammy's canon of hits, more than any other individual songwriter. Who better to give us an insightful book, and a new score which includes the classics that helped shape this legendary entertainer? Though Sammy crossed many boundaries throughout his multifaceted career, there was more to him than his iconic public persona. Our aim with this new work (with substantial sponsorship from San Diegans), is to both honor **Sammy Davis, Jr.** for those who knew and loved him, and to also introduce this one-of-a-kind performer to a new audience!"*



**UBBA BABATUNDE with
'Dean Martin' TROY BRITTON JOHNSON and 'Frank Sinatra' ADAM JAMES**

For the present 2 ½-hour show, of course, *SAMMY's* running time is of the essence, as it develops for a Broadway engagement. However, we do miss the *muses* and stories of Sammy Davis Jr. and Liza Minnelli, Tony Bennett, Ray Charles, as well as other mega-stars in Sammy's life! Playing through November 8th, ticketing for *SAMMY* can be obtained by calling ...

(619) 23-GLOBE, or go online at www.TheOldGlobe.org.

The Old Globe

SAN DIEGO DAILY TRANSCRIPT

October 9, 2009

Drama Desk

By Jenna Long

'Creditors' a nice change

"You don't truly know your spouse, do you, until after you marry them," says Gustav, the master manipulator of this La Jolla Playhouse world premiere.

An August Strindberg tragicomedy adapted and directed by Doug Wright ("I Am My Own Wife"), the show dissects the husband/wife relationship with regard to issues of jealousy, revenge, forgiveness, honor, depravity and vindictiveness — not to mention the contradiction between both adoring and despising the one you're with.

While the dialogue can feel wordy and repetitive at times, the story is one worth telling by this talented three-person cast, and the set and costumes alone are reason enough to take a look.

As a period piece approaching the 20th century, graceful gowns and three-piece suits in muted beiges, whites and grays complement the surroundings perfectly, and the show's appearance has a similar antiquated beauty to the Playhouse's stunning 2005 production of Molière's "The Miser."

The Playhouse has a knack for making the old seem fresh and new, and that's certainly the case with Wright's latest enterprise.

"Creditors" is playing through Oct. 25 at La Jolla Playhouse.

'Sammy' pulls it off

The Old Globe's world

premiere musical "Sammy," following the life of Rat Pack legend Sammy Davis Jr., explodes with nonstop energy, a slew of uplifting and powerful songs, and spectacular costumes and sets.


The story exemplifies not only the high in the entertainer's life as he rises to the top, but doesn't shy away from the rollercoaster ride of embedded racism, drug use and personal hardships Sammy had to endure along the way, including a real-life love affair with actress Kim Novak that was forbidden and hushed by studio executives because of the interracial stigma attached.

It's a must-see for musical lovers, with a hilariously entertaining scene featuring Dean Martin and Frank Sinatra headlining with Sammy in Las Vegas during their glory days.

"Sammy" is playing through Nov. 8 at the Old Globe Theatre.

jenna.long@sddt.com

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Sammy

At the Old Globe Theatre

Reviewed by Les Spindle

October 05, 2009



Librettist-songwriter Leslie Bricusse ("Victor/Victoria") and famous entertainer Sammy Davis Jr. (1925–1990) were close friends, and Davis parlayed many of Bricusse's best-known songs into signature numbers for himself. Bricusse's Davis bio-musical comes across primarily as an unabashed valentine to his late pal. Aside from an impressive star performance by Obba Babatundé in the title role, and a nifty song-and-dance sequence here or there, this superficial hodgepodge will leave musical theater buffs feeling shortchanged.

The fleeting scenes between numbers contain about as much substance as one might glean from random snippets from a biographical TV documentary. Anything that could be perceived as uncomplimentary to the celebrity is given short shrift in this canonization. Issues such as rampant 1960s-era racism, taboos against blacks and whites mating, substance abuse, and womanizing are trotted out and quickly dismissed, squeezed in between production numbers. The episodes survey Davis' career launch at age 4 in a vaudeville act with his father and uncle; Davis' rise to success in television, on Broadway, and in Las Vegas; his Rat Pack antics with his best friend Frank Sinatra (gamely but ineffectively channeled by Adam James), and his marriages and romantic dalliances. The show ends with a late-career retrospective in which Davis' worshipful friends, family, and colleagues sing his praises.

The best songs are Sammy's solos, wonderfully performed by Babatundé. Many are recycled from other stage and screen musicals scored by Bricusse, far surpassing the wan original tunes he penned for this show. The highlights are legendary Bricusse–Anthony Newley ballads ("What Kind of Fool Am I?," "Who Can I Turn To?"). Reasonably appealing is a duet by Babatundé and Mary Ann Hermansen (fairly credible as screen star Kim Novak) to "Something in Your Smile," from the movie-musical turkey "Dr. Dolittle." Far less palatable is the cheery Bricusse-Newley "The Candy Man" (from "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory"), ridiculously misused here in a cheesy psychedelic sequence with Sammy and a bevy of writhing babes indulging in a dope orgy.

Outstanding support comes from Ann Duquesnay as Sammy's brassy but nurturing grandmother.

In her brief scenes as Swedish screen siren May Britt (Davis' second wife), Heather Ayers struggles with her wisp of an accent. Playing legendary entertainers, Troy Britton Johnson (as a crooning, boozy Dean Martin) and Perry Ojeda (as Eddie Cantor) are likewise lacking. Design elements are mostly undistinguished. Rahn Coleman's music direction is solid, and Keith Young's choreography and musical staging are satisfactory. Director Keith Glover's job primarily seems to have been providing Elmer's Glue to hold the disparate pieces of the diffuse enterprise together.

Presented by and at the Old Globe Theatre, 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park, San Diego.
Oct. 2–Nov. 8. Tue.–Wed., 7 p.m.; Thu.–Fri., 8 p.m.; Sat., 2 and 8 p.m.; Sun., 2 and 7 p.m.
(619) 234-5623. www.theoldglobe.org.

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VOICE & VIEWPOINT

October 8, 2009



"Sammy," A Must See Performance

review by John E. Warren

Obba Babatundé's performance as the Late Sammy Davis, Jr. at the Old Globe Theatre is not merely seen, it is experienced. The moment the curtain goes up, the clock rolls back at least 30 years. While those who have seen the play know that Obba is not really Sammy, his performance is so incredible that it is as if the spirit of Sammy Davis, Jr. has come back to perform in this great actor. Babatundé best described his performance when he said in an interview, "I am doing a reincarnation..I would like to be able to capture the essence of who the man was, and tell his story to the best of my ability." He succeeds.

The portrayal of the early life and encounters of Sammy, the racism in the military and the objection, in graphic terms, by the white studio executives to his marriage to May Britt, played by the talented Heather Ayers, is a true reminder of our nation's past. The powerful presence of Rosa Davis, Sammy's grandmother, played by the very strong and gifted Ann Duquesnay, gives an insightful portrayal of the foundation and support only loving grandparents can give to the lives of those like Sammy who have been abandoned by a parent. The many songs in the musical like the nostalgic "The Candy Man" and "What Kind of Fool Am I" take on newer and deeper meaning as the entire cast pour their souls into this production.

Though Sammy Davis was a relentless pioneering entertainment genius, racism, gambling and his troubled personal life haunted and challenged him throughout his long career.

Sammy Davis, Jr., the man, died at the age of 64 in 1990, but Sammy Davis, Jr., the legend, lives on in this magnificent production.



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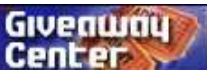
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Entertainment :: Theatre

Sammy

by Steve Heyl
EDGE Contributor
Monday Oct 12, 2009

From the opening, with purple lights silhouetting him, you know that **Sammy**, the new musical at the Old Globe in San Diego, is Obba Babatundé's show. Mr. Babatundé was a protege of Sammy Davis, Jr.

According to Davis, Babatundé "can do everything I can do"; in this show he proves it. He delivers a performance with the energy and versatility of Davis, himself. He pours emotion into every song, taps and does the soft-shoe with the best of them, and even plays a mean drum solo on stage. The portrayal of Davis learning to dance again after a car accident took an eye and his sense of balance is phenomenal. Whatever happens when this show moves to Broadway, the role of Sammy Davis, Jr. will be indelibly linked with Mr. Babatundé



Obba Babatundé as Sammy Davis, Jr. in *Sammy* at The Old Globe
(Source: http://www.theoldglobe.org/pressphotos/sammy_press.html)



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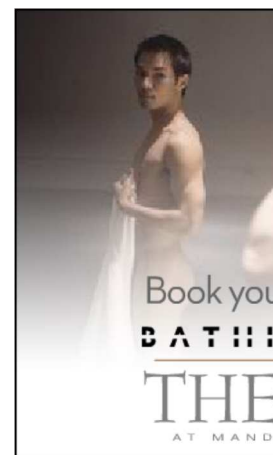
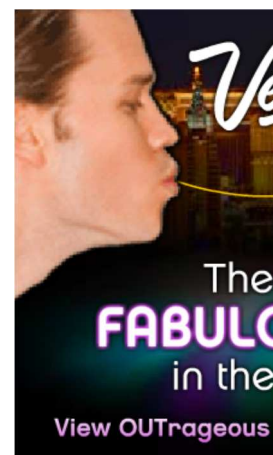
BUZZ UP!

Rounding out the Rat Pack is Adam James as Frank Sinatra and Troy Britton Johnson at Dean Martin. Mr. James has played Sinatra in a variety of other shows, so he has Sinatra's moves and voice, but is clearly uncomfortable playing second fiddle as required here. Mr. Johnson's brief appearance as Martin is quite humorous. The Davis family, played by Ted Louis Levy as Sammy Davis, Sr., Lance Roberts as Will Mastin, and Ann Duquesnay as Rosa Davis are excellent, especially in "The Biscuit's Better With the Butter" and its reprise. The women in Davis's life, Kim Novak (played by Mary Ann Hermansen), Altovise Gore (played by Victoria Platt) and Lola Falana (played by Keewa Nurullah) shine in the one song the do together ("The Only Man For Me"); each has another song, but are lightly drawn.

Keith Young's choreography and musical staging is top notch, incorporating styles from across cultures and decades, sometimes simultaneously, such as when a group of a singing white WACS are confronted with Davis' Soul-influenced dance steps. Alexander Dodge has designed three large pieces that serve multiple functions as the set. These pieces can be walls, windows, offices, and even entire apartments depending on the scene. The lighted double proscenium is inspired, changing colors along with the mood, action and decade.

According do Sammy Davis Jr., Obba Babatundé, "can do everything I can do"; in this show Babatundé proves it.

The problem with the show comes from the most unlikely of sources - the story, which follows, mostly chronologically, Sammy Davis, Jr.'s life. A common affliction among biography musicals, there is no overarching conflict or tension. There are hints of a lifelong struggle against racial prejudice, but the show gives us the action (being beaten up for dancing with a white performer in the army, being forced by the mob to break off his relationship with Kim Novak and marry black singer Loray White) but little insight into how these incidents change him. Only the song "Black Sammy, White Sammy", with lyrics like "Black is beautiful, but is it as beautiful as white", gives any hint of his internal conflict. Likewise, money problems are hinted at but never revealed.




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Leslie Bricusse (Stop the World I Want to Get Off, VICTOR/Victoria), wrote the book, music, and lyrics. Mr. Bricusse made the unusual and not wholly successful decision to use a mixture of songs from his previous shows and new material. Many of the songs included from previous Bricusse vehicles are not generally associated with the Davis repertoire. The effect is that of a jukebox musical loaded with B-sides. The material is uneven: "The House O' the Lord" is a clever premise, but in execution sounds neither Gospel nor Jewish. "The Candy Man" on the other hand, is finally given the drug context we all knew was there and works beautifully. But, "What Kind of Fool Am I?" falls flat, despite the alone-on-stage-in-the-spotlight-soliloquy treatment. "The Biscuit's Better With the Butter", which concludes that "The Future's Better with a Dream" is classic musical theater. The Davis/Sinatra duets "Charley Charm" and "Salt & Pepper" feel particularly extraneous, although it would be hard to imagine a show about Davis without at least one Davis/Sinatra duet. "Vaudeville" and "Burlesque" are catchy, "Rosa's Prayer" and "Another Hot Day In Harlem" less so.

If this sounds like a lot of music, it is, and the book suffers for it. Every scene seems obligated to include a song. The book has the style and pacing of a musical from the 1960s; if retro was Mr. Bricusse's intention, he has succeeded. Even so, he doesn't seem to know how to end it. The tail of the second act has at least three moments that seem to indicate the finale of the show, yet in two of them it continues on. There's a song titled "Getting' my Act Together" and that's what this show needs to do. In its current form, it will not last on Broadway. That's a shame because Babatundé's performance deserves a larger audience.

Sammy continues through November 8 at the Old Globe in San Diego. For more information visit the

A computer geek by day, one of Steve's evening loves is San Diego theater (the other is his husband of 20 years), which he enjoys sharing with others (theater, not the husband).

COMMENTS

"Sammy"

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By Charlene Baldrige

If you knew 'Sammy'

THE SHOW: Leslie Bricusse's *Sammy*, with additional songs by Leslie Bricusse and Anthony Newley, staged by Keith Glover



THE STORY: The celebratory tribute to performer Sammy Davis Jr. contains more than 20 songs by Bricusse and Newman. In economical style, Bricusse's book dips

kaleidoscope-style into little Sammy's first road trip at age 4, his rise to fame, the loss of his eye in an auto accident, his battles with the racism of the era, and Sammy's demons-cigarettes and whisky and wild, wild women.

THE PERFORMERS: Seemingly indefatigable of voice and body, Tony-nominated **Obba Babatundé** portrays the entertainer who actually mentored him in his own career. Without aping, Babatundé evokes the man, his movements and his milieu. Those who were not fans may come away with greater understanding of Davis's conflicted life. Those who were and are fans will remember and rejoice. His career was a natural, from the time he went on the road with his "uncle" Will Mastin and his father, Sammy Sr. (portrayed by Lance Roberts and Ted Louis Levy). Ann Duquesnay portrays Sammy's grandmother, who was his soul mother and who raised him. **Adam James** and **Troy Britton Johnson** evoke Sammy's fellow Rat Pack members Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin, and **Victoria Platt, Keewa Nurullah** and **Mary Ann Hermansen** play the important women in Sammy's life. But the life and the show and the amazement belong to Sammy. To his credit, Bricusse cuts the story off with the ceremony at which Davis received his Kennedy Center Honors for lifetime achievement. Tragically, Davis died of throat cancer two years later.



THE PRODUCTION is accompanied by a crackerjack, 13-piece orchestra conducted by Ian Fraser and includes such fabulous songs as "What Kind of Fool Am I?," "Gonna Build a Mountain," "Once in a Lifetime," and "Someone Nice Like You") from *Stop the World-I Want to Get Off*, "The Candy Man" and "The Only Man for Me," a trio for wife and mistresses. Babatundé and Hermansen sing and dance to "Something in Your Smile," which fairly sizzles.

My major carp is that the show does not include one of Davis' signature numbers, Jerry Jeff Walker's "Mr. Bojangles," which he always included in his act. These ears heard snatches of the tune in the 11th hour orchestration. The show ends with Bricusse's tribute song, "The Greatest," and then, more quietly, with Babatundé singing "The Good Things in Life" from Bricusse and Newley's 1974 show, "The Good Old Bad Old Days."

As always, the Globe's production team does excellent work: scenic designer Alexander Dodge; costume designer Fabio Toblini; lighting designer Chris Lee; sound designers

John H. Shivers and David Patridge; orchestrator Ned Paul Ginsburg; and music director/dance music arranger Rahn Coleman.

THE LOCATION: through November 8 at 7 pm Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Sundays; 8 pm Thursdays-Saturdays; 2 pm Saturdays and Sundays at the Old Globe Theatre, Balboa Park, \$54-\$89, www.theoldglobe.org or (619) 234-5623.

BOTTOM LINE: Worth a try.

619-337-1525 or visit www.cygnettheatre.com.

'9 Parts of Desire'

Seventh-century imam Ali ibn Abu Talib taught that "God created sexual desire in ten parts; then he gave nine parts to women and one part to men."

But *9 Parts of Desire*, based on women playwright Heather Raffo interviewed in Iraq in 1991, is not about sex. It's about survival, and these women have more basic needs: shelter, food, safety, recognition, even a bit of freedom.

Raffo, American with an Iraqi father, originally wrote this as a short piece for a class project at the University of San Diego. Later she fleshed it out and presented it as a solo show in Edinburgh in 2003 and later in London and New York, receiving a Susan Smith Blackburn Prize Special Commendation and a Lucille Lortel Award for Best Solo Show.



(l-r) Lisel Gorell-Getz, Frances Anita Rivera and Dré Slaman in '9 Parts of Desire' presented by Mo'olelo Performing Arts Company at the 10th Avenue Theatre through Sunday, Nov. 1. CREDIT: NICK ABADILLA

Mo'olelo Performing Arts Company presents *9 Parts of Desire* through Sunday, Nov. 1 at the 10th Avenue Theatre. Janet Hayatshahi directs.

Before a blue Islamic arch, nine Iraqi women portrayed by three actors – Lisel Gorell-Getz, Frances Anita Rivera and Dré Slaman – pass the black abaya (robe) back and forth as each woman speaks about her life.

Artist Layal (Gorell-Getz) is the dominant character, and the easiest for westerners to relate to. A bit of a daredevil, she flings the abaya carelessly around her shoulders like a shawl. A collaborator (despite the brutal murder she describes Uday as perpetrating), she has found favor with Saddam's regime, perhaps because she is free with her sexual favors ("I've been raped and raped and raped and I want more"). After all, "Isn't everything in this country a matter of survival?" she asks.

Gorell-Getz also plays Umm Ghada, who speaks movingly of the day in 1991 that she became the only survivor of American planes that bombed the shelter holding her and nine of her family members, and a Basra doctor (Gorell-Getz) who laments the huge increase in genetic mutations among the newborn.

The old exile Huda (Slaman), in her seventies, speaks proudly of being a dissident all her life. "In '58 anybody who was intelligent was Communist. When I lived in Beirut during their war, I protested too. Everywhere I go there is a war."

Slaman also plays a young Girl who dances with abandon to N'Sync but also knows the make of U.S. tank that took out much of her house, and collects the

bullets and guns she finds.

Rivera's lively Bedouin Amal has left two husbands and been abandoned by a third prospect; still, she looks for love, certain it is out there. She now lives in London so her children can see their father. But "I have no peace; always I am looking for peace," she says. Rivera also plays an American in New York anxious about her family's safety in Iraq.

Several of these characters tell harrowing stories; it is impossible not to be moved by them. But impeding the telling somewhat is the decision to vary accents according to the speaker's background and education level, which creates barriers to comprehension. The directorial judgment to have one character echo another's line is a bit off-putting as well.

Gorell-Getz leads this fine cast with her outstanding portrayals, but I couldn't help thinking the piece would be better done in its original solo incarnation.

9 Parts of Desire plays through Sunday, Nov. 1, at the 10th Avenue Theatre. Shows Thursday through Saturday at 7:30 p.m.; matinee Sunday at 2 p.m. For tickets, call 619-342-7395 or visit www.moolelo.net

'Sammy'

Called by many "the greatest entertainer the world has ever seen," Sammy Davis, Jr. broke down more than a few

barriers in his career as singer, dancer and entertainer.

Davis was a showbiz kid, born in 1925 to vaudeville dancers. After his parents split, the 4-year-old Sammy went on the road with his father Sammy and “uncle” Will Mastin, where he began his career.

The Old Globe Theatre presents the new musical bio *Sammy* through Sunday, Nov. 8. Keith Glover directs.

Leslie Bricusse, who knew Davis well, wrote book, music and lyrics (and many of Sammy’s greatest hits, among them “What Kind of Fool Am I,” “Gonna Build a Mountain,” “The Candy Man”); he and Anthony Newley wrote 15 additional songs for the show, which has Broadway ambitions. That’s a lot of music – 23 songs – but none of the new songs can compare to the ones everyone will come to hear.

The show boasts a great cast, headlined by Broadway veteran Obba Babatundé (*Dreamgirls*, *Jelly’s Last Jam*), who traveled with Davis for some years. He doesn’t imitate (who could?) as much as try to distill the essence of the man. It’s a tall (or short, in this case) order, and Babatundé triumphs.

Sammy’s grandmother Rosa Davis (Ann Duquesnay) provided his center, the home he could always return to. Duquesnay’s big, round voice sounds like home should feel, and she steals the show whenever she’s onstage.

Davis led an eventful life during a pivotal period in the nation’s history, and Bricusse tries to get it all in – the accident that cost him his left eye, the racism, his controversial marriage to Swedish actress May Britt, his conversion to Judaism – but the inclusionary instinct (scattershot approach?) leads to a one-over-lightly approach that left me wishing for less celebrity bio and more understanding of why this man mattered.

The show also suffers from tech overload, with sets that seem in constant motion. Alexander Dodge’s sets aren’t that evocative in the first place; moving them only concentrates the attention on that fact.

Sammy has a future: it has a subject that will interest many, a great cast and fine choreography. It needs tightening and focus. But even as it stands, it’s good entertainment.

Sammy plays through Sunday, Nov. 8, at the Old Globe Theatre. Shows Sunday, Tuesday and Wednesday at 7 p.m.; Thursday through Saturday at 8 p.m.; matinees Saturday and Sunday at 2 p.m. For tickets, call 619-23-GLOBE or visit www.TheOldGlobe.org.



(l-r) Troy Britton Johnson as Dean Martin, Obba Babatundé as Sammy Davis, Jr. and Adam James as Frank Sinatra in the world premiere of *Sammy*, a new musical by Leslie Bricusse at The Old Globe, through Sunday, Nov. 8. CREDIT: CRAIG SCHWARTZ

No comments yet

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Name:

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SENIOR RAMBLINGS

Theatre Chat

I recently saw two theatrical presentations. The first, "The Savannah Disputation," was very good; the second, "Sammy," was sensational.

"The Savannah Disputation" was about religion, lack of, etc. It was excellently acted.

It's on until November 1 at the Old Globe. Written by Evan Smith, and directed by Kim Rubinstein, it's about two Catholic spinsters. When the good-natured spinster welcomes a door-to-door Pentecostal missionary in to their home, her conviction begins to waiver. The other spinster quickly hatches a plan to bring her sister back in to the fold by inviting their unsuspecting parish priest to dinner, leading to a religious shake-down, and a theological showdown about the true meaning of faith.

The second presentation is "Sammy," all about Sammy Davis, Jr. This will be the hit at the Old Globe. Obba Babatunde, who is Sammy, is sensational. He sings, dances and acts beautifully. There is a cast of 17 Broadway singers and dancers. The actress who plays Rosa David, Sammy's grandmother, is wonderful. She has a great, unusual voice, and great charisma.

The book, music and lyrics is by Leslie Bricusse, with additional songs by Bricusse and Anthony Newley, directed by KeithGlover. It's at the Old Globe until November 8.



Senior Ramblings

C. DAVID KULMAN

The musical mentions Sammy's wives, including the Swedish Mai Britt, and his last wife, Altovese. There's also a scene when Harry Cohn, the head of Columbia Studios, threatens Sammy with bodily harm if he doesn't immediately drop his girlfriend, Kim Novak.

Speaking of Sammy's girlfriends, a lady I've known for over 40 years, who was a showgirl and was often mistaken for Marilyn Monroe, went out with Sammy Davis Jr. and Mickey Rooney. She told me that these very short men were only short in stature! Next time I talk with her, I'll ask for more details, which I probably won't be able to pass on.

Miscellaneous Chat

One of the senior clubs to which I belong, Fellowship of Older Gays (FOG), had their 16th anniversary dinner at Tom Ham's Lighthouse on Harbor Island Drive on September 21. I attended as they were honoring their members over 80, which includes me. There were eight of us. Three of us live in my building. (No, it's not an old-age home.) I can say, a good time was had by all.

Cat Chat

Owning a cat may cut your risk of heart attack death, researches at the University of Minnesota's Zeenat Qureshi Stroke Research Center have found.

During a ten-year study, subjects with cats were 40 percent less likely

to die from a heart attack than their catless counterparts. Feline companionship may actually help combat heart-harming stress and anxiety: a comparable effect has already been shown in studies of dog owners.

If you've just lost your pet and are elderly (over 80), should you consider getting another pet? If you're considering it, contact your local Humane Society adoption counselors. They will have a list of questions to ask to make sure it's the right decision, based on your needs and lifestyle.

Age Chat

For we older "coots" who might

remember the following who are still alive, here are their current ages: Author Jackie Collins (62); author Anne Rice (68); actress Susan Sarandon (63); comedian Bill Dana (85); singer Al Martina (82); actor Ben Vereen (63); and Barbara Walters (80).

And, now, enjoy your youth if you still have it, and even your old age if you're still here. And, be sure to go on out and hold someone's hand!

(C. David Kulman can be reached at Presidio Sentinel, 325 W. Washington, Suite 2-181, San Diego, CA 92103.)

ENTERTA

Sammy's Star Power Still Bright

By Barbara Smith

There is a scene in the first act of "Sammy," now playing at San Diego's Old Globe Theatre, where Obba Babatundé, portraying legendary performer Sammy Davis, Jr. struggles to lift himself from the floor while recovering from the 1954 car accident that took his eye and nearly claimed his life. He staggers and sways and reaches upward for strength, finally pulling himself to his feet. This seminal scene epitomizes the indomitable spirit of this iconic performer, whose remarkable life and career broke barriers, setting a standard for entertainment that has yet to be paralleled.

The production, which played to a packed house last week, takes on the daunting challenge of capturing the essence of Davis' complex life and 60-year career in a 2½ hour production, a feat

which writer Leslie Bricusse, along with a top-notch production team and cast, achieves admirably. Babatundé gives a consummate performance, paying tribute to the man whose talent

he aspired to as a child and who later became a close friend. Babatundé is onstage in virtually every scene, and like his triple-threat mentor, sings, dances and acts with finely nuanced



RTAINMENT



energy and passion.

With 23 songs, some originally scored for this show, "Sammy" is a feast for the eyes and the ears. The musical opens in Ciro's nightclub in 1951 Hollywood, with Davis, playing to an adoring audience and reflecting on his life. Thus the scene is set for a journey back in time. The story spirals back to Davis' childhood in Harlem where his grandmother and guardian Rosa Davis, in a powerhouse performance by Ann Duquesnay, tries to convince father Sammy Davis, Sr. (Ted Louis Lévy) and hooper/partner Will Mastin (Lance Roberts) to keep the talented 4-year old child in school rather than travel with them on the road. She of course loses the argument, but the world gains a star. The first act takes us through those early years where the wide-eyed and eager Davis, played throughout by Babatundé, gets his first taste of show business, touring as part of the Will Mastin Trio. Long, leggy showgirls strut and preen in "Vaudeville" and "Burlesque," evoking that magical era.

Directed by Keith Glover, the show ambitiously chronicles many of the triumphs and tragedies in Davis' career. Racism is a constant theme: he is beaten and the butt of racial epithets in the Army; Jim Crow laws prevented him from staying in the very hotels in Las Vegas where he was performing; he is threatened and ordered by studio heads to end his romance with blonde actress Kim Novak (Mary Ann Hermansen) and marry a black woman, a

marriage that lasted only a year and was followed by marriage to Swedish actress May Britt (Heather Ayers). Indeed Davis' dalliances with white women is an endless source of controversy in the play as it was in his life, even with his civil rights activism, and the dialog proffers the unkind cuts flung his way: "the blonde leading the blind" and "I only have eye for you," cruel references to the loss of his eye in the horrendous car accident. "The Only Man for Me," with May, Lola Falana (Keewa Nurallah), another of Davis' love interests, and Altovise Gore (Victoria Platt), with whom Davis at last found the rock he needed, is at once poignant and telling of the artist's painfully complicated relationships with women.

Davis' years with the Rat Pack is highlighted in several scenes with "Singin' and Swingin'" showing the party era in full tilt. Adam James as Frank Sinatra is spot on as he, Davis, and Dean Martin (Troy Britton Johnson) soft shoe, sling-drinks and "ring-a-ding" shtick onstage in Vegas.

While the play has an ensemble cast, Babatundé is clearly the standout with a brilliantly rendered performance of song, dance and acting that is "not so much an impersonation but rather an incarnation" of Sammy Davis, Jr., a goal that Babatundé set for himself and achieved flawlessly.

Babatundé's credits are many: Tony and Emmy nominations "Dreamgirls," and "Miss Evers Boys," respectively) and a host of other theatre, TV and film roles.

His tap and interpretive dancing are eye-popping, in particular the scene in which, propless, Davis careens wildly behind the wheel of his out-of-control car, culminating in the chaotic crash which nearly ended his life. Kudos to choreographer Keith Young for many such exquisitely crafted scenes.

With book, music and lyrics by Oscar and Grammy winner Leslie Bricusse, whose friendship and artistic collaborations with Davis spanned decades, the play is an homage to a once-in-a-lifetime performer. At a time when this country has just elected its first African American president, it is important to remember the forbears who made such achievements possible. Babatundé is the first to give credit to his mentor. One of the last times he saw his friend was in Stockholm in 1978, Babatundé related in a post-performance discussion in San Diego. "He told me to never quit. And I was able to tell him 'thank you for coming in through the kitchen so I could come in through the front door.'"

Many audience members spoke lovingly and nostalgically about having seen Davis in nightclubs and onstage. Said one: "This show lets us feel that we're doing something for Sammy." Indeed, this is one show you don't want to miss. Do something for Sammy and much more, do something for yourself. See "Sammy" at the Old Globe Theatre through November 8. For ticket information, phone: 619-234-5623 or visit www.theoldglobe.org.

TALK

THEATRE TALK



Nojangles



THU OCT 29, 2009

Host: James C. Taylor

Listen to/Watch entire show:

This is James Taylor with *Theatre Talk*.

The late 1950's and 1960's were indeed [Sammy Davis Jr.](#)'s moment. During that time he was one of, if not, the highest paid entertainer in America.



His career is the subject of a new musical titled [Sammy](#) -- and in that clip you just heard, that was Obba Babatundé who sings, dances, acts and in many ways is *Sammy* Davis Jr. on stage.

His look-alike performance is without a doubt the best thing about *Sammy* (directed by Keith Glover) a show clearly modeled around the success of other sixties-biographical musicals, like [Jersey Boys](#).

Unfortunately, *Sammy* has none of the narrative grace of that show, nor does it even offer much insight into its subject. The musical, written by Leslie Bricusse, is little more than a crude biographical sketch.

For those born after his Rat Pack heyday, *Sammy* Davis Jr. has always been a mystery. Sure, you knew he was famous because of his TV appearances (and, of course, the *Canonball Run* films) but the roots of his fame — and his role in breaking racial barriers in the entertainment industry — weren't televised. The pre-superstar days would seem to be great fodder for the theater, because that's where Davis grew up: onstage in the vaudeville circuit.



What's missing in *Sammy* is the recreation of that world, a world you can't find on YouTube. To read in the program about the way Sammy Davis Jr. took London by storm with his nightclub act in 1960, you'd swear it was a phenomenon like Michael Jackson's *Thriller* Album. Bricusse was witness to this and many other moments in Davis' career, yet *Sammy* conveys none of that early electricity. Compared with the exciting way *Jersey Boys* uses music to dramatize the Four Seasons' rise to fame, *Sammy* leaves you wondering if you missed something — or if history was wrong.

Instead of bringing Davis into closer focus, *Sammy* provides a generic, whistle-stop tour through the headlines of his life — at times it feels like little more than a Wikipedia entry set to music.

And old music at that, Bricusse has written a few new songs, but most of the music is recycled from his own hits, songs he wrote with Anthony Newley for shows like *Stop The World—I Want To Get Off* or *The Roar of the Greasepaint—the Smell of the Crowd*. The one number that actually evokes the era, is a new one written about the Rat Pack, called "Singing' an' Swingin'!"

This song, while nothing groundbreaking, succinctly conveys Frank, Dino and Sammy's success and charm. It's one of the few times in the show where the music provides a sense of atmosphere and fun, rather than just breaking up the talk show-style anecdotes rehearsed on stage.

Sammy Davis Jr. was a song-and-dance man, and yet *Sammy* the musical not only leaves out Davis' signature song, "Mr. Bojangles" (which is heard only in a snippet near the end) but it also features very little dance. More daring and integrated choreography could have broken *Sammy* out of its formulaic jukebox-biography conventions. Sadly, like *Ray Charles: Live on Stage*, another recent Southern California premiere that seems destined not to make it to Broadway, *Sammy* makes its celebrity subject feel smaller than life.

Sammy runs through November 8 at the Old Globe Theatre in San Diego.

This is James Taylor with *Theatre Talk* for KCRW.

"Sammy"

"Sammy"
Old Globe Theatre
San Diego
September 19, 2009

By Jack Lyons, Palm Springs Guides Theatre and Cinema Critic/Reviewer

San Diego's Famed Old Globe Theatre Presents a World Premiere Musical Based on the Life of Sammy Davis, Jr.

"Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown"
- William Shakespeare, 1596 -

When a real-life mega-star performer becomes the subject of a "bioplay" you just know it's going to be tough on the performer who has to become that person. Who for example, can fill the empty shoes of Sammy Davis, Jr.? Only Sammy Davis, Jr. and we all know that isn't going to happen. This dilemma lies solely in the lap of playwright, composer, and lyricist Leslie Bricusse, who in his admiration for his friend Davis decided to write a musical homage to his talent, his life and his legacy.

Bricusse is an extremely talented and gifted artist but when one divides one's focus and energy into thirds: music, lyrics, and story, something has to give. In the case of "Sammy", I'm afraid it's the story that has an uphill battle for all concerned. Bricusse it appears was undecided on how to best tell his story of this amazing performer. The choice he made was to go episodic on the audience presenting one known fact after another in the hope that we would be dazzled by the sheer energy and force of Davis' on-stage character presence. When familiar songs associated with Davis, such as What Kind of Fool Am I and Once in a Lifetime from "Stop the World", The Candy Man from "Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory", and Who Can I Turn To? , from "The Roar of the Greasepaint; the Smell of the Crowd" are sung by Obba Babatundé as Sammy, the musical soars. But when the new material, created by Bricusse especially for this show, is sung, it is evident, at least to me, that Bricusse needed the brilliance of his old partner Anthony Newley to help carry the day.

The usual rationale for doing biopics or in this case, a "bioplay" is to offer a larger picture of the subject. Everyone knows the gigantic performing talent that was Sammy Davis, Jr., but only a few know what the real man was all about. I believe it's the untold Sammy story we all want to know. That said, then the choices open to Bricusse were how can I flesh out this character to make him more accessible to his legions of fans and admirers? Well for starters, you can cast a performer that most resembles Davis in look and talent. That choice became a no-brainer.

Obba Babatundé, like his mentor Sammy Davis, Jr., has been entertaining audiences since he was a child. A skilled actor, singer, and dancer, Davis once said of Babatundé "I feel safe knowing that with cats like Obba, when I get out of this business I am leaving it in good hands." Babatundé is an excellent performer, and renders a faithful channeling of Davis. At times, it looks like and sounds like the real Davis up there on the stage of The Old Globe Theatre. But it takes more than a one-person characterization to create a complex life lived by a complex man. That's where Bricusse is "missing in action". It's the playwright's job to create the scenes and dialogue which in turn allows the actors to breathe life into their on-stage characterizations.

The cast of "Sammy" is uniformly solid in their roles. Ann Duquesnay as Rosa, Ted Louis Levy as Sammy's father, Lance Roberts as Will Mastin, Adam James as Frank Sinatra, and a bevy of beauties that Sammy, in real life, always had close to him: Mary Ann Hermansen as Kim Novak, Heather Ayers as May Britt, Altovise Gore as Victoria Platt, and Keewa Nurullah as Lola Falana.

What then are the missing emotional dots that need to be connected in order for the audience to become fully engaged in Sammy's story? Maybe some trimming here and there by director Keith Glover, perhaps, a little time spent in a script doctor's office might be helpful. Maybe even a rewrite before this production leaves for Broadway. But as it stands right now, "Sammy" is a show that has a handsome and polished look to it, with talent to burn, yet it remains an unfulfilled promise of what might have been.

San Diego Museum of Art's James S. Copley Auditorium, runs through November 1, 2009. Don't miss it.

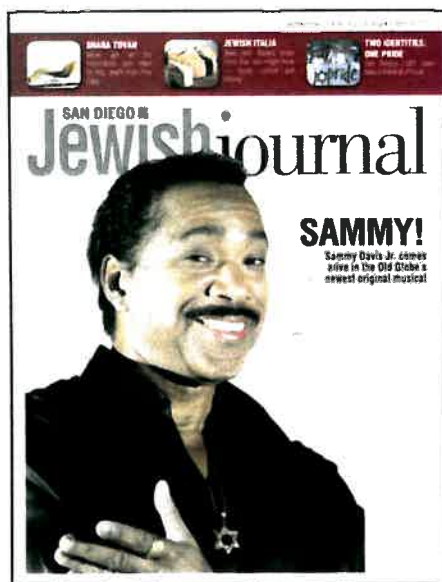
Balboa Park
 1363 Old Globe Way (at Village Pl)
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FEATURES

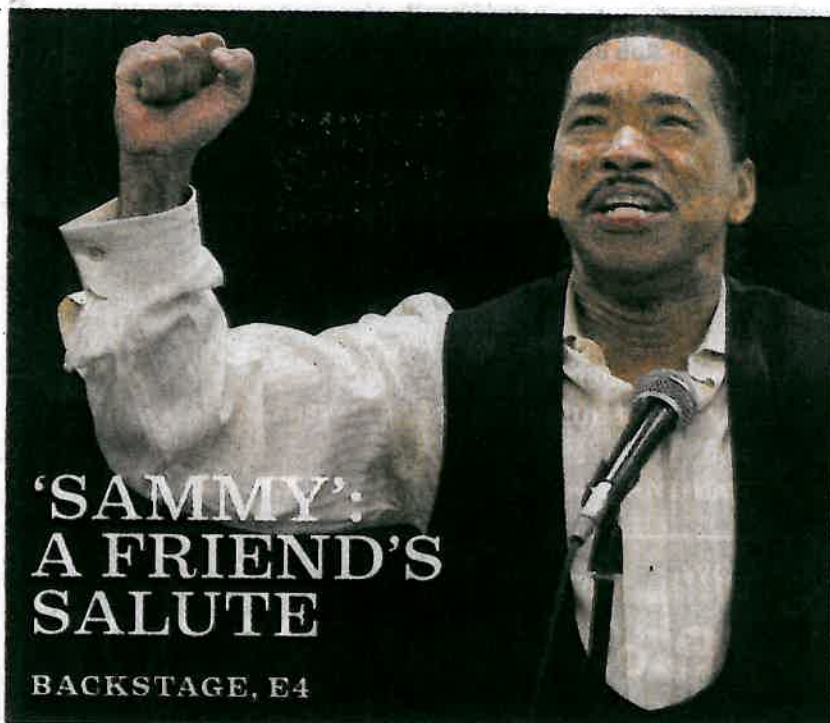
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October 2009



LOS ANGELES TIMES

September 27, 2009



'SAMMY': A FRIEND'S SALUTE

BACKSTAGE, E4

MARK BOSTER Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES TIMES

September 27, 2009

THEATER

Reviews by PHILIP BRANDES (P.B.), F. KATHLEEN FOLEY (F.K.F.), CHARLES McNULTY (C.M.), DARYL H. MILLER (D.H.M.), DAVID NG (D.N.), DAVID C. NICHOLS (D.C.N.) and CHARLOTTE STOUTT (C.S.). Compiled by SHAYNA SOBOLO.

Openings

Alan Cumming: I Bought a Blue Car Today The Scottish film and Tony Award-winning stage actor performs his solo cabaret show of stories and songs based on his experiences living in the United States for the last 10 years. Audrey Skirball Kenis Theater at the Geffen Playhouse, 10886 Le Conte Ave., Westwood. Tue.-Fri., 8 p.m.; Sat., 7:30 and 9:30 p.m.; next Sun., 2 and 7 p.m. \$55-\$75. (310) 208-5454.

Not a Genuine Black Man Brian Copeland's solo show details his experience as an 8-year-old African American boy moving to what has been called one of the most racist communities in the U.S. Hayworth Theatre, 2509 Wilshire Blvd., L.A. Tue.-Wed., 8 p.m.; ends Oct. 21. \$25. (800) 838-3006.

Even Yet, Its Mighty Daring Sings X Repertory Theatre's inaugural production weaves together first-person narratives collected through interviews with average Americans with the eerily prescient 1905 play "The Voyage Inheritance" to explore the current state of the economy. X Repertory Theatre, 1581 Industrial St., L.A. Thu.-next Sun., 8 p.m.; ends Oct. 11. \$15-\$20. (213) 536-4331.

Bobby Bondon Gets By Brian Solka's comedy centers on two buddies seeking success in a heavy-metal hair band circa 1990. Original score performed by Torch. Studio/Stage, 520 N. Western Ave., L.A. Fri.-Sat., 8 p.m.; next Sun., 5 p.m.; ends Oct. 25. \$15. (323) 230-0127.

The Doctor Despite Himself Ipanema Theater Troupe presents Gulu Montefiro's new adaptation of Molière's farcical attack on the medical profession. Electric Lodge Performance Space, 1416 Electric Ave., Venice. Fri.-Sat., 8 p.m.; next Sun., 2 p.m.; ends Nov. 8. \$20. (310) 823-0710.

Much Ado About Nothing California Shakespeare Company stages the bard's romantic comedy. The Four Friends Hall, 1408 Thousand Oaks Blvd., Thousand Oaks. Fri.-Sat., 8 p.m.; next Sun., 3 p.m.; ends Oct. 25. \$20. (805) 498-3354.

Much Ado About Nuthin' A wildly irreverent version of the Shakespeare classic. Ark Theatre Company at the Hayworth, 2511 Wilshire Blvd., L.A. Fri.-Sat., 8 p.m.; next Sun., 7 p.m.; ends Nov. 21. \$22. (323) 696-1707.

Sammy Stage, film and TV actor Obba Babatundé stars in Oscar- and Grammy-winning writer-composer-lyricist Leslie Bricusse's new musical about Sammy Davis Jr., moving from his early days as a child working in vaudeville through his time with Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin as a member of the Rat Pack. Keith Glover directs. The Old Globe, 1363 Old Globe Way, San Diego. Fri., 8 p.m.; Sat., 2 and 8 p.m.; next Sun., 2 and 7 p.m.; ends Nov. 8. \$54-\$89. (619) 234-5623. Story on Page E4

Sammy Davis Jr. recorded 60 Leslie Bricusse songs. Now the composer is honoring his late friend with a biographical musical.

KAREN WADA
REPORTING FROM SAN DIEGO

"OK, ladies, let's do 'Vaudeville.'"

The women of the chorus, a young and shapely bunch, obligingly assume a variety of frisky poses. As the piano picks up the beat, they bump and grind their way through the burlesque number — after cooing over "little Sammy Davis," the precocious kid who's playing the circuit when he should be in school.

"I would never have it that good again," sighs the grown-up Davis (Obba Babatundé). "The tragedy was that it had to happen when I was 6!"

He rolls his eyes and flashes that familiar crooked smile. Rimshot, please.

"Sammy" — Leslie Bricusse's new musical about his old pal Sammy Davis Jr. — is full of comic bits and pretty girls as well as dramatic highs (Davis' rise from Harlem to superstardom) and lows (battles against bigotry and nasty inner demons) and lots of singing and dancing.

In other words, says Bricusse, it's the kind of show Sammy would put on if he were doing "Sammy."

Indeed, while Davis is no longer with us, his spirit seems to inhabit every part of this production, which will premiere Friday at the Old Globe Theatre in San Diego.

In the rehearsal room, his portrait is propped on a table facing the actors. In the hallways, his name keeps popping up ("Sammy used to say...") in conversations where people talk as if they know him.

Some did — including not just Bricusse but also music supervisor Ian Fraser and Babatundé, who considers him his mentor. Others have been longtime fans. Director Keith Glover used the Davis hit "The Candy Man" as his audition song. Choreographer Keith Young owns two dogs: Sammy and Davis.

On this overcast morning, Glover and the company are fine-tuning material with Bricusse, who has flown in from Europe, where he lives much of the year. The Oscar- and Grammy-winning songwriter has brought the latest in a series of revisions. This being a new work, every line and measure is subject to second thought.

After "Vaudeville," the action shifts to an Army base in the 1940s, where Pvt. Sammy Davis Jr. wows a talent show with a big-band version of "Gonna Build a Mountain." When he fin-



LONDON CALLING: "We became instant friends," Bricusse, left, says of meeting Davis in 1961. "We went out every night." Music supervisor Ian Fraser, right, also linked with the performer that year.

ishes, Davis is ambushed by a bunch of rednecks, who pummel and taunt him — until Glover interrupts. The fight scene needs work.

Once the changes are made, Babatundé begins a sad yet defiant reprise:

*Gonna build a mountain —,
gonna build it high!
I don't know how I'm gonna do it —
only know I'm gonna try.*

The room grows quiet. Compact and nimble, Babatundé evokes Sammy's presence whenever he takes the stage. He can swing and sing the blues, tap, flirt and clown — which comes in handy since he performs in 19 of the musical's two dozen numbers.

It's a "packed" show, acknowledges Bricusse, one that may get tightened during and after this run. (There are no plans for "Sammy" beyond San Diego; however, Bricusse hopes it will find a new life in, say, London.) Most of the songs are original; 10 were written earlier — mainly by Bricusse and Anthony Newley — and are used "in a different context than before," says Bricusse, who created "Sammy's" music, lyrics and book.

Eventful life

"Sammy" zigzags through the 64 years of Davis' life, focusing on the '50s and '60s, when he was a star of stage,

screen and the club scene and a member of Frank Sinatra's Rat Pack. Bricusse touches on some of his friend's troubles as well: the car accident that costs him an eye, the controversies sparked by his interracial romances and conversion to Judaism, and his self-destructive recklessness with money, drugs and women. The show ends on a high note. Before he dies of throat cancer in 1990, Davis is honored as a civil rights champion and philanthropist as well as the consummate entertainer.

To some, says Glover, "Sammy is a mythic hero." To others, "he's a crazy cat who wore lots of gold chains." Either way, the director says, "we make this a voyage of self-discovery rather than a 'me telling you about my life' thing. As he goes along, Sammy discovers stuff he may not have known when the evening began. We hope the audience will too."

Bricusse, 78, met Davis in 1961 when Davis came to London for a theater gig and happened to see "Stop the World — I Want to Get Off," the first musical written by Bricusse and fellow Englishman Newley.

"We became instant friends," Bricusse says. "We went out every night. It was probably the happiest time of his life. He had just married May Britt, the Swedish actress, and he found in London the unprejudiced reception he never had in America."

Since then, Bricusse has created music for more than 40 shows and films, ranging from "Doctor Dolittle" to "Victor/Victoria." Davis recorded 60 of Bricusse's songs, including "What Kind of Fool Am I?" and "The Candy Man," co-written by Newley. He also appeared in a revival of "Stop the World" in the late '70s. Bricusse says he and his wife, Evie, saw Davis perform "hundreds of times all over the planet."

After Davis died, Bricusse put together a songbook that contained tributes from friends such as Sinatra, Quincy Jones and Michael Jackson, whose life — Bricusse notes — ended up bearing many similarities to Davis'. Jones told Bricusse he should turn the songbook into a show. Bricusse did.

Last winter, Bricusse and Lou Spisto, the Old Globe's executive producer, discussed potential projects. "I liked 'Sammy' because here was this unusual talent who led an unusual life," Spisto says, "the kind of life that supports a stage musical. Also, musicals are about music, and this music is great."

Once Bricusse found a theater, the next challenge was finding a star. "A lot of names came up, but Obba's was the first I had written down," he says. "He is the blueprint because he is the direct link to Sammy."

Babatundé, who says he is in his

50s, is a Broadway and Hollywood veteran who was nominated for a 1982 Tony for "Dreamgirls." He met Davis in 1978 in Lake Tahoe, where Babatundé was appearing with Liza Minnelli. "Sammy would follow us on tour, opening after we closed, so I got to learn a lot from him."

Knowing the person you are portraying is a mixed blessing, says Babatundé, who calls his performance "an incarnation and not an impersonation." He finds it hard, for instance, to sing Jerry Jeff Walker's "Mr. Bojangles," the tale of a washed-up hooper. "First, it was done to perfection by the man himself. But also I know Sammy feared that his life would end up like the man he sung about."

The sharing of such insights has given Babatundé's colleagues a better sense of who Davis was. "A lot of videos are being passed around, and Sammy stories are being told," says Glover. "One of the girls sent out YouTube links. Everybody was in the vibe once they got a chance."

Orchestra rehearsal

It's a gorgeous September afternoon. A perfect day for the "sitzprobe" — the cast's first opportunity to sing with the orchestra. For this \$2.5-million production, the Globe has secured a 13-piece ensemble, which is large for a regional theater. Everyone is giddy.

"Please, no chatter," Fraser admonishes from the podium. Fraser, an 11-time Emmy winner, has worked with Bricusse for half a century and first worked with Davis in 1961. He guides the company through number after number, swaying with the beat even as he maintains order.

Tony winner Ann Dukesnay, who plays Davis' grandmother, raises the roof with a solo. Adam James croons à la Sinatra. After each song, everyone whoops and claps, except for Bricusse. Sitting with his wife and Spisto, he keeps scribbling notes. Only for the last few tunes — old favorites — does he put away his pen. He wraps his arm around Evie as they listen to Babatundé sing "The Good Things in Life."

*But I raise my glass
to the good things in life.
I am not here for long,
but there's time for a song
and some wine.
And when time runs away,
I will look back and say
that the good things in life
were all mine...*

Whenever she hears "I raise my glass," Evie Bricusse lifts her hand in an imaginary toast. Afterward, she explains this was something "we always did when Sammy sang."

"It's just like old times," she says.

calendar@latimes.com

THEATER

Jumped so high, then he lightly touched down



Photographs by MARK BOSTER Los Angeles Times

MR. ENTERTAINMENT: Obba Babatundé, who plays Davis in "Sammy" at San Diego's Old Globe, calls his portrayal "an incarnation and not an impersonation."

THE WEEKLY GUIDE

OCT. 1-7, 2009

NIGHT & DAY

SAMMY'S BACK

Sammy Davis Jr. comes to life in Old Globe's new musical >> **ON STAGE**

Country star Brad Paisley knows how to keep things in perspective.

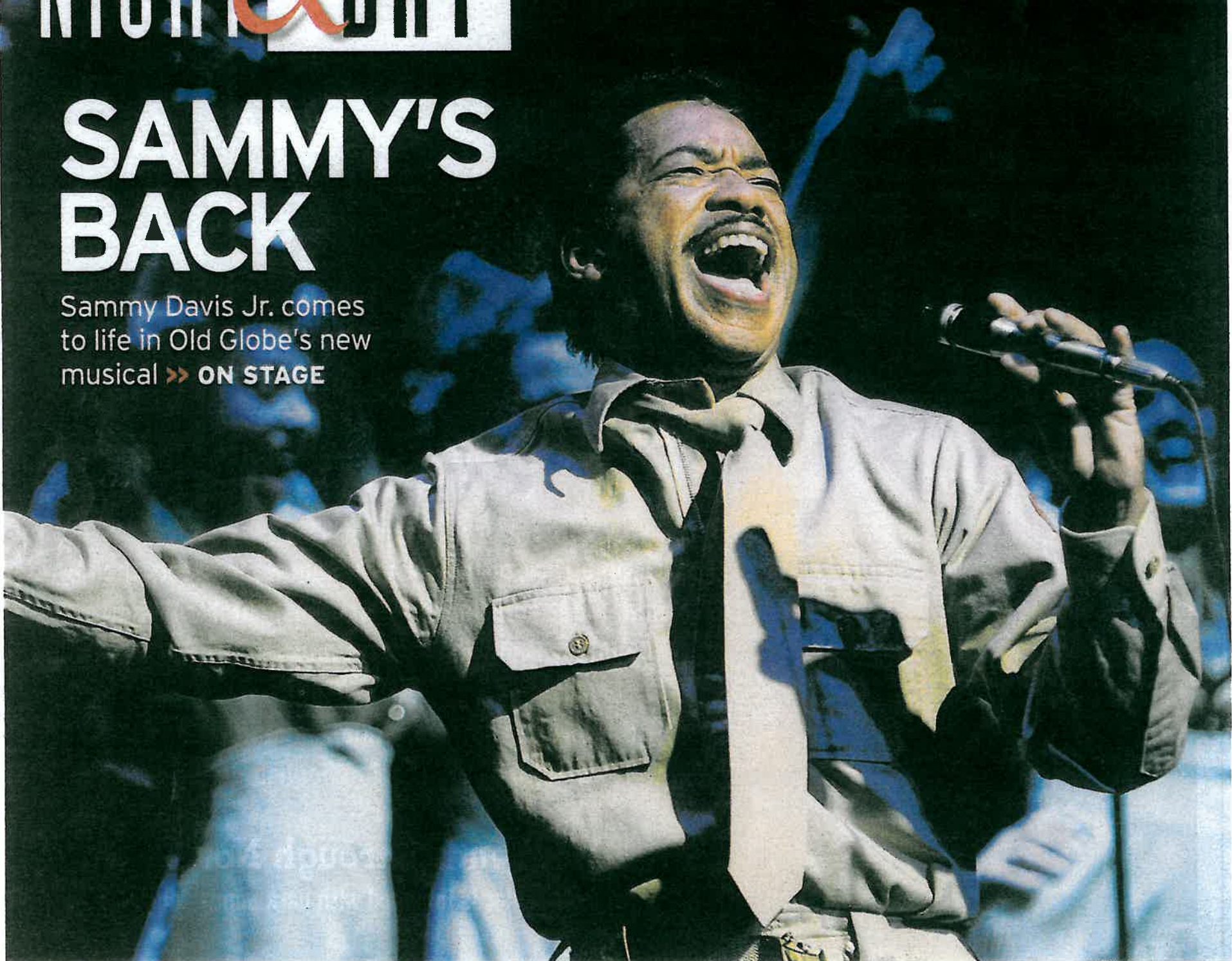
>> **POP MUSIC**

The screaming has already begun at local haunted houses.

>> **STREET**

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>> **DINING**



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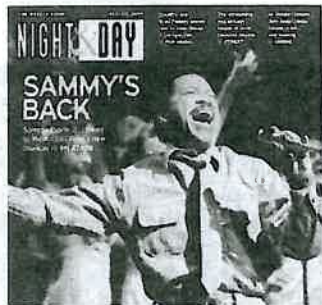
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October 1, 2009

NIGHT & DAY

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ON THE COVER:
Photo by David Brooks / Union-Tribune

SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE

October 1, 2009

NIGHT & DAY

ON STAGE

MORE THAN A ROLE

Obba Babatundé is not just playing the title role of "Sammy" — he's paying a debt to his mentor and inspiration.





Obba Babatundé embodies his friend and mentor, Sammy Davis Jr., in the new musical at the Old Globe, "Sammy." David Brooks / Union-Tribune

Old Globe captures pioneering performer's can-do spirit in new musical

SAMMY'S STORY

By James Hebert
THEATER CRITIC

Late night, hotel room, Stockholm, Sweden. It's the end of the 1970s. Sammy Davis Jr., globe-trotting entertainer, is ushering performers, friends and hangers-on out the door after a post-show party. All except one.

"Obba, sit down."

Obba Babatundé's mind re-winds 30 years.

"He said, 'I wanna talk to you,'" Babatundé recalls now. "I still get chills as I remember this moment. And he began to impart things that have stayed with me from that day to this. The biggest of them being: 'Never quit. Never. Quit.'"

"He said, 'Sometimes it may be far from easy. But everything that could be done to you has already been done to me. And I'm still here.'"

Sammy Davis Jr. may not be here now — he died in 1990 at age 64 — but his protégé (whose name is pronounced OH-ba Baba-TUHN-day) hopes the Old Globe Theatre's world-premiere musical "Sammy," in which he plays the title role, comes as close as possible to recapturing the pioneering performer's can-do spirit.

In the decades since Davis' heyday, the figure of the bantamweight singer-dancer-actor who became a showbiz giant has faded in popular memory to something approaching cliché — a cartoon of a swingin' Rat Packer cruising Vegas in gold chains.

But Babatundé, a 1982 Tony nominee (for "Dreamgirls") whose talents in many ways mirror his mentor's, says the show and his work in it are meant to go beyond the image and illuminate a life that blazed with fame and bravery but was roiled by racism, money troubles and Davis' personal weaknesses.

"I'm not playing a 'Hey, maaaaan,' kind of impersonation," explains Babatundé, doing his own impersonation of some two-bit mimic's take on Davis. "If anything, I'm doing a reincarnation. I would like to be able to capture the essence of who the man was, and tell his story to the best of my ability."

The man adapting that life story for the stage — as well as contributing the show's music and lyrics — is another longtime Davis friend and collaborator, the Oscar- and Grammy-winning British composer and director Leslie Bricusse.

It was Bricusse, often in partnership with the late Anthony Newley, who wrote some of

DETAILS

"Sammy"

The Old Globe Theatre

When: Now in previews.

Opens tomorrow; runs Tuesdays-Wednesdays, 7 p.m.; Thursdays-Fridays, 8 p.m.; Saturdays, 2 and 8 p.m.; Sundays, 2 and 7 p.m.; through Nov. 8

Where: 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park

Tickets: \$54-\$89

Phone: (619) 234-5623

Online: TheOldGlobe.org

Davis' biggest pop hits, from "The Candy Man" to "What Kind of Fool Am I?" (Bricusse's works include the stage musicals "Stop the World — I Want to Get Off" and "Scrooge," as well as music for the movies "Doctor Doolittle" and "Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory.")

One of the toughest tasks in putting together "Sammy," Bricusse says, has been in trying to condense and reconcile Davis' sprawling, exuberant and sometimes troubled existence.

"Sammy's life was such a fireworks display in every way," Bricusse says of the performer he first met in London in the early '60s. "You need to capture many different facets of him, good and bad. And much more good than bad. But at times, as you'll see in the show, he was capable of being his own worst enemy."

"I've often said he was both the hero and the villain of his own life. His talent was the hero. His excess was the villain. And they fought against each other."

In terms of capturing those complexities, "Obba is a great blessing," Bricusse says. "Obba will be the kind of blueprint for anything that happens to the show in the future. He had the one-on-one contact with Sammy. He knew him as a person and a performer."

The idea for "Sammy" originally came from the veteran producer-musician Quincy Jones. But it remained in limbo until February, when Globe CEO/executive producer Louis G. Spisto, meeting with Bricusse to talk about unrelated potential projects, happened to ask what else the writer-composer was up to.

"I gave him 'Sammy' to read," Bricusse says. "And 24 hours later he called me back and said, 'Let's do this.'"

Spisto recalls that he was "very taken with the score in particular." He found the show's concept compelling because Davis "was iconic and controversial; he was talented

SEE **Sammy**, Page 9

► **SAMMY**

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

and wonderful and messy all at the same time. It makes for a great story. And we haven't seen a story about Sammy."

The Globe is sole producer of the musical, whose budget Spisto estimates at \$2.3 to \$2.5 million. The production received \$1 million in support from an anonymous donor, Spisto says, as well as a \$75,000 New American Play Award from the Edgerton Foundation.

Film and stage pro Keith Glover directs an ensemble whose roles include those of Davis' Rat Pack pals Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin, Davis' four wives and others drawn from real life. Keith Young choreographs, with music supervision by Ian Fraser, who has worked with Bricusse for decades.

The story opens in 1951 at Ciro's nightclub in West Hollywood with a landmark gig by the Will Mastin Trio (Davis, his father and "uncle" Will Mastin), then explores Davis' earlier life, before jumping forward to culminate with his receiving the Kennedy Center Honors in 1987. Bricusse says the score includes six or seven existing tunes ("The Candy Man" among them) and about 15 new ones.

Along the way are all those life milestones: Davis' encounters with bigotry in the military and beyond, his breaking of racial barriers in entertainment, the devastating 1954 car crash in which he lost an eye, his subsequent conversion to Judaism, his ill-advised hug of Richard Nixon in 1970.



The real Sammy with (from left) Anthony Newley, Henry Mancini and Leslie Bricusse.

SWEET SUCCESS

Sammy Davis Jr.'s biggest pop hit was also his least likely – "The Candy Man," which hit No. 1 in June 1972.

The signature tune, written by Leslie Bricusse (creator of the Old Globe's "Sammy") and Anthony Newley, had already appeared a year earlier in the movie "Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory."

But Mike Curb – a young producer who would become California's lieutenant governor seven years later – was sure Sammy could make it a sensation.

Bricusse wasn't convinced.

"I thought it was a very bizarre song for Sammy to record," Bricusse says now. "He didn't know quite why he was singing it, and we didn't either. It was Mike who persuaded Sammy to sing (the song). It was his sort of resilience, just battling with it."

And when it topped the pop charts, "it amazed everybody, including Sammy and including us," Bricusse admits. "If you look at anything else he'd done up to that point, it didn't make sense. It was all too cutesy-pie.

"But I'm glad it happened."

— JAMES HEBERT

"The best way I can describe it is, it's Sammy's journey of discovery," says Babatundé. And once again, Babatundé is letting Davis show him the way.

"I leave Obba in the dressing room, and for that time,

Sammy is living his life. I have to do it that way."

James Hebert: (619) 293-2040; jim.hebert@uniontrib.com; blog, houseseats.uniontrib.com; Twitter, jimhebert



Ann Duquesnay (as Rosa Davis) with Lance Roberts (left, as Will Mastin) and Ted Louis Levy (as Sammy Sr.) in "Sammy." *David Brooks / Union-Tribune*



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Posted: Wed., Jul. 29, 2009, 4:02pm PT

'Sammy' biotuner finds its lead

Obba Babatunde cast as crooner

By [GORDON COX](#)

Obba Babatunde has been cast as Sammy Davis Jr. in "Sammy," the biotuner bowing at the Old Globe in San Diego this fall.

Thesp ("Dreamgirls," "Jelly's Last Jam") was a protege of Davis, whose life story is retold in the musical with book, music and lyrics by Leslie Bricusse ("Stop the World -- I Want to Get Off") and additional songs by Bricusse and Anthony Newley.

Keith Glover directs the world preem, choreographed by Keith Young. Show is set to begin previews at the Old Globe Sept. 19 ahead of an Oct. 2 opening.

Read the full article at:

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NORTH COUNTY TIMES

September 17 - 23, 2009

preview

MUSIC

Jason Aldean rides his 'Big Green Tractor' to Wagon Wheel

Country stars converge
at Lake Elsinore festival:
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PREMIERES
MUSICAL ON THE
LIFE OF SAMMY
DAVIS JR.: PAGE 16

THEATER

Old Globe to premiere
Sammy Davis Jr. musical

By JIM TRAGESER
jtrageser@nctimes.com

Speaking with Obba Babatunde about his upcoming role starring as his late friend and mentor Sammy Davis Jr. in The Old Globe's world premiere production of "Sammy" brought the Broadway and television veteran quickly to the first time he met the legendary performer in Las Vegas in 1978.

"I was co-starring in a world tour with Liza Minnelli at the same time Sammy was doing his world tour," he recalled during a phone conversation last month from his temporary digs in San Diego.

"It was our last performance at Harrah's, at which he was to open the next night. Liza came into my dressing room before the show started and said, 'Obba — Sammy's here and he wants to meet you.' She knew I was a *huge* fan, and I said to her, 'Oh, wow, you know I want to meet him, but I'd rather him meet me and me meet him after he sees me work.' My thinking in that was it's a little bit different when a professional sees another professional work — then you are sort of talking as performers to one another, rather than fan to a performer.

"But in this case, she said, 'His gums are giving him trouble and he's not going to stay for the show — he just wanted to come by to say hi.' So I threw my robe on and I went into her dressing room — and there he was. His



Obba Babatunde and Adam James play Sammy Davis Jr. and Frank Sinatra in "Sammy" at the Old Globe Theatre. Photo courtesy of Craig Schwartz

"SAMMY"

WHEN Previews run Saturday through Oct. 1; opens Oct. 2 and runs through Nov. 8; showtimes, 8 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays; 7 p.m. Sundays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays; 2 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays

WHERE Old Globe Theatre, Balboa Park, San Diego

TICKETS \$54-\$89

INFO 619-234-5623
www.theoldglobe.org

back was to me, and ... I stood there in awe, about to meet a legendary figure whom I had really patterned the style of my career after.

"He turned around, and I said, 'Good evening, Mr. Davis.' And he said, 'Sam ... call me Sam.' Well, I couldn't call him 'Sam' — he was too iconic for me! I said, 'It's very nice to meet you, Mr. D.' He said, 'Liza tells me you're marvelous — unfortunately, I'm not going to be able to see you tonight.' I said I understood and I shook his hand and said 'It's an honor to meet you.'"

"After the show, I heard his voice in the hallway (saying) 'Great show, Liza — where's Obba's dressing room?' And I had a knock on my door, and when I opened the door, there he stood, and his words to me were, in his inimitable style, 'You, my man, were a bitch on wheels. You are a bitch on wheels. May I come in?' I said, 'Yes of course.' He came in and for the next, what seemed

See
'Sammy,'
Page 18

‘Sammy’

Continued from Page 16

like eternity, he said some of the nicest things and words of praise about my performance.”

Thirty-one years later, Babatunde still gets a kick out of remembering that first encounter of what became a close friendship that lasted until Davis’ death in 1990. Babatunde tours the country in a Sammy Davis Jr. solo tribute show, but he has a long list of Broadway and theater credits, including a Tony-nominated performance in “Dreamgirls,” a revival of “Chicago,” “Grind” and “Timbuktu!” He also created the role of Jelly Roll Morton for the musical “Jelly’s Last Jam.” His television credits include an Emmy-nominated performance in “Miss Ever’s Boys,” an NAACP Image Award-nominated role as Harold Nicholas in “Introducing Dorothy Dandridge,” and parts in more than 60 made-for-TV movies.

Babatunde said — with no bragging or ego involved — he feels he was meant to play Davis on stage, even though it took awhile for it to happen.

“Seven years ago, I got a call from Quincy Jones, and he said, ‘Hey man, I want to talk to you about an idea.’ I was really jazzed about it, and then he went off to Europe. Time passed, and nothing came about.”

Babatunde said he had heard a few years ago that English composer Leslie Bricusse — who had written

“The Candy Man” and “What Kind of Fool Am I?,” two of Davis’ biggest hits — was working on a stage musical about Davis’ life. But until recently, he heard nothing more than rumors.

Then, “I finally got the call. I went in and met with (director) Keith Glover, (choreographer) Keith Young and (music supervisor) Ian Fraser. Next, I got a call that they wanted to fly me to New York to meet with Leslie and Lou Spisto, from the Globe. I left the room and went to the restroom, and when I came back, they said, ‘We want you to do this.’ And here we are now.”

“I always believed that I was meant to do this, and I think a lot of other people felt the same way. I guess they did a reading of it, and the director (Glover) — who’s the director now — said, ‘I kept telling them, ‘Obba Babatunde.’”

When asked why he and the late Gregory Hines seem to be the last of the old multiple-threat entertainers that Davis represented — artists who can sing, dance and act — the 58-year-old Babatunde had a quick response:

“Television and technology! When you are on the stage, what you see is what you get. When you truncate it onto a small screen and you have the technology whereby you’re more impressed with celebrity than you are capability, that starts to drain it.”

“Nobody born in the last 30-some years has had to change a television channel manually. Any 2-year-old can pick up a remote control and push a button and something

happens — that means the brain starts to develop on the basis of immediate gratification. They’re born into a world based on immediate gratification. We were born into a different world.

“Now you can go into a studio and sing completely out of tune and they can push a button and you’re singing in tune. Now you don’t have to practice really hard and continually on your instrument to play the trumpet, to play the guitar, to play the piano — you can go on the computer and on your keypad play all those instruments never having put an instrument to your lips, yet you can put down a track that sounds like a trumpet.

“But in our show, there’ll be none of that! There will be me busting my ass to bring to life the real dancing, the real singing, the real acting, the real impersonations, the real musicianship. And I only hope the audience, those who remember that’s the way it was, will be refreshed in seeing it again — and those who will be introduced to it hopefully will be inspired to return to it.”

While the opportunity to portray his friend and idol was an obvious draw for Babatunde to come to the Old Globe, where previews of “Sammy” begin on Saturday, he said the quality of the script was what sold him on the role.

“The magic about our script is we start at Citro’s, which is in ’51. And then we take a journey back, to some of the earlier beginnings, so we get a sense of history of where he came from. And we

land in certain monumental experiences of his life; being a member of the first integrated infantry; What it was like with his dad and uncle in vaudeville; the relationship with Kim Novak; his accepting Judaism as his chosen faith; his time in London ... of course, his relationship with Frank (Sinatra) and the Rat Pack.”

Among his many idiosyncrasies, Davis was known for hugging everyone — including a controversial hug of President Richard Nixon in 1970.

“So we touch on the hugging,” Babatunde said, adding that audiences will now get a chance to see behind the scenes how these controversies affected Davis personally. “We don’t try to skirt around the issues of choices that Sammy made that may not have been the best choices — but those were the choices he made in his life.”

While he admits that a televised performance he saw of Davis at age 6 both inspired his own career in entertainment, and his approach to it — being able to sing, dance, act and do impersonations — Babatunde said his admiration for Davis goes beyond his talents.

More important, even, was Davis’ willingness to endure indignity after indignity due to his heritage (his father Sammy Davis Sr. was black, his mother Elvera Sanchez was Cuban-American) to open doors for future generations of black American professionals.

“One of the things that is very important is that unless

you understand the historical time in which an event takes place, you don’t understand the event. Somebody invents an airplane today with a design that makes it fly faster — oh yeah, that’s cool. But when the Wright brothers got an airplane to take off and fly it was a whole different thing because it hadn’t been done.

“Sammy Davis Jr. is iconic not just because he was talented, but because of his ability to rise to the level he was able to rise to during the time and the overt limitations that were placed on black Americans at that time. Jim Crow laws were still in place when Sammy Davis Jr. was headlining.”

Those who have seen Babatunde’s one-man stage show may be expecting to see his spot-on impersonation of Davis, but Babatunde said that’s not what “Sammy” the musical is about.

“I’m not planning on doing an impersonation of Sammy, but a reincarnation.” Rather than mimicking Davis, Babatunde said the show will be “a tribute to the essence of the man and the abilities of the man, and to tell his story.”

“I only hope that I’m able to scratch the surface of the talent that the great Sammy Davis Jr. possessed and that I’m able to do him justice.

“I’m excited and thrilled and honored to have the opportunity to breathe life into a man whom I admired and whose career was a great inspiration for the kind of work I’ve tried to make sure I continue to do, which is maintain a standard of excellence.”

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Old Globe's 'Sammy' musical receives Edgerton award

4:35 PM, July 16, 2009

The Old Globe in San Diego has received the Edgerton Foundation's prestigious New American Play Award for its [upcoming world premiere production of "Sammy,"](#) a musical biography of the late Sammy Davis Jr.

As part of the award, the company will receive \$75,000 that will go toward an extension of the rehearsal period for "Sammy," which is scheduled to begin previews Sept. 19 and to officially open Friday, Oct. 2. The production is scheduled to run through Nov. 8.

Featuring songs by Oscar winner Leslie Bricusse and Anthony Newley — as well as some of the crooner's own signature tunes — the show spans Davis' life from his childhood to his years as a member of the Rat Pack.

The Old Globe has not yet announced the names of the cast or of the creative team for "Sammy."

The company previously received the Edgerton Foundation's New American Play Award for its productions of Mark V. Olsen's "[Cornelia](#)," Itamar Moses' "[Back Back Back](#)" and Steven Drukman's "[In This Corner](#)."

The award, which was launched in 2006, has so far helped 46 productions around the U.S. by providing additional financial resources for the rehearsal process.

Recent high-profile plays to have received the award include Sarah Ruhl's "[In the Next Room \(or the vibrator play\)](#)" at Berkeley Rep and Rajiv Joseph's "[Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo](#)" at the Kirk Douglas Theatre.

-- David Ng

Photo: Sammy Davis Jr. Credit: Associated Press

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Today's Arts Headlines

LOS ANGELES TIMES

September 13, 2009

**CHARLES
McNULTY,
THEATER CRITIC**

LOCAL

'Medea'

Few roles are as ferociously inviting to powerhouse actresses as Medea, the title character of Euripides' ancient masterpiece who sets out to teach her two-timing husband, Jason, a lesson he surely will never forget. Essaying the role in UCLA Live's production, directed by Lenka Udovicki, is Annette Bening, who will get to exercise her more menacing muscles. No stranger to dramatic malice, Bening won Oscar nominations for her portrayals of chilly connivers in "The Grifters" and "American Beauty." But Euripides takes the wrath of a scorned woman to a fatal peak in this tinderbox tale of marital vengeance. Udovicki, an international theater and opera director making her U.S. debut, attempts to bridge the gap between classical and contemporary worlds in a stylized production that includes onstage musicians and a 12-person chorus.

UCLA Live, opens Sept. 23.

'Sammy'

The singer who made "The Candy Man" a hit is the subject of this bio-musical about a celebrity who once described himself as a "short, ugly, one-eyed, black Jew." Yes, we're talking about "Mr.

Wonderful," triple-threat Sammy Davis Jr., the Harlem-born entertainer whose flamboyant style and showbiz pizzazz made him a natural in Vegas. Created by Oscar- and Grammy-winning songwriter Leslie Bricusse, who wrote the book, lyrics and music (some songs with the late Anthony Newley), the show traces Davis' journey from child star working the vaudeville circuit, through chain-smoking Rat Packer in duds that redefined "dandy," and beyond. Obba Babatundé stars as the diminutive dynamo with the fleet feet and soulful swing, not to mention a complicated personal story that was jagged with contradictions. Keith Glover directs this world premiere.

Old Globe Theatre, opens Oct. 2.



CRAIG SCHWARTZ

SONG MAN: Obba Babatundé's Sammy Davis Jr.



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Sammy's story

Old Globe captures pioneering performer's can-do spirit in new musical

By [James Hebert](#)
Union-Tribune Staff Writer

2:00 a.m. October 1, 2009

Sweet success

Sammy Davis Jr.'s biggest pop hit was also his least likely — “The Candy Man,” which hit No. 1 in June 1972.

The signature tune, written by Leslie Bricusse (creator of the Old Globe's “Sammy”) and Anthony Newley, had already appeared a year earlier in the movie “Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory.”

But Mike Curb — a young producer who would become California's lieutenant governor seven years later — was sure Sammy could make it a sensation.

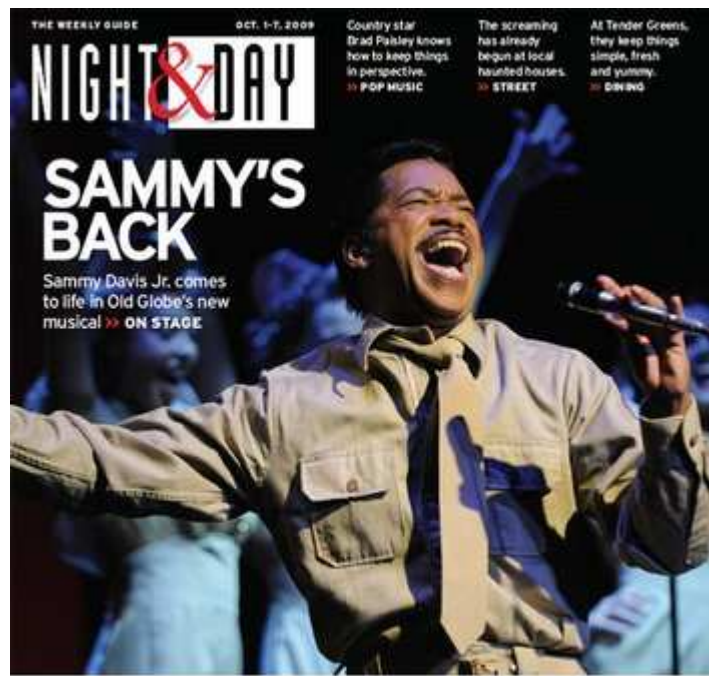
Bricusse wasn't convinced.

“I thought it was a very bizarre song for Sammy to record,” Bricusse says now. “He didn't know quite why he was singing it, and we didn't either. It was Mike who persuaded Sammy to sing (the song). It was his sort of resilience, just battling with it.”

And when it topped the pop charts, “it amazed everybody, including Sammy and including us,” Bricusse admits. “If you look at anything else he'd done up to that point, it didn't make sense. It was all too cutesy-pie.

“But I'm glad it happened.”

DETAILS



"Sammy"

The Old Globe Theatre

When: Now in previews. Opens tomorrow; runs Tuesdays-Wednesdays, 7 p.m.; Thursdays-Fridays, 8 p.m.; Saturdays, 2 and 8 p.m.; Sundays, 2 and 7 p.m.; through Nov. 8

Where: 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park

Tickets: \$54-\$89

Phone: (619) 234-5623

Online: TheOldGlobe.org

Late night, hotel room, Stockholm, Sweden. It's the end of the 1970s. Sammy Davis Jr., globe-trotting entertainer, is ushering performers, friends and hangers-on out the door after a post-show party. All except one.

"Obba, sit down."

Obba Babatundé's mind rewinds 30 years.

"He said, 'I wanna talk to you,'" Babatundé recalls now. "I still get chills as I remember this moment. And he began to impart things that have stayed with me from that day to this. The biggest of them being: 'Never quit. Never. Quit.'

"He said, 'Sometimes it may be far from easy. But everything that could be done to you has already been done to me. And I'm still here.'"

Sammy Davis Jr. may not be here now — he died in 1990 at age 64 — but his protégé (whose name is pronounced OH-ba Baba-TUHN-day) hopes the Old Globe Theatre's world-premiere musical "Sammy," in which he plays the title role, comes as close as possible to recapturing the pioneering performer's can-do spirit.

In the decades since Davis' heyday, the figure of the bantamweight singer-dancer-actor who became a showbiz giant has faded in popular memory to something approaching cliché — a cartoon of a swingin' Rat Packer cruising Vegas in gold chains.

But Babatundé, a 1982 Tony nominee (for "Dreamgirls") whose talents in many ways mirror his mentor's, says the show and his work in it are meant to go beyond the image and illuminate a life that blazed with fame and bravery but was roiled by racism, money troubles and Davis' personal weaknesses.

"I'm not playing a 'Hey, maaaaan,' kind of impersonation," explains Babatundé, doing his own impersonation of some two-bit mimic's take on Davis. "If anything, I'm doing a reincarnation. I would like to be able to capture the essence of who the man was, and tell his story to the best of my ability."

The man adapting that life story for the stage — as well as contributing the show's music and lyrics — is another longtime Davis friend and collaborator, the Oscar- and Grammy-winning British composer and director Leslie Bricusse.

It was Bricusse, often in partnership with the late Anthony Newley, who wrote some of Davis' biggest pop hits, from "The Candy Man" to "What Kind of Fool Am I?" (Bricusse's works include the stage musicals

“Stop the World — I Want to Get Off” and “Scrooge,” as well as music for the movies “Doctor Doolittle” and “Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory.”)

One of the toughest tasks in putting together “Sammy,” Bricusse says, has been in trying to condense and reconcile Davis' sprawling, exuberant and sometimes troubled existence.

“Sammy's life was such a fireworks display in every way,” Bricusse says of the performer he first met in London in the early '60s. “You need to capture many different facets of him, good and bad. And much more good than bad. But at times, as you'll see in the show, he was capable of being his own worst enemy.

“I've often said he was both the hero and the villain of his own life. His talent was the hero. His excess was the villain. And they fought against each other.”

In terms of capturing those complexities, “Obba is a great blessing,” Bricusse says. “Obba will be the kind of blueprint for anything that happens to the show in the future. He had the one-on-one contact with Sammy. He knew him as a person and a performer.”

The idea for “Sammy” originally came from the veteran producer-musician Quincy Jones. But it remained in limbo until February, when Globe CEO/executive producer Louis G. Spisto, meeting with Bricusse to talk about unrelated potential projects, happened to ask what else the writer-composer was up to.

“I gave him ‘Sammy’ to read,” Bricusse says. “And 24 hours later he called me back and said, ‘Let's do this.’”

Spisto recalls that he was “very taken with the score in particular.” He found the show's concept compelling because Davis “was iconic and controversial; he was talented and wonderful and messy all at the same time. It makes for a great story. And we haven't seen a story about Sammy.”

The Globe is sole producer of the musical, whose budget Spisto estimates at \$2.3 to \$2.5 million. The production received \$1 million in support from an anonymous donor, Spisto says, as well as a \$75,000 New American Play Award from the Edgerton Foundation.

Film and stage pro Keith Glover directs an ensemble whose roles include those of Davis' Rat Pack pals Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin, Davis' four wives and others drawn from real life. Keith Young choreographs, with music supervision by Ian Fraser, who has worked with Bricusse for decades.

The story opens in 1951 at Ciro's nightclub in West Hollywood with a landmark gig by the Will Mastin Trio (Davis, his father and “uncle” Will Mastin), then explores Davis' earlier life, before jumping forward to culminate with his receiving the Kennedy Center Honors in 1987. Bricusse says the score includes six or seven existing tunes (“The Candy Man” among them) and about 15 new ones.

Along the way are all those life milestones: Davis' encounters with bigotry in the military and beyond, his breaking of racial barriers in entertainment, the devastating 1954 car crash in which he lost an eye, his subsequent conversion to Judaism, his ill-advised hug of Richard Nixon in 1970.

“The best way I can describe it is, it's Sammy's journey of discovery,” says Babatundé. And once again, Babatundé is letting Davis show him the way.

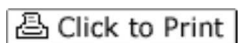
“I leave Obba in the dressing room, and for that time, Sammy is living his life. I have to do it that way.”

Union-Tribune

[James Hebert](#); ;

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SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE

August 2, 2009

Obba Babatundé to take lead in 'Sammy'

The Old Globe Theatre's next new musical has found its main man.

Obba Babatundé will play the title role in "Sammy," a world-premiere work based on the life of the pioneering African-American entertainer Sammy Davis Jr. The show, written and composed by Leslie Bricusse (who penned "The Candy Man" and other songs for Davis), opens its Globe run in late September.

Babatundé is a veteran stage and screen actor who made

his first big splash in the original 1981 cast of "Dreamgirls," earning a Tony nomination for his portrayal of the songwriter C.C. White.


Davis, who died in 1990, served as a mentor to Babatundé. Among their career links: In 1964, Davis starred as a prizefighter in the Broadway musical version of Clifford Odets' "Golden Boy," an adaptation that sparked a furor at the time over its interracial romance.

Twenty years later, the first Broadway revival of the show starred Babatundé, in the role Davis had originated.

Among Babatundé's "Dreamgirls" castmates on Broadway, incidentally, was Sheryl Lee Ralph, now on-stage at the Globe in the world-premiere musical "The First Wives Club."

And speaking of that show: The Globe also has announced that it is extending the "Wives" run by one week. The show, scored by the Motown trio Holland/Dozier/Holland (who wrote and produced many hits for the Supremes, the girl group that helped inspire "Dreamgirls"), now runs through Aug. 30.

— JAMES HEBERT

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Marriage isn't fake, grandmother insists

By [Diane Bell](#)

Union-Tribune Columnist

2:00 a.m. October 3, 2009

**Fax Diane at**

619-260-5009

Call Diane at

619-293-1518

[E-mail Diane](#)[Bio Page](#)

San Diegan Mary Jo Shannon had a front-row seat at the wedding Sunday of reality TV star Khloé Kardashian and L.A. Laker Lamar Odom.

She's Khloé's grandmother and owns a baby boutique in La Jolla with her daughter Karen Houghton of San Marcos. Houghton also attended the elaborate Bel Air wedding with her daughter, Natalie, 11.

Accusations that the marriage was fake and merely a ratings play for E!'s "Keeping Up with the Kardashians" TV show, which videotaped the nuptials for its Nov. 8 episode, are not true, said Shannon, who chatted with the minister the evening before. After interviewing the couple at length, the pastor told her that he has faith their marriage will last.



The newlyweds met at an L.A. party just a month Pet Doors USA asked for owner Paul Goodman's

before their wedding. The star-studded ceremony, permission to include his dog Cashew's photo in its underwritten by the Ryan Seacrest-produced catalogs. (Paul Goodman) - show, took place at the mansion of Kardashian family friend and music mogul Irving Azoff.

"I first met the bridegroom the night before the wedding," said Shannon, whose other daughter, Kris, Khloé's mom, was married to L.A. lawyer Robert Kardashian prior to her current husband, Olympian Bruce Jenner.

Among wedding guests were Kobe Bryant, Luke Walton, Sugar Ray Leonard, Kelly Osbourne, Ryan Seacrest, Chelsea Handler, Brittny Gastineau, Adrienne Bailon and Lara Spencer. The bride's TV co-stars, sisters Kim and Kourtney Kardashian, were bridesmaids, of course. During the reception, Kim repeatedly sneaked peaks at a football game on TV to keep tabs on her "on-again" romance with the New Orleans Saints' Reggie Bush.

Hollywood South

A star-studded crowd is expected tomorrow for the Old Globe Theatre's musical on the life of Sammy Davis Jr. Frank Sinatra's daughters, Tina and Nancy, are on the guest list of the post-performance party at Bertrand at Mister A's, as is Quincy Jones, a friend of "Sammy" creator Leslie Bricusse.

Also expected are Ginny Mancini, the widow of composer Henry Mancini; actress Anne Archer; "Happy Days" Marion Ross and her longtime beau, actor Paul Michael; Gregory Peck's widow, Veronique; screenwriter Tom Mankiewicz; actress Stephanie Powers, who was a Hollywood High classmate of Nancy Sinatra; TV producer Terry Jastrow; plus actor Billie Dee Williams, of "Star Wars" fame, and TV producer George Schlatter, who brought us Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In."

Another dog star is born

After reading here about Abbey, a former animal shelter pooch who was adopted through FOCAS (Friends of County Animal Shelters) and became a model for Petco, Paul Goodman e-mailed me about his terrier-mix shelter dog.

She had been one of 10 small dogs scheduled to be euthanized at a shelter in Riverside, and Goodman adopted her through the Helen Woodward Animal Center. He named her Cashew because, with her blonde fur, she looked like a big cashew curled up in his lap en route home to University Heights.

After a house remodel, Goodman caught a snapshot of Cashew sitting next to her new doggie door and included it with a note to the manufacturer. A short time later, Pet Doors USA asked for his permission to include Cashew's photo in its online and print catalogs.

She doesn't get royalties, but her owners did receive two T-shirts as a reward for their canine adoptee's "model" behavior.

San Diegans Ink

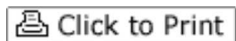
County Supervisor Ron Roberts walked his talk last week. After kicking off the county's immunization campaign, he lined up for a flu shot himself. Roberts came prepared, thanks to Helene, his wife of 45 years. She had handed him four Tylenol when he left home that morning with instructions to take two before his injection and two later in the day. He reportedly didn't even get a sore arm.

Union-Tribune

[Diane Bell](#): (619) 293-1518;

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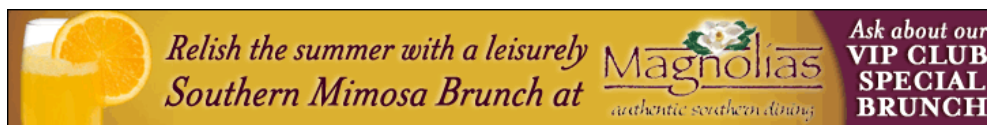
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Arts news

2:00 a.m. August 2, 2009

MCASD jumps onboard the Artbabbble site

Back in April, [Artbabbble.org](#) premiered with seven museums and organizations, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, as initial partners. On Tuesday, nine additional art institutions were added, including the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego.

The site, which is calling itself an online community, features videos of art installations; interviews with artists, curators and others; and full-length documentaries. Other features of the site include multiple video sharing capabilities and viewer feedback.

The project was conceived and led by the Indianapolis Museum of Art. All of the participating venues provide content.

MCASD already has seven videos available for viewing, including teen-directed and -produced video interviews with Robert Irwin, whose enduring work was the subject of a major retrospective; Roman de Salvo, creator of ingenious indoor and outdoor works for the museum; and Joshua Mosley, whose provocative film, "Dread," using 3-D image scanning, was exhibited by the museum, along with his related sculptures.

Video options for the site include a high-resolution video player and built-in links to related materials on each artist.

- ROBERT L. PINCUS

'Oratorio' heading to the Playhouse

La Jolla Playhouse has added a special engagement of the surreal, circus-esque stage piece "Aurélia's Oratorio" to its 2009-10 season.

The work stars Aurélia Thierrée and is conceived and directed by her mother, Victoria Thierrée Chaplin, who is the daughter of Charlie Chaplin and granddaughter of the playwright Eugene O'Neill.

The piece (which is suitable for families) has been performed around the world since 2003; it comes to the Playhouse Feb. 3-28. Details: (858) 550-1010 or [lajollaplayhouse.org](#).

- JAMES HEBERT

KSDS-FM sets a jazz fundraising concert

San Diego radio station KSDS-FM Jazz 88.3 isn't letting the absence of what would have been its fifth annual Ocean Beach Jazz Festival be a deterrent.

The station shelved plans for this year's June festival after the nation's economic woes prompted most of its corporate sponsors to withdraw. Undaunted, KSDS will now stage a Sept. 13 fundraising concert at the Birch North Park Theatre, featuring rising young bassist-singer Esperanza Spalding and her band. The concert will be co-headlined by the Clayton Brothers, featuring piano virtuoso Gerald Clayton, 24, the son of the group's bassist, John Clayton.

Spalding, also 24, will be making her debut here as a leader, following a La Jolla gig two years ago as the bassist in saxophonist Joe Lovano's band. She performed at the White House earlier this year with Stevie Wonder and has recorded with such diverse artists as Lovano, bass great Stanley Clarke and indie-rock favorite M. Ward.

"We also want to raise awareness of the vitality of jazz with Esperanza, who is a young, vibrant player," said Claudia Russell, KSDS's program director. "It's important for people to know that jazz is not just about the history of the music, but also its present."



Rising young bassist-singer Esperanza Spalding performs Sept. 13 at the Birch North Park Theatre as part of a KSDS-FM fundraiser. -

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Tickets for the concert will be available, starting Tuesday, from the station's Web site, jazz88.org and (619) 388-3037.

– GEORGE VARGA

Obba Babatundé to take lead in 'Sammy'

The Old Globe Theatre's next new musical has found its main man.

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And speaking of that show: The Globe also has announced that it is extending the "Wives" run by one week. The show, scored by the Motown trio Holland/Dozier/Holland (who wrote and produced many hits for the Supremes, the girl group that helped inspire "Dreamgirls"), now runs through Aug. 30.

– JAMES HEBERT

Like music? Then you should go to North Park

The Night Marchers, headed by ex-Rocket From the Crypt leader John Reis are among the nine acts confirmed to perform next Sunday at the outdoor concert that will conclude this year's edition of the North Park Music Thing (formerly known as North By North Park).

Among the other artists on the bill for the seven-hour Street Fest include such San Diego-based luminaries as Blackheart Procession, Steve Poltz & The Rugburns, Uncle Joe's Big 'Ol Driver, Scott Russo & The Big Big Bang, Shark Attack, Writer, Dynamite Walls, The Bloodflowes, Buddy Akai and iRADio.

All of the above artists are appearing in addition to the 150 or so bands and solo performers who will be performing Saturday on 20 stages in 19 venues in North Park (and a bit beyond).

Two-day badges, which also admit you to all of the Aug. 8 and Aug. 9 music panels and workshops, plus the music trade show, are priced at \$30 each. Tickets for the Aug. 9 Street Fest, which will be held on three outdoor stages adjacent to the festival headquarters at the Lafayette Hotel, cost \$20 at the door. Information: sandiegomusicfoundation.org.

– GEORGE VARGA

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"Sammy" May Be Next San Diego Export to Broadway

New musical set to open on Oct. 2 in Balboa Park

By [KRISTINA SANTOS](#)

Updated 10:31 AM PDT, Tue, Sep 22, 2009

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Craig Schwartz

The Old Globe is set to debut "[Sammy](#)," a new musical based on the life of [Sammy Davis Jr.](#) and his struggles and triumphs as the ultimate triple-threat singer, actor and dancer.

The story takes theatergoers from Davis' childhood working days in vaudeville through his time as a member of the Rat Pack with Dean Martin and [Frank Sinatra](#).

"Sammy Davis Jr. was a man who opened doors, made things possible and who was quite complicated. He was known as a triple threat who could do it all, but had a complicated life, and we hope to tell the story honestly and still celebrate and honor this very special man," said Lou Spisto, the executive producer at [the Old Globe](#).

The world premier musical was written by two-time Academy- and Grammy-award winner Leslie Bricusse and features such hits as "The Candy Man," "Mr. Bojangles," "What Kind of Fool Am I?" and includes new songs written for the musical.

"Sammy" stars Obba Babatundé as Sammy Davis, [Ted Louis Levy](#) as Sammy Davis Sr., [Ann Duquesnay](#) as Rosa Davis and Adam James as Frank Sinatra. The show is directed by [Keith Glover](#) and choreographed by Keith Young.

Sammy runs from Sept. 19 to Nov. 8 at the Old Globe in Balboa Park. Previews are running until Oct. 1, and opening night is set for Oct. 2.

First Published: Sep 22, 2009 8:43 AM PDT

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[Leslie Bricusse pays tribute to old pal Sammy Davis in a new musical](#)
September 18th, 2009, 1:11 pm • [Post a Comment](#) • posted by [Paul Hodgins](#)



I had a fascinating chat this morning with **Leslie Bricusse**, the Oscar- and Grammy-winning British writer-composer-lyricist. Bricusse, 78, is at San Diego's Old Globe this week, working on the fulfillment of a longtime dream: a musical about his old friend, the late Sammy Davis Jr. It's called, simply, "**Sammy**." Their relationship was professional as well as personal: Davis recorded more than 60 of Bricusse's songs, including "Candy Man" and "What Kind of Fool Am I?"

In the early '60s Bricusse burst onto the scene, penning two shows with Anthony Newley, "Stop the World, I Want to Get Off" and "The Roar of the Greasepaint – The Smell of the Crowd." During his busy six-decade career he has worked with Henry Mancini, John Williams, John Barry, Jule Styne, Jerry Goldsmith, Lionel Bart and Andre Previn. Bricusse wrote songs and/or screenplays for "Doctor Doolittle," "Scrooge," "Goodbye Mr. Chips," "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory," "Victor Victoria," "Peter Pan," "Babes in Toyland" and "The Pied Piper."

Bricusse's "Sammy" makes its world premiere this weekend at the Old Globe. Read my interview:

Q. Tell me about how you met Sammy Davis.

A. When "Stop the World, I Want to Get Off" opened in London, Sammy was in town to do a one-man show at the Prince of Wales Theatre. We opened at the Queens, which was just down the street from him. He had a week before he opened so he came to see "Stop the World." After the show he introduced himself to us and we all had dinner together that night. He told us he loved the music, and he was the first person to record the songs from the show. He did an extended-play album – four of the songs. He had a big hit with "What Kind of Fool Am I?" So from then on, out of friendship, really, never any professional

plan, he wanted to have first listen to everything I did.

Q. Talk about how the idea for this musical about Sammy's life came about.

A. When Sammy died in 1990 I decided to bring out a songbook of all the stuff of mine that he'd done. I also included a half-dozen other songs he'd made famous or had a hit record with. It started with that. But this isn't just a song-and-dance show; it deals with the heavy issues of Sammy's life and career: the battles he fought; the racism he encountered; losing his eye. That was a crucial thing. He thought he'd never dance again.

Q. You spent a lot of time with Sammy. What was he like?

A. He was the best fun in the world. He was a truly funny man. And (he was) outrageously, ridiculously generous. You had to hold him back. There's a sequence in the show called "Living Large." It's about the great financial problems in his life. I always say that Sammy was both the hero and the villain of his own life. His talent was the hero and his excess was the villain. He had a lot of problems that he never quite resolved.

Q. How did you end up bringing this project to fruition at the Old Globe?

A. Several years ago I had met (Old Globe executive producer) Lou Spisto in London. I was writing a project with an English playwright about the last days of Peter Sellers. He was interested in that. I met Lou again in February of this year. This time I was working on a show with Frank Wildhorn, "Cyrano." Lou asked, "What else are you doing?" I told him about the Sammy idea. He called me back the next day and said, "We've got to do this!"

Q. How hard was it to cast the role of Sammy? (The Globe debut production features Tony-nominated Obba Babatundé.)

A. Years ago we lived just around the corner from Sammy in Beverly Hills. He turned up at my house late one night and said, "Meet my young friend Obba." Sammy was his mentor. He has the essence of Sammy, which none of the people we auditioned could equal because he knew the man and he can get inside the character. He does physical stuff that's just pure Sammy. It's quite extraordinary. He's got the whole package: he can sing, dance, he's funny. And, of course, Sammy was his idol.

Q. Are there plans to take the show to Broadway?

A. I never try to predict what will happen to any project, ever. There are so many factors. Does the public like the subject matter, the way you handle it? I was talking to a TV bigwig and he said, "Nobody under 35 knows who Sammy Davis is." Well, you'll hear angry denials of that from younger people. Someone from the ("Sammy") orchestra said, "You'll be surprised how many people will be coming out from New York." Sammy had a much bigger public than we realize. He still does.

Posted in: [Theater by Paul Hodgins](#) • [musicals](#) • [theater videos](#) • [Leslie Bricusse](#) • [Old Globe San Diego](#) • [Sammy Davis Jr.](#) |

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Volume 3, Number 192

'There's a Jewish story every'

Sunday-Monday, October 11-12, 2009

The Jewish Citizen

Museum visit, *Sammy* production recall Davis-Nixon]

By Donald H. Harrison



YORBA LINDA, California—The Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum complex is also Richard Nixon's birthplace and grave site—in short, a place where one may review the entire scope of his life, weighing his accomplishments against his misdeeds.

Although the format is much different, the experience is in some ways quite similar to seeing *Sammy*, the musical retrospective (now playing at the Old Globe Theatre in San Diego) that leads viewers through the high and low points of entertainer Sammy Davis Jr.'s life.

If you'd like to preview the plot, read the [Wikipedia entry](#) about Sammy Davis Jr., which is remarkably parallel to songwriter and playwright Leslie Bricusse's script, though the latter sometimes compresses the timeline for dramatic effect. The lives of Nixon and Davis famously intersected on two occasions within a year of each other. Davis was among the entertainers who appeared at a concert in 1972 in Miami Beach supporting President Nixon's reelection campaign, and, when Nixon came on the stage unannounced, Davis gave him a hug—much to the distress of many of his liberal show business colleagues.

[Here's a link](#) to an Associated Press photo of that hug; above right is an Old Globe photo from its *Sammy* production in which actor Obba Babatundé, who portrays Davis, hugs a larger than life figure of the controversial president.

In 1973, Davis was a guest at Nixon's White House, the historical



ABOVE: Obba Babatundé, portraying Sammy Davis Jr., hugging a larger than life figure of Richard Nixon (Craig Schwartz photo). **BELOW:** The house in which President Richard Nixon was born—around which the Nixon Presidential Library and Museum was later constructed. (D.H. Harrison photo)

speculation being that he was the first African-American to ever sleep in the residential quarters of the President's home.



The museum displays in its lobby a photograph (above) of Richard and Pat Nixon and Sammy and third wife Altovise Davis in 1973. Unfortunately, neither the museum nor the play probe the dynamics of the Nixon-Davis relationship, but the May 17, 1990, *New York Times* obituary of Davis may provide a telling clue to both men's motivations.

Twelve years before he slept in the Queen's Bedroom at the White House, Sammy Davis Jr. had been scheduled to participate in the 1961 inauguration of Nixon's arch-rival, President John F. Kennedy, but the invitation was revoked after he married his second wife, Swedish actress May Britt—the Kennedys fearing that giving Davis a political embrace so soon after his inter-racial marriage would anger Southern Democrats whose support he needed to pass his programs. At the time, interracial marriages were forbidden in 37 states.

(Incidentally, the marriage in California to Britt came after Davis lost one eye in a traffic accident. While hospitalized, the entertainer began studying Judaism—ultimately to convert—prompted by a conversation he had with vaudevillian Eddie Cantor about the similarities between the Jewish and African-American experiences. Many readers of the *San Diego Jewish Press-Heritage*, of which this publication is in many ways a successor, were familiar with the late columnist Rabbi Will Kramer, who officiated at the controversial Davis-Britt wedding).

Later in his life, Davis said he regretted his support for Nixon, explaining that he felt that Nixon had not lived up to his promise to work for Civil Rights legislation. The Kennedy family subsequently made amends to Davis Jr., sponsoring a Kennedy Center salute to his career as a showman.

Prior to such revisionism, however, for both Nixon and Davis, the Kennedy family may well have represented wealth and privilege, which stood in contrast to their own humble beginnings. Davis, who was three or four years old (accounts vary) when he left Harlem to go on stage with his father as part



of the Will Mastin Trio, never had any formal schooling, a grew up understanding that his success and that of his fan depended upon the applause of others.

Nixon was born in the small bedroom off the combination room-dining room in a store-bought home that his father assembled from a kit. Here he learned to play a piano and several other musical instruments before the family event moved to Whittier, California.

Whereas Davis tried to please everyone, Nixon was a success debater at Whittier College who came to consider public life a contest in which one had to choose sides and enemies. After returning home from World War II, he became a Republican candidate for Congress, defeating Jerry Voorhis, and entered the same freshman congressional class as Jack Kennedy. Kennedy also, he soon stepped up to the U.S. Senate, defeating liberal Democrat Helen Gahagan Douglas. Nixon was known as a fierce anti-Communist, one who, in the view of opponents, would smear anyone to work his way up the political ladder.

Along the way to the top of their respective professions, both got beat up – Davis, physically, when white racist soldiers roughed him up after performing with white actresses in radio stage shows, and Nixon, politically, in his losses in 1960 for President to John F. Kennedy and in 1962 for California governor to Edmund G. Brown Sr.

Both men, too, had people who despised them, purely and simply. Davis found he was hated on both sides of the racial divide—by whites who feared the blurring of racial lines, a blacks who thought his marriage to Britt meant he had defected.

One can conclude that Davis and Nixon both had deep inner complexes, notwithstanding their many accomplishments. Nixon's paranoia about his enemies led to his participation in the cover-up of the Watergate burglaries and ultimately to his disgrace as the first (and only) president to be forced to resign from office. Davis's lack of an emotional anchor—he had adopted Judaism in theory but not in the sense of commitment.

[Go to the top of next column](#)

practice—led him to multi-million dollar spending sprees, numerous extramarital affairs and to illegal drug use.

Despite their flaws, both men achieved remarkable height helped to personify their era. The Nixon Library and Mus and *Sammy* are equally worth seeing.

Harrison is editor and publisher of *San Diego Jewish World*
Email: editor@sandiegojewishworld.com

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theatre



Sammy with Evie and Leslie Bricusse. Photo courtesy of Leslie Bricusse.

To step into the shoes of someone else's incredible talent and persona is no easy task. For the world premiere of Leslie Bricusse's *Sammy* at The Old Globe, Obba Babatundé is doing just that as he portrays the legendary show biz star Sammy Davis Jr. Babatundé is a star in his own right on Broadway. His portrayal of C.C. White comes to mind in *Dreamgirls* or his run as Billy Flynn in *Chicago*. Yet, Babatundé has a very unique and special connection to this new production simply called *Sammy*. *The Rage Monthly* spoke with Obba Babatundé to learn more about his respect, admiration and friendship with the one-and-only Sammy Davis Jr. as he prepares to portray the entertainment icon at The Old Globe from September 19 to November 8.

Rage: Please tell me about your admiration for Sammy Davis Jr.

Obba Babatundé: I was always an admirer of the talents and capabilities of Mr. Davis. As a child, it was Mr. Davis' image that I identified with watching television. It was one of the few images that was a reflection of what my household looked like. It was also one that was right there with those who were touted as being the best in the business. There it was... a reflection of a talent that was enormous, that was really singing and really dancing and doing the acting. It was all across the board. He was a show-stopping entertainer and doing it with a standard of excellence.

Rage: Did you ever imagine you would be right here and now doing *Sammy*?

OB: I had the great pleasure in 1978 of meeting Sammy in person. I was costarring in a world tour with Liza Minnelli. We were about to begin our world tour and were at Harrah's in Tahoe. Sammy was about to embark on his world tour, which meant we would precede or follow Sammy into the different venues. So, I got a chance to spend a lot of time with him from 1978 until his passing. I was always in great awe and

admiration. One of the most generous human beings I've ever had the chance to be in the company of. A quick little story... Liza said to me, knowing that I was a huge fan said, "Obba. Sammy is here and he wants to meet you." And I said, for whatever the reason was, "I'd love to meet him but I'd like to meet him after he's seen me work." She said, "He's not going to stay for the performance. His gums are bothering him." So I said, "Okay." I went into her dressing room and there he was getting a beverage out of the cooler. He turned around and I said, "How do you do Mr. Davis?" He said, "It's Sam, man. Call me Sam." I said, "Mr. Davis, it's an honor to meet you." He said, "Call me Sam, man." Of course, I couldn't call him Sam. I began to call him Mr. D. As it were, he said, "Listen man. Liza tells me your marvelous. Unfortunately, I won't be able to see you tonight. My gums are bothering me and as you well know, the audience is the priority and I've got to go home and rest." I said I understood and that it was an honor and a pleasure to meet him. Then Liza and I went on. When I came off stage, Helen, who was Liza's dresser said, "Obba. Liza said to tell you that Sammy stayed." So, after the show, I heard in the hallway, "Marvelous Liza. Where's Obba's dressing room?" There's a rap on my door and I said, "Yes." Sammy said, "It's me Ob." I opened the door and he looked at me and says, "You my man, are a bitch on wheels. A bitch on wheels!" He then came inside and praised me with a lot of generous compliments. I said to him, "Mr. D, I'd like to thank you for coming in through the kitchen so I could come in through the front door."

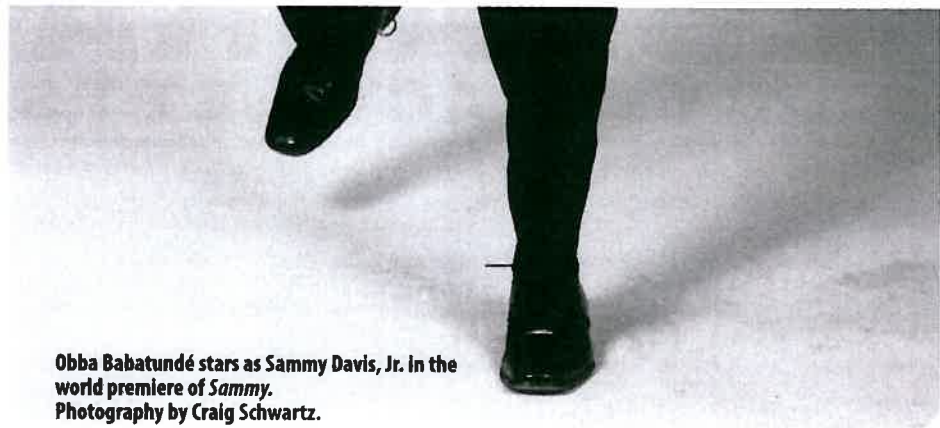
Rage: Presenting the time period and the personal troubles in a realistic way, I think that would be an integral part of the show.

OB: It certainly is. Bill, that's a very astute observation. One of the things about Sammy is that we have to identify and see him in a historical context of the time in which he lived. It is as much a part of what made Sammy "Sammy." Here is a man who was headlining when the Jim Crow laws are still in place. For example, if somebody builds a plane today, we talk about the style and the exciting things but it doesn't have the same iconic representation as when the Wright Brothers first flew the plane. Because it hadn't been done before. It's the same thing with Mr. D. This guy was doing what nobody else was doing. At a time, when it was told to him that he could not do it, he was not allowed to do it.

Rage: What would you say Sammy Davis Jr.'s motto was?

OB: His motto for life was in my opinion, like the song he did called "I Gotta Be Me." Anybody who listens to the lyrics of that song, I think will understand Mr. D. "Whether I'm right or whether I'm wrong, whether I find a place in this world or never belong, I gotta be me. Willing to try or do it or die, I gotta be me."

"Call me Sam, man." by bill biss
OBBA BABATUNDÉ and Sammy Davis Jr.



Obba Babatundé stars as Sammy Davis, Jr. in the world premiere of *Sammy*. Photography by Craig Schwartz.



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He's Gotta Be Him: Babatundé Is *Sammy* in New Musical Opening Oct. 2 in CA

By [Kenneth Jones](#)
02 Oct 2009



Sammy stars Obba Babatundé and Heather Ayers
photo by Craig Schwartz

The world-premiere biographical musical, *Sammy*, about late showman Sammy Davis Jr., opens Oct. 2 after previews from Sept. 19 at the Old Globe Theatre in San Diego. The cast is headed by Broadway veteran and Tony Award nominee Obba Babatundé as Davis.

Famed songwriter Leslie Bricusse ("Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory," *Stop the World — I Want to Get Off*, "Scrooge") penned book, music and lyrics for the musical about his showbiz pal, the groundbreaking African-American triple-threat who sang, dance and acted in film, TV and on Broadway.

Directed by Keith Glover with choreography by Keith Young and music supervision by Ian Fraser, *Sammy* will run to Nov. 8 (which represents an extension).

The score includes numbers that Davis was associated with in his career, but also boasts more than a dozen new songs that Bricusse wrote specifically for this project. Additional songs are by Bricusse and Anthony Newley; Davis recorded a number of Bricusse-Newley songs in his day. Davis, a native of Harlem who died in Beverly Hills, CA, lived 1925-1990.

According to The Old Globe, "*Sammy* traces the highs and lows of the ultimate triple-threat singer, actor and dancer. Davis became one of the greatest performers of his generation, paving new ground while struggling with issues of identity, race and a turbulent personal life."

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Like his mentor Sammy Davis, Jr., Babatundé has been entertaining audiences since he was a child, according to The Old Globe. Davis once said of Babatundé: "I feel safe knowing that with cats like Obba, when I get out of this business I am leaving it in

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Troy Britton Johnson, Obba Babatundé and Adam James in *Sammy*
photo by Craig Schwartz

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The Ultimate Playbill® Binder

Sammy, the New Musical, Now on Sale at Old Globe

By [Kenneth Jones](#)
23 Aug 2009



Sammy star Obba Babatundé
photo by Craig Schwartz

Single tickets for the world premiere biographical musical, *Sammy*, about late showman Sammy Davis Jr., go on sale Aug. 23 at the Old Globe Theatre in San Diego. Famed songwriter Leslie Bricusse penned book, music and lyrics for the show about his showbiz pal.

Until now, tickets to *Sammy* had been available by subscription only. For single tickets (on sale at 10 AM, PT) visit www.TheOldGlobe.org or call (619) 23-GLOBE.

Directed by Keith Glover with choreography by Keith Young and music supervision by Ian Fraser, *Sammy* will run Sept. 19-Nov. 8. Opening night is Oct. 2.

The new musical is based on the life of singer-dancer-actor Sammy Davis, Jr. with book, music and lyrics by Bricusse, and additional songs by Bricusse and Anthony Newley.

The cast will be headed by the previously reported Broadway veteran and Tony Award nominee Obba Babatundé as Davis.

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The creative team also includes Alexander Dodge (scenic design), Fabio Toblini (costume design), Chris Lee (lighting design), John H. Shivers (sound design), David Patridge (sound design), Ned Ginsburg (orchestrator), Rahn Coleman (music director/conductor), Dominique Kelley (assistant choreographer), and David Sugarman (stage manager).

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A New "Candy Man": Tony Nominee Babatundé Will Be Sammy in New Musical

By [Kenneth Jones](#)
29 Jul 2009



Sammy star Obba Babatundé
photo by Craig Schwartz

Broadway veteran and Tony Award nominee Obba Babatundé will star as showbiz legend Sammy Davis, Jr. in the world premiere of *Sammy* by lyricist-composer-librettist Leslie Bricusse.

Old Globe executive producer Lou Spisto announced the casting on July 29. Directed by Keith Glover with choreography by Keith Young and music supervision by Ian Fraser, *Sammy* will run in the Old Globe Theatre in San Diego Sept. 19–Nov. 8. Opening night is Oct. 2.

The new musical is based on the life of singer-dancer-actor Davis with book, music and lyrics by Bricusse, and additional songs by Bricusse and Anthony Newley.

Like his mentor Sammy Davis, Jr., Babatundé has been entertaining audiences since he was a child, according to The Old Globe. Davis once said of Babatundé: "I feel safe knowing that with cats like Obba, when I get out of this business I am leaving it in good hands."

Babatundé was nominated for a Tony Award for his performance as C.C. White in the original Broadway cast of *Dreamgirls*. His additional Broadway credits include the revival of *Chicago*, *Grind* and *Timbuktu!* He also created the role of Jelly Roll Morton in *Jelly's Last Jam*. On television, Babatundé delivered an Emmy-nominated performance in "Miss Ever's Boys," received a NAACP Image Award nomination for his performance as Harold Nicholas in "Introducing Dorothy Dandridge" and has appeared in 60 made-for-television movies.

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Tickets to *Sammy* are currently available by subscription only. Single tickets go on sale Aug. 23 at 10 AM and can be purchased online at www.TheOldGlobe.org, by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the Box Office.

The full cast and creative team have not yet been announced.

The world premiere musical "moves from Sammy Davis, Jr.'s days as a child working in vaudeville through his time with Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin as a member of the Rat Pack." It will feature the classic tunes that helped to make Davis an icon — "The Candy Man," "Mr. Bojangles" and "What Kind of Fool Am I."

According to The Old Globe, "*Sammy* traces the highs and lows of the ultimate triple-threat singer, actor and dancer. Davis became one of the greatest performers of his generation, paving new ground while struggling with issues of identity, race and a turbulent personal life."

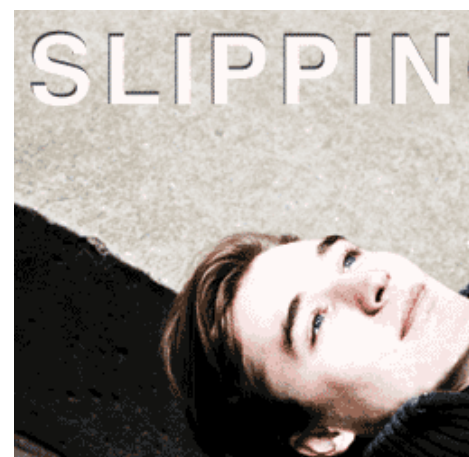
Double Oscar and Grammy winner Leslie Bricusse has written more than 40 musical shows and films. He has been nominated for ten Academy Awards, nine Grammys and four Tonys, and in addition to his Oscars and Grammy, has won eight Ivor Novello Awards. His stage musicals include *Stop the World—I Want to Get Off*; *The Roar of the Greasepaint—The Smell of the Crowd*; *Pickwick*; *Harvey*; *The Good Old Bad Old Days*; *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*; *Henry's Wives*; *Scrooge*; *One Shining Moment*; *Sherlock Holmes*; *Jekyll and Hyde* and *Victor/Victoria*. Bricusse has also written songs and/or screenplays for such films as "Doctor Dolittle"; "Scrooge"; "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory"; "Goodbye, Mr. Chips"; "Superman"; "Victor/Victoria"; "Santa Claus – The Movie"; "Home Alone I & II"; "Hook"; "Tom & Jerry – The Movie"; and various "Pink Panther" films. His better-known songs include "What Kind of Fool Am I?," "Once in a Lifetime," "Gonna Build a Mountain," "Who Can I Turn To?," "The Joker," "If I Ruled the World," "My Kind of Girl," "Talk to the Animals," "You and I," "Feeling Good," "When I Look in Your Eyes," "Goldfinger," "Can You Read My Mind?" (the Love Theme from Superman), "You Only Live Twice," "Le Jazz Hot!," "On a Wonderful Day Like Today," "Two for the Road," "The Candy Man," "This Is the Moment," "Crazy World," "Pure Imagination" and more.

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Jason Butler Harner, who played Ivan Turgenev in the Tony Award-winning Tom Stoppard play *The Coast of Utopia*, will succeed David Cromer in the critically acclaimed revival of *Our Town* at the Barrow Street Theatre.

Ayers, Duquesnay, Johnson and More Will Join Babatundé in New Musical *Sammy*



Complete casting has been announced for the world premiere of the new musical *Sammy* — by lyricist-composer-librettist Leslie Bricusse — which will run in the Old Globe Theatre in San Diego Sept. 19–Nov. 8.



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August 14, 2009

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Ayers, Duquesnay, Johnson and More Will Join Babatundé in New Musical *Sammy*

By [Andrew Gans](#)
and Kenneth Jones
14 Aug 2009



Sammy star Obba Babatundé
photo by Craig Schwartz

Complete casting has been announced for the world premiere of the new musical *Sammy* by lyricist-composer-librettist Leslie Bricusse.

Directed by Keith Glover with choreography by Keith Young and music supervision by Ian Fraser, *Sammy* will run in the Old Globe Theatre in San Diego Sept. 19–Nov. 8. Opening night is Oct. 2.

The new musical is based on the life of singer-dancer-actor Sammy Davis, Jr. with book, music and lyrics by Bricusse, and additional songs by Bricusse and Anthony Newley.

The cast will be headed by the previously reported Broadway veteran and Tony Award nominee Obba Babatundé, who will star as showbiz

legend Davis, Jr.

Babatundé will be joined by the newly announced Heather Ayers (May Britt/Ensemble), Ann Duquesnay (Rosa Davis), Mary Ann Hermansen (Kim Novak/Ensemble), Adam James (Frank Sinatra), Troy Britton Johnson (Dean Martin/Cohn/Jennings/Ensemble), Ted Louis Levy (Sammy Davis, Sr.), Keewa Nurullah (Lola Folana/Ensemble), Victoria Platt (Altovise Gore/Ensemble), Lance Roberts (Will Mastin), Alonzo Saunders

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(Murphy/Ensemble/understudy Sammy), Sarrah Strimel (Luella/Hedda/Ensemble) with Jenelle Engleson, Stephanie Girard, Lauren Haughton and Anise Ritchie (Ensemble).

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According to The Old Globe, "*Sammy* traces the highs and lows of the ultimate triple-threat singer, actor and dancer. Davis became one of the greatest performers of his generation, paving new ground while struggling with issues of identity, race and a turbulent personal life."

The creative team also includes Alexander Dodge (scenic design), Fabio Toblini (costume design), Chris Lee (lighting design), John H. Shivers (sound design), David Patridge (sound design), Ned Ginsburg (orchestrator), Rahn Coleman (music director/conductor), Dominique Kelley (assistant choreographer), and David Sugarman (stage manager).

Tickets to *Sammy* are currently available by subscription only. Single tickets go on sale Aug. 23 at 10 AM and can be purchased online at www.TheOldGlobe.org, by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the Box Office.



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Sammy stars Obba Babatundé and Adam James
photo by Craig Schwartz

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PHOTO CALL: *Sammy*, with Obba Babatundé, in San Diego

By [Matthew Blank](#)
27 Sep 2009

The biographical musical *Sammy*, about late showman Sammy Davis Jr., is enjoying its world premiere at San Diego's Old Globe Theatre. Tony Award nominee Obba Babatundé plays the title role.



The new work features book, music and lyrics by Leslie Bricusse.

Keith Glover directs a company that also includes Heather Ayers (May Britt/Ensemble), Ann Duquesnay (Rosa Davis), Mary Ann Hermansen (Kim Novak/Ensemble), Adam James (Frank Sinatra), Troy Britton Johnson (Dean Martin/Cohn/Jennings /Ensemble), Ted Louis Levy (Sammy Davis, Sr.), Keewa Nurullah (Lola Folana/Ensemble), Perry Ojeda (Eddie Cantor/Ensemble), Victoria Platt (Altovise Gore/Ensemble), Lance Roberts (Will Mastin), Alonzo

Saunders (Murphy/Ensemble) with Jenelle Engleson, Stephanie Girard, Lauren Haughton, Anise Ritchie and Sarrah Strimel (Ensemble).

Here is a first look at the production, which opens Oct. 2 and runs through Nov. 8:

View the Entire Photo Gallery



Obba Babatundé
Photo by Craig Schwartz

For tickets visit www.TheOldGlobe.org or call (619) 23-GLOBE.

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***Sammy*, Bricusse Musical About Sammy Davis Jr., Gets Award — and an Extra Week**

By Kenneth Jones
July 16, 2009

The Edgerton Foundation's New American Play Award has been granted to The Old Globe in support of the fall world premiere of *Sammy*, the new musical about Sammy Davis Jr.

The \$75,000 award will allow for an extension of the rehearsal period of *Sammy*, directed by Keith Glover. The show has book, music and lyrics by Leslie Bricusse, whose songs were famously recorded by Davis.

The musical will play the Old Globe Theatre in San Diego Sept. 19–Nov. 8. The cast and full creative team have not yet been announced.

The preview and opening night dates of *Sammy* have been revised since an earlier announcement and an additional week of performances has been added. Opening night, after previews from Sept. 19, will be Oct. 2. (The previously announced Sept. 17 and 18 previews have been canceled. Additional matinee preview performances have been added on Saturday, Sept. 26 and Sunday, Sept. 27 at 2 PM. Opening night is Friday, October 2. The opening was previously scheduled for Sept. 26).

The show will now close on Nov. 8 rather than Nov. 1.

*

Launched in 2006, the Edgerton Foundation's New American Play Awards have provided 46 productions with the financial resources to increase rehearsal time with the full production team onsite. The Globe has previously received the prestigious award in support of the world premieres of Mark V. Olsen's *Cornelia*, Itamar Moses' *Back Back Back* and Steven Druksman's *In This Corner*.

Tickets to *Sammy* are currently available by subscription only. Single tickets go on sale Aug. 23 at 10 AM and can be purchased online at www.TheOldGlobe.org, by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the box office at 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park.

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Obba Babatunde To Star As Sammy Davis, Jr. In The New Leslie Bricusse Musical, SAMMY

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by BWW News Desk



Broadway veteran Obba Babatundé is set to star as Sammy Davis, Jr. in the world premiere of Sammy, Old Globe Executive Producer Lou Spisto announced today.

The new musical is based on the

life of Davis with book, music and lyrics by Leslie Bricusse, and additional songs by Bricusse and Anthony Newley. Directed by Keith Glover with choreography by Keith Young and music supervision by Ian Fraser, Sammy will run in the Old Globe Theatre Sept. 19 - Nov. 8. Previews run from Sept. 19 - Oct. 1. Opening night is Oct. 2 at 8:00 p.m.

Tickets to Sammy are currently available by subscription only. Single tickets go on sale Aug. 23 at 10:00 a.m and can be purchased online at www.TheOldGlobe.org, by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the Box Office. (The full cast and creative team have not yet been announced.)

Like his mentor Sammy Davis, Jr., Obba Babatundé has been entertaining audiences since he was a child. A skilled actor, singer and dancer, Davis once said of Babatundé that "I feel safe knowing that with cats like Obba, when I get out of this business I am leaving it in good hands." Babatundé was nominated for a Tony Award for his performance as C.C. White in the original Broadway cast of Dreamgirls. His additional Broadway credits include the revival of Chicago, Grind and Timbuktu! He also created the role of Jelly Roll Morton in Jelly's Last Jam. On television, Babatundé delivered an Emmy-nominated performance in Miss Ever's Boys, received a NAACP Image Award nomination for his performance as Harold Nicholas in Introducing Dorothy Dandridge and has appeared in 60 made-for-television movies. His theatrical films include The Celestine Prophecy, Material Girls, After the Sunset, The Manchurian Candidate, The Notebook and the upcoming The Black Man's Guide to Understanding Black Women.

"Casting is always critical, but for Sammy, you either get the right man or you do not attempt it,



and we are incredibly fortunate to have found the perfect actor to play the role," said Spisto. "Obba has an abundance of the necessary performance skills, as well as a firsthand knowledge and understanding of both the professional and personal Sammy. He will add an immeasurable level of honesty to the portrayal of the great Sammy Davis Jr."

The world premiere musical moves from Sammy Davis, Jr.'s days as a child working in vaudeville through his time with Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin as a member of the Rat Pack. Featuring the classic tunes that helped to make Davis an icon - "The Candy Man," "Mr. Bojangles" and "What Kind of Fool Am I" - Sammy traces the highs and lows of the ultimate triple-threat singer, actor and dancer. Davis became one of the greatest performers of his generation, paving new ground while struggling with issues of identity, race and a turbulent personal life.

Double Oscar and Grammy winner Leslie Bricusse has written more than 40 musical shows and films, and has collaborated with an array of musical talents, including Anthony Newley, Henry Mancini, John Williams, John Barry, Jerry Goldsmith, Jule Styne, Quincy Jones, Andre Previn, Frank Wildhorn and Peter Illyich Tchaikovsky (whose Nutcracker Suite he adapted into a song score). He has been nominated for ten Academy Awards, nine Grammys and four Tonys, and in addition to his Oscars and Grammy, has won eight Ivor Novello Awards. His stage musicals include *Stop the World-I Want to Get Off*; *The Roar of the Greasepaint-The Smell of the Crowd*; *Pickwick*; *Harvey*; *The Good Old Bad Old Days*; *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*; *Henry's Wives*; *Scrooge*; *One Shining Moment*; *Sherlock Holmes*; *Jekyll and Hyde* and *Victor/Victoria*. Bricusse has also written songs and/or screenplays for such films as *Doctor Dolittle*; *Scrooge*; *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*; *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*; *Superman*; *Victor/Victoria*; *Santa Claus - The Movie*; *Home Alone I & II*; *Hook*; *Tom & Jerry - The Movie*; and various *Pink Panther* films. His better-known songs include "What Kind of Fool Am I?," "Once in a Lifetime," "Gonna Build a Mountain," "Who Can I Turn To?," "The Joker," "If I Ruled the World," "My Kind of Girl," "Talk to the Animals," "You and I," "Feeling Good," "When I Look in Your Eyes," "Goldfinger," "Can You Read My Mind?" (the Love Theme from *Superman*), "You Only Live Twice," "Le Jazz Hot!," "On a Wonderful Day Like Today," "Two for the Road," "The Candy Man," "This Is the Moment," "Crazy World," "Pure Imagination" and "Oompa-Loompa-Doompa-Dee-Doo." In 1989, Bricusse received the Kennedy Award for consistent excellence in British songwriting, bestowed by the British Academy of Songwriters, Composers and Authors, and was inducted into the American Songwriters Hall of Fame - only the fourth Englishman to be honored - after Noel Coward, John Lennon, and Paul McCartney.

TICKETS to Sammy are currently available by subscription only. Single tickets go on sale Aug. 23 at 10:00 a.m. and can be purchased online at www.TheOldGlobe.org, by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the box office at 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park. Performances begin on Sept. 19 and continue through Nov. 8. Ticket prices range from \$54 to \$89. Performance times: Previews: Saturday, Sept. 19 at 8:00 p.m., Sunday Sept. 20 at 7:00 p.m., Tuesday, Sept. 22, at 7:00 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 23 at 7:00 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 24 at 8:00 p.m., Friday, Sept. 25 at 8:00 p.m., Saturday, Sept 26 at 2:00 p.m. and 8 p.m., Sunday, Sept. 27 at 2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m., Tuesday, Sept. 29 at 7:00 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 30 at 7:00 p.m. and Thursday, Oct. 1 at 8:00 p.m. Regular Performances: Tuesday and Wednesday evenings at 7:00 p.m., Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings at 8:00 p.m., Saturday and Sunday matinees at 2:00 p.m., and Sunday evenings at 7:00 p.m. Discounts are available for full-time students, patrons 29 years of age and under, seniors and groups of 10 or more.

The Old Globe is located in San Diego's Balboa Park at 1363 Old Globe Way. There are numerous free parking lots available throughout the park. Valet parking is also available (\$10). For additional parking information visit www.BalboaPark.org.

Shakespeare Festival: Twelfth Night, Cyrano de Bergerac and Coriolanus (in repertory thru 9/27), Sammy (9/19-11/8), The Savannah Disputation (9/26-11/1), Whisper House (1/13-2/21).

The Tony Award-winning Old Globe is one of the country's leading professional regional theaters and has stood as San Diego's flagship arts institution for 74 years. Under the direction of Executive Producer Louis G. Spisto, The Old Globe produces a year-round season of 15 productions of classic, contemporary and new works on its three Balboa Park stages: the 580-seat Old Globe Theatre, the 250-seat Arena Stage at the San Diego Museum of Art's James S. Copley Auditorium (an interim second stage during construction of the new 280-seat Conrad Prebys Theatre Center) and the 612-seat outdoor Lowell Davies Festival Theatre, home of its internationally renowned Shakespeare Festival. More than 250,000 people attend Globe productions annually and participate in the theater's education programs and outreach services. Numerous Broadway-bound premieres and revivals, such as *The Full Monty*, *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, *A Catered Affair*, and the annual holiday musical, *Dr. Seuss' How The Grinch Stole Christmas!*, have been developed at The Old Globe and have gone on to enjoy highly successful runs in New York and at regional theaters across the country.



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SAMMY Gears Up For Opening At The Old Globe, 10/2

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Tuesday, September 29, 2009; Posted: 10:09 AM - by [BWV News Desk](#)

ADD THIS



SAMMY, a new musical about the life of Sammy David Jr. currently in previews at [The Old Globe](#), is gearing up for it's much anticipated opening on October 2nd and the buzz has begun. After all, what \$2.5-million production about an icon with a 13-piece orchestra and list of award-winning actors wouldn't generate excitement?

The world premiere of SAMMY is presented by Old Globe Executive Producer [Lou Spisto](#) with book, music and lyrics by [Leslie Bricusse](#), and additional songs by Bricusse and [Anthony Newley](#). Directed by [Keith Glover](#) with choreography by [Keith Young](#) and music supervision by [Ian Fraser](#), Sammy began previews on Sept. 19 and will run through Nov. 8.

"The opportunity to work with [Leslie Bricusse](#) and tell the story of the great [Sammy Davis, Jr.](#) was something we couldn't pass up," said Spisto. "Bricusse contributed to Sammy's canon of hits more than any other individual songwriter. Who better to give us an insightful book and a new score which includes the classics that helped shape this legendary entertainer? Though Sammy crossed many boundaries throughout his multifaceted career, there was much more to him than his iconic public persona. Our aim with this new work is to both honor [Sammy Davis, Jr.](#) for those who knew and loved him, and to also introduce this one-of-a-kind performer to a new audience."

Sammy moves from [Sammy Davis, Jr.](#)'s beginnings in vaudeville through the Rat Pack years with [Frank Sinatra](#) to ultimate recognition of his lifetime contribution to American culture. Featuring the classic tunes that helped to make Davis an icon - "The Candy Man," "Mr. Bojangles" and "What Kind of Fool Am I" - Sammy traces the highs and lows of the ultimate triple-threat singer, actor and dancer. Davis was one of the greatest performers of his generation, paving new ground while struggling with issues of identity, race and a turbulent personal life.

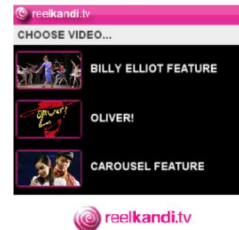
Broadway veteran Obba Babatundé headlines as [Sammy Davis, Jr.](#) The cast also features [Heather Ayers](#) (May Britt/Ensemble), [Ann Duquesnay](#) (Rosa Davis), [Mary Ann Hermansen](#) ([Kim Novak](#)/Ensemble), [Adam James](#) ([Frank Sinatra](#)), [Troy Britton Johnson](#) ([Dean Martin](#)/Cohn/Jennings/Ensemble), Ted [Louis Levy](#) ([Sammy Davis, Sr.](#)), [Keewa Nurullah](#) (Lola Folana/Ensemble), [Perry Ojeda](#) ([Eddie Cantor](#)/Ensemble), Victoria Platt ([Altovise Gore](#)/Ensemble), [Lance Roberts](#) ([Will Mastin](#)), [Alonzo Saunders](#) (Murphy/Ensemble) with [Jenelle Engleson](#), [Stephanie Girard](#), [Lauren Haughton](#), [Anise Ritchie](#) and [Sarrah Strimel](#) (Ensemble).

The Sammy creative team also includes [Alexander Dodge](#) (Scenic Design), [Fabio Toblani](#) (Costume Design), [Chris Lee](#) (Lighting Design), John H. Shivers (Sound Design), [David Patridge](#) (Sound Design), [Ned Ginsburg](#) (Orchestrator), [Rahn Coleman](#) (Music Director/Conductor), [Dominique Kelley](#) (Assistant Choreographer), [Tara Rubin](#) Casting (Casting) and [David Sugarman](#) (Stage Manager).

The multitalented [Keith Glover](#) returns to [The Old Globe](#) having previously directed his own work, [Thunder Knocking on the Door](#), winner of the American Theatre Critics Association's Osborn Award. He authored a new adaptation of the [Sammy Davis, Jr.](#) vehicle, [Golden Boy](#) (based on the original by [Clifford Odets](#) and [William Gibson](#)) and has directed many of his own plays including [In Walks Ed](#) which was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize, [Dancing on Moonlight](#), produced by the New York Shakespeare Festival, [Coming of the Hurricane](#), a finalist for the American Theatre Critics Award for Best Play, [The Rose of Corazon](#), [Jazzland](#), [Dark Paradise](#), [Shooting Star](#), [Clandestine Crossing](#) and [The Sword of Kazarán](#). As an actor, he has appeared on stage, television and film. Glover received an Outstanding Writing in a Feature Film/Television Movie Image Award nomination for [Life is Not a Fairytale: The Fantasia Barrino Story](#).

[Keith Young](#) choreographed the recent Broadway revival of [On the Town](#). His regional credits include [Crowns](#), [Thunder Knocking at the Door](#) and [Cheer](#). His film credits include Nancy Meyer's upcoming feature [It's Complicated](#) with [Meryl Streep](#) and [Alec Baldwin](#), [The Baster](#) with [Jennifer Aniston](#), [Rent](#), [Something's Gotta Give](#), [What Women Want](#), [Dark Streets](#), [The Holiday](#), [Rat Race](#), [Affair of the Necklace](#) and [The Parent Trap](#). On television, his work has been seen on [The Academy Awards](#), [The Emmy Awards](#), [The Grammy Awards](#), [The NAACP Image Awards](#), "Pushing Daisies," "The Unit," "So You Think You Can Dance," "The Drew Carey Show" (Emmy Award), "Seinfeld" and "[Christopher Reeve: A Celebration of Hope](#)" (American Choreography Award). Young has staged both live concerts and music videos for [Madonna](#), [Babyface](#), [Bette Midler](#), [Josh Groban](#), [Outkast](#), [Phil Collins](#), [Clay Aiken](#), [LL Cool J](#), [Talking Heads](#), [Red Hot Chili Peppers](#), [Gladys Knight](#) and [Natalie Cole](#).

Like his mentor [Sammy Davis, Jr.](#), Obba Babatundé has been entertaining audiences since he was a child. A skilled actor, singer and dancer, Davis once said of Babatundé that "I feel safe knowing that with cats like Obba, when I get out of this business I am leaving it in good hands." Babatundé was nominated for a Tony Award for his performance as



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[C.C. White](#) in the original Broadway cast of Dreamgirls. His additional Broadway credits include the revival of Chicago, Grind and Timbuktu! He also created the role of [Jelly Roll Morton](#) in Jelly's Last Jam. On television, Babatundé delivered an Emmy-nominated performance in Miss Ever's Boys, received a NAACP Image Award nomination for his performance as [Harold Nicholas](#) in Introducing [Dorothy Dandridge](#) and has appeared in 60 made-for-television movies. His theatrical films include Philadelphia, That Thing You Do, After the Sunset, The Manchurian Candidate, The Notebook and the upcoming Moneyball opposite [Brad Pitt](#).

An accomplished showman and songwriter, [Adam James](#) was chosen by Tina Sinatra to portray her father, Frank, in Sinatra Remembered, the first-ever musical theater production about his life. James also co-starred Off Broadway in Our Sinatra at New York's legendary jazz venue, Birdland, and covered the role of Sinatra in the North American premiere of London's West End production of The Rat Pack. James replaced fellow Canadian crooner Michael Bublé as the vocalist/emcee for the American tour of Forever Swing. He performs internationally with symphonies and big bands starring in A Toast to Ol' Blue Eyes, a show he co-created with conductor/arranger [David Martin](#). He has also appeared in concert with [Liza Minnelli](#), [Tony Bennett](#) and [Ray Charles](#). James was named "Best Vocalist" by Jazz Report Magazine, was a finalist at the Montreal Jazz Festival and was nominated for a 2004 Genie Award (the Canadian "Oscar") for singing and co-writing the theme song for the film, Mambo Italiano. Following the autumn release of his debut solo recording, [Adam James](#), he will perform in Vancouver during the 2010 Olympic Winter Games and compose songs for [Twyla Tharp](#)'s Come Fly With Me.

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Emmy Award winner Ted [Louis Levy](#)'s professional training began in Chicago with Finis Henderson II, Master Tap Dancer and former manager of [Sammy Davis, Jr.](#) Levy collaborated with [George C. Wolfe](#) and [Gregory Hines](#) on the choreography of Jelly's Last Jam, for which he received a Tony Award and Drama Desk nominations, and the Outer Critics Circle Award. Levy also appeared on Broadway in Black and Blue and as Papa Jack in [Susan Stroman](#) and [Harry Connick, Jr.](#)'s Thou Shalt Not. He received a [Helen Hayes](#) Award for his portrayal of The Mikado in The Ford Theater's production of The Hot Mikado. He directed [Savion Glover](#)'s Dancing Under The Stars at the New York Shakespeare Festival's Delacorte Theater and contributed to the choreography Bring In 'Da Noise, Bring In 'Da Funk on Broadway. Levy made his film debut in [Spike Lee](#)'s Malcolm X, appeared with [Gregory Hines](#) in Bojangles and received an Emmy Award for his television debut performance in the PBS Special "Precious Memories." He is the recipient of the 2008 [Gregory Hines](#) Humanitarian Award.

Double Oscar and Grammy winner [Leslie Bricusse](#) has written more than 40 musical shows and films, and has collaborated with an array of musical talents, including [Anthony Newley](#), [Henry Mancini](#), [John Williams](#), [John Barry](#), [Jerry Goldsmith](#), [Jule Styne](#), [Quincy Jones](#), Andre Previn, [Frank Wildhorn](#) and Peter Illyich Tchaikovsky (whose Nutcracker Suite he adapted into a song score). He has been nominated for ten Academy Awards, nine Grammys and four Tonys, and in addition to his Oscars and Grammy, has won eight [Ivor Novello](#) Awards. His stage musicals include Stop the World - I Want to Get Off, The Roar of the Greasepaint - The Smell of the Crowd, Pickwick, Harvey, The Good Old Bad Old Days, Goodbye, Mr. Chips, Henry's Wives, Scrooge, One Shining Moment, Sherlock Holmes, Jekyll and Hyde and Victor/Victoria. Bricusse has also written songs and/or screenplays for such films as Doctor Dolittle, Scrooge, Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory, Goodbye, Mr. Chips, Superman, Victor/Victoria, Santa Claus - The Movie, Home Alone I & II, Hook, Tom & Jerry - The Movie, and various Pink Panther films. His better-known songs include "What Kind of Fool Am I?," "Once in a Lifetime," "Gonna Build a Mountain," "Who Can I Turn To?," "The Joker," "If I Ruled the World," "My Kind of Girl," "Talk to the Animals," "You and I," "Feeling Good," "When I Look in Your Eyes," "Goldfinger," "Can You Read My Mind?" (the Love Theme from Superman), "You Only Live Twice," "Le Jazz Hot!," "On a Wonderful Day Like Today," "Two for the Road," "The Candy Man," "This Is the Moment," "Crazy World," "Pure Imagination" and "Oompa-Loompa-Doompa-Dee-Doo." In 1989, Bricusse received the Kennedy Award for consistent excellence in British songwriting, bestowed by the British Academy of Songwriters, Composers and Authors, and was inducted into the American Songwriters Hall of Fame - only the fourth Englishman to be honored - after Noel Coward, [John Lennon](#) and [Paul McCartney](#).

[Anthony Newley](#) garnered three Tony Award nominations (Best Actor, Best Musical Author and Best Composer and Lyricist) for Stop the World-I Want to Get Off and two Tony Award nominations (Best Director and Best Composer and Lyricist) for The Roar of the Greasepaint-The Smell of the Crowd, both written with his longtime collaborator, [Leslie Bricusse](#). After the worldwide success of these two hit musicals, Newley ventured into film with roles in Doctor Dolittle and Sweet November. Other film credits as director, actor or producer include Summertree, It Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time, Mr. Quilp and Can Hieronymus Merkin Ever Forget Mercy Humppe and Find True Happiness? His collaborations with Bricusse also produced the score to the television production of Peter Pan which starred [Danny Kaye](#) and [Mia Farrow](#), the film Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory, and the London stage production of the Good Old Bad Old Days. Together they created such standards as "What Kind of Fool Am I?," "Who Can I Turn To?," "Goldfinger," "Once in a Lifetime" and [Sammy Davis, Jr.](#)'s international hit record "The Candy Man." In television he played opposite [Joan Collins](#) in the "Tonight at Eight Thirty" series, "Red Peppers" and "Fumed Oak." His final television appearances were in "Eastenders" and "The Lakes." Newley devoted his time in later years to personal appearances in nightclubs and cabarets around the world performing his highly acclaimed one man show. During the last five years of his life he achieved enormous success in the musical version of Scrooge culminating in a record breaking season at London's Dominion Theatre.

[Ian Fraser](#) came to New York from England in 1962 with [Anthony Newley](#)'s and [Leslie Bricusse](#)'s Stop the World - I Want to Get Off, where he was Musical Director and Arranger of both the original London and Broadway productions. He has conducted

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Pickwick on Broadway, served as Vocal Supervisor for Doctor Dolittle and was [John Williams'](#) associate on Goodbye, Mr. Chips. For the musical film Scrooge, starring [Albert Finney](#), both he and Bricusse received Academy Award nominations. He and Bricusse have now worked together for over fifty years. His association with Sammy Davis Jr. began in 1961, when he wrote Davis' first arrangement of "What Kind of Fool Am I," and continued for many years on Television Specials and [Mr. Davis'](#) revival of Stop the World. In 1977, he received his first Emmy Award for the Musical Direction of "America Salutes [Richard Rodgers](#)," beginning what was to become the longest run of individual Emmy nominations in the history of the Television Academy. In 2009 he received his thirtieth nomination, and was awarded his eleventh Emmy in 1993 for the 52nd Presidential Inaugural Gala. In December 2008, he was once again the Musical Director for TNT's 26th "Christmas in Washington," which he has conducted every year since its inception in 1982, and for which he has received three of his Emmy awards. His 2009 Emmy nomination was his tenth for this show. His film and television scores include Torn between Two Lovers, Hopscotch, First Monday in October, and Zorro the Gay Blade. His 1995 and 1997 Broadway albums with [Julie Andrews](#) on Philips Classics were both Grammy Nominees. In 1992, he made his debut as a guest conductor with the Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra. He is the past President of the American Society of Music Arrangers and Composers and recently completed his eighth two-year term as a Governor of the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.

Tickets can be purchased online at www.TheOldGlobe.org, by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the box office at 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park. Ticket prices range from \$54 to \$89. Performance times: Regular Performances: Tuesday and Wednesday evenings at 7:00 p.m., Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings at 8:00 p.m., Saturday and Sunday matinees at 2:00 p.m., and Sunday evenings at 7:00 p.m.

[The Old Globe](#) is located in San Diego's Balboa Park at 1363 Old Globe Way. There are numerous free parking lots available throughout the park. Valet parking is also available (\$10). For additional parking information visit www.BalboaPark.org.

The Tony Award-winning Old Globe is one of the country's leading professional regional theaters and has stood as San Diego's flagship arts institution for 74 years. Under the direction of Executive Producer [Louis G. Spisto](#), [The Old Globe](#) produces a year-round season of 15 productions of classic, contemporary and new works on its three Balboa Park stages: the 580-seat [Old Globe Theatre](#), the 227-seat [Arena Stage](#) at the San Diego Museum of Art's James S. Copley Auditorium (an interim second stage during construction of the new 250-seat Conrad Prebys Theatre Center) and the 612-seat outdoor Lowell Davies [Festival Theatre](#), home of its internationally renowned Shakespeare Festival. More than 250,000 people attend Globe productions annually and participate in the theater's education programs and outreach services. Numerous Broadway-bound premieres and revivals, such as The Full Monty, Dirty Rotten Scoundrels, A Catered Affair, and the annual holiday musical, [Dr. Seuss'](#) How The Grinch Stole Christmas!, have been developed at [The Old Globe](#) and have gone on to enjoy highly successful runs in New York and at regional theaters across the country.

[Heather Ayers](#) (May Britt/Ensemble) [The Old Globe](#): The Women, Ace. BROADWAY: [Megan Mullally's](#) understudy in Young Frankenstein. OFF BROADWAY: Five Course Love, Sarah, Plain and Tall, Forbidden Broadway Strikes Back, and four [City Center](#) Encores! productions. REGIONAL: [Cincinnati Playhouse](#), Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, [Eugene O'Neill](#) Festival, [George Street Playhouse](#), Dallas Theater Center, [GeVa Theatre](#) Center, Kansas City Repertory Theatre, [Barrington Stage Company](#), Hasty Pudding Theatre and others. RECORDINGS: Young Frankenstein and Face the Music.

OBBA BABATUNDÉ (Sammy) Like his mentor [Sammy Davis, Jr.](#), Obba Babatundé has been entertaining audiences since he was a child. A skilled actor, singer and dancer, Davis once said of Babatundé that "I feel safe knowing that with cats like Obba, when I get out of this business I am leaving it in good hands." Babatundé was nominated for a Tony Award for his performance as [C.C. White](#) in the original Broadway cast of Dreamgirls. His additional Broadway credits include the revival of Chicago, Grind and Timbuktu! He also created the role of [Jelly Roll Morton](#) in Jelly's Last Jam. On television, Babatundé delivered an Emmy-nominated performance in Miss Ever's Boys, received a NAACP Image Award nomination for his performance as [Harold Nicholas](#) in Introducing [Dorothy Dandridge](#) and has appeared in 60 made-for-television movies. His theatrical films include Philadelphia, That Thing You Do, After the Sunset, The Manchurian Candidate, The Notebook and the upcoming and the upcoming Moneyball opposite [Brad Pitt](#).

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[Mary Ann](#) Hermansen ([Kim Novak](#)/Ensemble) BROADWAY: Chicago, Weissler Productions; Carrie, [Royal Shakespeare Company](#). NATIONAL TOURS: Chicago, Smokey Joe's Café. FILM: Blast from the Past, That Thing You Do, Forrest Gump, Forget Paris, A Hollywood Story. TV: "Strong Medicine," "General Hospital" (recurring), "Alien Nation," "Doogie Howser, M.D."

[Adam James](#) ([Frank Sinatra](#)) An accomplished showman and songwriter, [Adam James](#) was chosen by Tina Sinatra to portray her father, Frank, in Sinatra Remembered, the first-ever musical theater production about his life. James also co-starred Off Broadway in Our Sinatra at New York's legendary jazz venue, Birdland, and covered the role of Sinatra in the North American premiere of London's West End production of The Rat Pack. James replaced fellow Canadian crooner Michael Bubl  as the vocalist/emcee for the American tour of Forever Swing. He performs internationally with symphonies and big bands starring in A Toast to Ol' Blue Eyes, a show he co-created with conductor/arranger [David Martin](#). He has also appeared in concert with [Liza Minnelli](#), [Tony Bennett](#) and [Ray](#)

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Troy Britton Johnson (*Dean Martin*/Cohn/Jennings/Ensemble) BROADWAY: *The Drowsy Chaperone*, *Damn Yankees*, *The Best Little Whorehouse Goes Public*, *The Will Rogers Follies*. NATIONAL TOURS: *Hairspray*, *The Full Monty*. OFF BROADWAY: *Vampire Lesbians of Sodom*. REGIONAL: *She Loves Me*, *Huntington Theatre*; *The Drowsy Chaperone*, *Ahmanson Theatre*; *Violet*, *Laguna Playhouse*; *Strike Up the Band*, *Bells Are Ringing*, *Reprise Theatre Company*; *A House in the Woods*, *Goodspeed Opera*; *That's Christmas*, *Shubert Theater*. FILM: *Blood Night*, *Life in Flight*, *Calling it Quits*. TV: *"The Drew Carey Show"*, *"Beverly Hills 90210"*, *"The Rosie O'Donnell Show"*.

TED **Louis Levy's** (*Sammy Davis, Sr.*) professional training began in Chicago with *Finis Henderson II*, Master Tap Dancer and former manager of *Sammy Davis, Jr.* Levy collaborated with *George C. Wolfe* and *Gregory Hines* on the choreography of *Jelly's Last Jam*, for which he received a Tony Award and Drama Desk nominations, and the *Outer Critics Circle Award*. Levy also appeared on Broadway in *Black and Blue* and as *Papa Jack* in *Susan Stroman* and *Harry Connick Jr.'s* *Thou Shalt Not*. He received a *Helen Hayes Award* for his portrayal of *The Mikado* in *The Ford Theater's* production of *The Hot Mikado*. He directed *Savion Glover's* *Dancing Under The Stars* at the *New York Shakespeare Festival's* *Delacorte Theater* and contributed to the choreography *Bring In 'Da Noise, Bring In 'Da Funk* on Broadway. Levy made his film debut in *Spike Lee's* *Malcolm X*, appeared with *Gregory Hines* in *Bojangles* and received an *Emmy Award* for his television debut performance in the PBS Special *"Precious Memories"*. He is the recipient of the 2008 *Gregory Hines Humanitarian Award*.

Keewa Nurullah (*Lola Folana/Ensemble*) NATIONAL TOUR: *On the Record* (Disney Theatricals). REGIONAL: *Monty Python's Spamalot* (Las Vegas), *Peter Pan* (The MUNY), *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* (The MUNY and *Kansas City Starlight Theatre*). FILM: *Save the Last Dance*. TV: *"Victoria's Secret Fashion Show"*.

VICTORIA PLATT (*Altovise Gore/Ensemble*) BROADWAY: Original Broadway production of *Jelly's Last Jam* directed by *George C. Wolfe*. REGIONAL: *Pippin*, *Mark Taper Forum*; Atlanta, *Geffen Playhouse*; *Asphalt*, *REDCAT*; *Smoke*, *Lilies and Jade*, *The Public Theater*; *All Night Strut*, *Fullerton CLO Music Theatre*; *Last Days of Judas Iscariot*, *Black Dahlia Theatre*; *The Hot Mikado*, *Ford's Theatre*; *Hope Runs Eternal* (NAACP nomination), *Nate Holden Performing Arts Center*; *Dreamgirls*, *Westchester Broadway Theatre*; *Women of Plums*, *The Kennedy Center*. She was last seen in *Matt Sax & Eric Rosen's* hip-hopical *Venice* at the *Kirk Douglas Theatre* and in 2010 will appear in the feature films *Jonah Hex* starring *Josh Brolin* and *My Girlfriend's Back*. FILM: *Cover*, *Flip the Script*, *Winchell* (HBO), *True Grits* (Cannes Short Film Corner) and *'Round Midnight*. TV: *"CSI: Miami"*, *"Crossing Jordan"*, *"Strong Medicine"*, *"The Guiding Light"*, *"Barbershop"* and *"All My Children"*.

Lance Roberts (*Will Mastin*) Originally from New York, Roberts now makes his home in LA where he has appeared in almost 100 professional shows including the original LA casts of *Cats*, *I Love You You're Perfect Now Change*, *Forbidden Hollywood*, *The All Night Strut*, *Once on This Island* and most recently *Ain't Misbehavin'* at the *Music Center's Ahmanson Theater*. San Diego audiences have seen him at *San Diego Repertory*, *La Jolla Playhouse*, *Moonlight*, *Welk and Gaslight Theatres*. NEW YORK: *Forbidden Hollywood* (original casts); *Radio City's America* and the revival of *The Me Nobody Knows*. TOURS: *Ragtime*, *Dreamgirls*, *Five Guys Name Moe* and many others. REGIONAL: *Anthony and Cleopatra*, *Driving Miss Daisy*, *I'm Not Rappaport* and many other original works. TV: *"Numbers"*, *"Related"*, *"The Drew Carey Show"*, *"Girlfriends"* and *"Zoey 101"*, as well as DVD classics such as *"Knots Landing"*, *"Dallas"*, *"The Colby's"*, *"My Two Dads"* and more. He has been playing *Jafar* at *Disney's California Adventure* since the beginning of its 7000 performance run in *Aladdin, The Musical Spectacular*.

ALONSO SAUNDERS (*Murphy/Ensemble/understudy Sammy*) LONDON WEST END: *The Rat Pack Live From Las Vegas*. BROADWAY: *Chicago*, *Showboat*. NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL TOURS: *The Rat Pack*, *Chicago*, *The Wizard Of Oz*. REGIONAL: *Ragtime* (Maine State Music Theatre), *La Cage Aux Folles* (Stages St. Louis), *Oliver!* (*Paper Mill Playhouse*), *A Chorus Line* (Theater By The Sea). FILM: *My Father's Will*. TV: *"30 Rock"*.

Sarrah Strimel (*Luella/Hedda/Ensemble*) BROADWAY: *Young Frankenstein* (Inga u/s), *The Producers* (Ulla u/s), *Encore Theatre Company's Stairway to Paradise*. NATIONAL TOURS: *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* (Jolene u/s), *The Producers* (1st and 2nd tours). REGIONAL: *Minsky's* (Mary u/s), *Ahmanson Theatre*; *Lil Abner* (Stupifyin' Jones), *Goodspeed Opera House*; *Cats* (Bombalurina), *Houston Theatre Under the Stars*; *42nd Street* (Anytime Annie), *Atlanta Theater of the Stars* and *Wolf Trap*; as well as many shows at *Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera*, *St. Louis' The MUNY* and *Starlight Theatre* (Kansas City).

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Old Globe Theatre Announces Full Cast & Creative Team For SAMMY, Runs 9/19-11/8, Opens 10/2

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by BWW News Desk



Old Globe Executive Producer Lou Spisto today announced the complete cast and creative team for the world premiere of Sammy, a new musical based on the life of Sammy Davis, Jr. with book, music and lyrics by Leslie



Bricusse, and additional songs by Bricusse and Anthony Newley. Directed by Keith Glover with choreography by Keith Young and music supervision by Ian Fraser, Sammy will run in the Old Globe Theatre Sept. 19 - Nov. 8. Previews run from Sept. 19 - Oct. 1. Opening night is Oct. 2 at 8:00 p.m. Tickets to Sammy are currently available by subscription only. Single tickets go on sale Aug. 23 at 10:00 a.m. and can be purchased online at www.TheOldGlobe.org, by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the Box Office.

"The opportunity to work with Leslie Bricusse and tell the story of the great Sammy Davis, Jr. was something we couldn't pass up," said Spisto. "Bricusse contributed to Sammy's canon of hits more than any other individual songwriter. Who better to give us an insightful book and a new score which includes the classics that helped shape this legendary entertainer? Though Sammy crossed many boundaries throughout his multifaceted career, there was much more to him than his iconic public persona. Our aim with this new work is to both honor Sammy Davis, Jr. for those who knew and loved him, and to also introduce this one-of-a-kind performer to a new audience."

Sammy moves from Sammy Davis, Jr.'s beginnings in vaudeville through the Rat Pack years with Frank Sinatra to ultimate recognition of his lifetime contribution to American culture. Featuring the classic tunes that helped to make Davis an icon - "The Candy Man," "Mr. Bojangles" and "What Kind of Fool Am I" - Sammy traces the highs and lows of the ultimate triple-threat singer, actor and dancer. Davis was one of the greatest performers of his generation, paving new ground while struggling with issues of identity, race and a turbulent personal life.

As previously announced, Broadway veteran Obba Babatundé headlines as Sammy Davis, Jr. The cast also features Heather Ayers (May Britt/Ensemble), Ann Duquesnay (Rosa Davis), Mary Ann Hermansen (Kim Novak/Ensemble), Adam James (Frank Sinatra), Troy Britton Johnson (Dean Martin/Cohn/Jennings/Ensemble), Ted Louis Levy (Sammy Davis, Sr.), Keewa Nurullah (Lola Folana/Ensemble), Victoria Platt (Altovise Gore/Ensemble), Lance Roberts (Will Mastin), Alonzo Saunders (Murphy/Ensemble/understudy Sammy), Sarrah Strimel (Luella/Hedda/Ensemble) with Jenelle Engleson, Stephanie Girard, Lauren Haughton and Anise Ritchie (Ensemble).

The Sammy creative team also includes Alexander Dodge (Scenic Design), Fabio Toblini (Costume Design), Chris Lee (Lighting Design), John H. Shivers (Sound Design), David Patridge (Sound Design), Ned Ginsburg (Orchestrator), Rahn Coleman (Music Director/Conductor), Dominique Kelley (Assistant Choreographer), Tara Rubin Casting (Casting) and David Sugarman (Stage Manager).

The multitalented Keith Glover returns to The Old Globe having previously directed his own work, *Thunder Knocking on the Door*, winner of the American Theatre Critics Association's Osborn Award. He authored a new adaptation of the Sammy Davis, Jr. vehicle, *Golden Boy* (based on the original by Clifford Odets and William Gibson) and has directed many of his own plays including *In Walks Ed* which was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize, *Dancing on Moonlight*, produced by the New York Shakespeare Festival, *Coming of the Hurricane*, a finalist for the American Theatre Critics Award for Best Play, *The Rose of Corazon*, *Jazzland*, *Dark Paradise*, *Shooting Star*, *Clandestine Crossing* and *The Sword of Kazaran*. As an actor, he has appeared on stage, television and film. Glover received an Outstanding Writing in a Feature Film/Television Movie Image Award nomination for *Life is Not a Fairytale: The Fantasia Barrino Story*.

Keith Young choreographed the recent Broadway revival of *On the Town*. His regional credits include *Crowns*, *Thunder Knocking at the Door* and *Cheer*. His film credits include Nancy Meyer's upcoming feature *It's Complicated* with Meryl Streep and Alec Baldwin, *The Baster* with Jennifer Aniston, *Rent*, *Something's Gotta Give*, *What Women Want*, *Dark Streets*, *The Holiday*, *Rat Race*, *Affair of the Necklace* and *The Parent Trap*. On television, his work has been seen on *The Academy Awards*, *The Emmy Awards*, *The Grammy Awards*, *The NAACP Image Awards*, *"Pushing Daisies," "The Unit," "So You Think You Can Dance," "The Drew Carey Show"* (Emmy Award), *"Seinfeld"* and *"Christopher Reeve: A Celebration of Hope"* (American Choreography Award). Young has staged both live concerts and music videos for Madonna, Babyface, Bette Midler, Josh Groban, Outkast, Phil Collins, Clay Aiken, LL Cool J, Talking Heads, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Gladys Knight and Natalie Cole.

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Tony Award winner Ann Duquesnay most recently starred in Sheila's Day in Johannesburg, South Africa and at Crossroads Theatre, New Brunswick, N.J. Her Broadway credits include Bring in 'Da Noise, Bring in 'Da Funk (Tony Award, Drama League Recognition Award and Grammy nomination (co-composer/lyricist)), Hot Feet, It Ain't Nothin But the Blues, Jelly's Last Jam, revival of The Wiz, and Blues in the Night. She has appeared Off Broadway in Our Leading Lady (Manhattan Theatre Club - AUDELCO Award nominee), Cookin' at the Cookery (Melting Pot Theatre - Drama Desk nominee and Drama League Recognition Award), and Spunk (New York Shakespeare Festival - AUDELCO Award).

Emmy Award winner Ted Louis Levy's professional training began in Chicago with Finis Henderson II, Master Tap Dancer and former manager of Sammy Davis, Jr. Levy collaborated with George C. Wolfe and Gregory Hines on the choreography of Jelly's Last Jam, for which he received a Tony Award and Drama Desk nominations, and the Outer Critics Circle Award. Levy also appeared on Broadway in Black and Blue and as Papa Jack in Susan Stroman and Harry Connick, Jr.'s Thou Shalt Not. He received a Helen Hayes Award for his portrayal of The Mikado in The Ford Theater's production of The Hot Mikado. He directed Savion Glover's Dancing Under The Stars at the New York Shakespeare Festival's Delacorte Theater and contributed to the choreography Bring In 'Da Noise, Bring In 'Da Funk on Broadway. Levy made his film debut in Spike Lee's Malcolm X, appeared with Gregory Hines in Bojangles and received an Emmy Award for his television debut performance in the PBS Special "Precious Memories." He is the recipient of the 2008 Gregory Hines Humanitarian Award.

Double Oscar and Grammy winner Leslie Bricusse has written more than 40 musical shows and films, and has collaborated with an array of musical talents, including Anthony Newley, Henry Mancini, John Williams, John Barry, Jerry Goldsmith, Jule Styne, Quincy Jones, Andre Previn, Frank Wildhorn and Peter Illyich Tchaikovsky (whose Nutcracker Suite he adapted into a song score). He has been nominated for ten Academy Awards, nine Grammys and four Tonys, and in addition to his Oscars and Grammy, has won eight Ivor Novello Awards. His stage musicals include Stop the World - I Want to Get Off, The Roar of the Greasepaint - The Smell of the Crowd, Pickwick, Harvey, The Good Old Bad Old Days, Goodbye, Mr. Chips, Henry's Wives, Scrooge, One Shining Moment, Sherlock Holmes, Jekyll and Hyde and Victor/Victoria. Bricusse has also written songs and/or screenplays for such films as Doctor Dolittle, Scrooge, Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory, Goodbye, Mr. Chips, Superman, Victor/Victoria, Santa Claus - The Movie, Home Alone I & II, Hook, Tom & Jerry - The Movie, and various Pink Panther films. His better-known songs include "What Kind of Fool Am I?," "Once in a Lifetime," "Gonna Build a Mountain," "Who Can I Turn To?," "The Joker," "If I Ruled the World," "My Kind of Girl," "Talk to the Animals," "You and I," "Feeling Good," "When I Look in Your Eyes," "Goldfinger," "Can You Read My Mind?" (the Love Theme from Superman), "You Only Live Twice," "Le Jazz Hot!," "On a Wonderful Day Like Today," "Two for the Road," "The Candy Man," "This Is the Moment," "Crazy World," "Pure Imagination" and "Oompa-Loompa-Doompa-Dee-Doo." In 1989, Bricusse received the Kennedy Award for consistent excellence in British songwriting, bestowed by the British Academy of Songwriters, Composers and Authors, and was inducted into the American Songwriters Hall of Fame - only the fourth Englishman to be honored - after Noel Coward, John Lennon and Paul McCartney.

Anthony Newley garnered three Tony Award nominations (Best Actor, Best Musical Author and Best Composer and Lyricist) for *Stop the World-I Want to Get Off* and two Tony Award nominations (Best Director and Best Composer and Lyricist) for *The Roar of the Greasepaint-The Smell of the Crowd*, both written with his longtime collaborator, Leslie Bricusse. After the worldwide success of these two hit musicals, Newley ventured into film with roles in *Doctor Dolittle* and *Sweet November*. Other film credits as director, actor or producer include *Summertime*, *It Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time*, *Mr. Quilt* and *Can Hieronymus Merkin Ever Forget Mercy Humppe and Find True Happiness?* His collaborations with Bricusse also produced the score to the television production of *Peter Pan* which starred Danny Kaye and Mia Farrow, the film *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*, and the London stage production of the *Good Old Bad Old Days*. Together they created such standards as "What Kind of Fool Am I?," "Who Can I Turn To?," "Goldfinger," "Once in a Lifetime" and Sammy Davis, Jr.'s international hit record "The Candy Man." In television he played opposite Joan Collins in the "Tonight at Eight Thirty" series, "Red Peppers" and "Fumed Oak." His final television appearances were in "Eastenders" and "The Lakes." Newley devoted his time in later years to personal appearances in nightclubs and cabarets around the world performing his highly acclaimed one man show. During the last five years of his life he achieved enormous success in the musical version of *Scrooge* culminating in a record breaking season at London's Dominion Theatre.

Ian Fraser came to New York from England in 1962 with Anthony Newley's and Leslie Bricusse's *Stop the World - I Want to Get Off*, where he was Musical Director and Arranger of both the original London and Broadway productions. He has conducted *Pickwick* on Broadway, served as Vocal Supervisor for *Doctor Dolittle* and was John Williams' associate on *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*. For the musical film *Scrooge*, starring Albert Finney, both he and Bricusse received Academy Award nominations. He and Bricusse have now worked together for over fifty years. His association with Sammy Davis Jr. began in 1961, when he wrote Davis' first arrangement of "What Kind of Fool Am I," and continued for many years on Television Specials and Mr. Davis' revival of *Stop the World*. In 1977, he received his first Emmy Award for the Musical Direction of "America Salutes Richard Rodgers," beginning what was to become the longest run of individual Emmy nominations in the history of the Television Academy. In 2009 he received his thirtieth nomination, and was awarded his eleventh Emmy in 1993 for the 52nd Presidential Inaugural Gala. In December 2008, he was once again the Musical Director for TNT's 26th "Christmas in Washington," which he has conducted every year since its inception in 1982, and for which he has received three of his Emmy awards. His 2009 Emmy nomination was his tenth for this show. His film and television scores include *Torn between Two Lovers*, *Hopscotch*, *First Monday in October*, and *Zorro the Gay Blade*. His 1995 and 1997 Broadway albums with Julie Andrews on Philips Classics were both Grammy Nominees. In 1992, he made his debut as a guest conductor with the Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra. He is the past President of the American Society of Music Arrangers and Composers and recently completed his eighth two-year term as a Governor of the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.

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HEATHER AYERS (May Britt/Ensemble) *THE OLD GLOBE*: *The Women, Ace*. BROADWAY: Megan Mullally's understudy in *Young Frankenstein*. OFF BROADWAY: *Five Course Love*, *Sarah, Plain and Tall*, *Forbidden Broadway Strikes Back*, and four City Center Encores! productions. REGIONAL: Cincinnati Playhouse, Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, Eugene O'Neill Festival, George Street Playhouse, Dallas Theater Center, Geva Theatre Center, Kansas City Repertory Theatre, Barrington Stage Company, Hasty Pudding Theatre and others. RECORDINGS: *Young Frankenstein* and *Face the Music*.

OBBA BABATUNDÉ (Sammy) Like his mentor Sammy Davis, Jr., Obba Babatundé has been entertaining audiences since he was a child. A skilled actor, singer and dancer, Davis once said of Babatundé that "I feel safe knowing that with cats like Obba, when I get out of this business I am leaving it in good hands." Babatundé was nominated for a Tony Award for his performance as C.C. White in the original Broadway cast of *Dreamgirls*. His additional Broadway credits include the revival of *Chicago*, *Grind* and *Timbuktu!* He also created the role of Jelly Roll Morton in *Jelly's Last Jam*. On television, Babatundé delivered an Emmy-nominated performance in *Miss Ever's Boys*, received a NAACP Image Award nomination for his performance as Harold Nicholas in *Introducing Dorothy Dandridge* and has appeared in 60 made-for-television movies. His theatrical films include *Philadelphia*, *That Thing You Do*, *After the Sunset*, *The Manchurian Candidate*, *The Notebook* and the upcoming and the upcoming *Moneyball* opposite Brad Pitt.

ANN DUQUESNAY (Rosa Davis) mostly recently starred in *Sheila's Day* in Johannesburg, South Africa and at Crossroads Theatre, New Brunswick, N.J. BROADWAY: *Bring in 'Da Noise, Bring in 'Da Funk* (Tony Award, Drama League Recognition Award and Grammy nominee (co-composer/lyricist)), *Hot Feet*, *It Ain't Nothin But the Blues*, *Jelly's Last Jam*, revival of *The Wiz* and *Blues in the Night*. OFF BROADWAY: *Our Leading Lady* (Manhattan Theatre Club - AUDELCO Award nominee), *Cookin' at the Cookery* (Melting Pot Theatre - Drama Desk nominee and Drama League Recognition Award), *Spunk* (New York Shakespeare Festival - AUDELCO Award). REGIONAL: *Hallelujah Baby* (Arena Stage - Helen Hayes Award), *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (Denver Center Theatre), *Lady Day* (Theatre on the Square - Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Award), *Porgy and Bess* (Houston Grand Opera), *Betsey Brown* (McCarter Theatre). NATIONAL TOURS: *The Civil War*, *Bubbling Brown Sugar*, *The Wiz*. OTHER: Narrator of Aretha Franklin's autobiography audiobook, *Aretha from These Roots*; historical voices in Ken Burns TV documentaries.

MARY ANN HERMANSEN (Kim Novak/Ensemble) BROADWAY: *Chicago*, Weissler Productions; *Carrie*, Royal Shakespeare Company. NATIONAL TOURS: *Chicago*, Smokey Joe's Café. FILM:

Blast from the Past, That Thing You Do, Forrest Gump, Forget Paris, A Hollywood Story. TV: "Strong Medicine," "General Hospital" (recurring), "Alien Nation," "Doogie Howser, M.D."

ADAM JAMES (Frank Sinatra) An accomplished showman and songwriter, Adam James was chosen by Tina Sinatra to portray her father, Frank, in *Sinatra Remembered*, the first-ever musical theater production about his life. James also co-starred Off Broadway in *Our Sinatra* at New York's legendary jazz venue, Birdland, and covered the role of Sinatra in the North American premiere of London's West End production of *The Rat Pack*. James replaced fellow Canadian crooner Michael Bublé as the vocalist/emcee for the American tour of *Forever Swing*. He performs internationally with symphonies and big bands starring in *A Toast to Ol' Blue Eyes*, a show he co-created with conductor/arranger David Martin. He has also appeared in concert with Liza Minnelli, Tony Bennett and Ray Charles. James was named "Best Vocalist" by *Jazz Report Magazine*, was a finalist at the Montreal Jazz Festival and was nominated for a 2004 Genie Award (the Canadian "Oscar") for singing and co-writing the theme song for the film, *Mambo Italiano*. Following the autumn release of his debut solo recording, Adam James, he will perform in Vancouver during the 2010 Olympic Winter Games and compose songs for Twyla Tharp's *Come Fly With Me*.

TROY BRITTON JOHNSON (Dean Martin/Cohn/Jennings/Ensemble) **BROADWAY:** *The Drowsy Chaperone*, *Damn Yankees*, *The Best Little Whorehouse Goes Public*, *The Will Rogers Follies*. **NATIONAL TOURS:** *Hairspray*, *The Full Monty*. **OFF BROADWAY:** *Vampire Lesbians of Sodom*. **REGIONAL:** *She Loves Me*, Huntington Theatre; *The Drowsy Chaperone*, Ahmanson Theatre; *Violet*, Laguna Playhouse; *Strike Up the Band*, Bells Are Ringing, Reprise Theatre Company; *A House in the Woods*, Goodspeed Opera; *That's Christmas*, Shubert Theater. **FILM:** *Blood Night*, *Life in Flight*, *Calling it Quits*. **TV:** "The Drew Carey Show," "Beverly Hills 90210," "The Rosie O'Donnell Show."

TED LOUIS LEVY's (Sammy Davis, Sr.) professional training began in Chicago with Finis Henderson II, Master Tap Dancer and former manager of Sammy Davis, Jr. Levy collaborated with George C. Wolfe and Gregory Hines on the choreography of *Jelly's Last Jam*, for which he received a Tony Award and Drama Desk nominations, and the Outer Critics Circle Award. Levy also appeared on Broadway in *Black and Blue* and as Papa Jack in Susan Stroman and Harry Connick Jr.'s *Thou Shalt Not*. He received a Helen Hayes Award for his portrayal of The Mikado in The Ford Theater's production of *The Hot Mikado*. He directed Savion Glover's *Dancing Under The Stars* at the New York Shakespeare Festival's Delacorte Theater and contributed to the choreography *Bring In 'Da Noise, Bring In 'Da Funk* on Broadway. Levy made his film debut in Spike Lee's *Malcolm X*, appeared with Gregory Hines in *Bojangles* and received an Emmy Award for his television debut performance in the PBS Special "Precious Memories." He is the recipient of the 2008 Gregory Hines Humanitarian Award.

KEEWA NURULLAH (Lola Folana/Ensemble) **NATIONAL TOUR:** *On the Record* (Disney Theatricals). **REGIONAL:** *Monty Python's Spamalot* (Las Vegas), *Peter Pan* (The MUNY), *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* (The MUNY and Kansas City Starlight Theatre). **FILM:** *Save the Last Dance*. **TV:** "Victoria's Secret Fashion Show."

VICTORIA PLATT (Altovise Gore/Ensemble) **BROADWAY:** Original Broadway production of *Jelly's Last Jam* directed by George C. Wolfe. **REGIONAL:** *Pippin*, Mark Taper Forum; Atlanta, Geffen Playhouse; *Asphalt*, REDCAT; *Smoke, Lilies and Jade*, The Public Theater; *All Night Strut*, Fullerton CLO Music Theatre; *Last Days of Judas Iscariot*, Black Dahlia Theatre; *The Hot Mikado*, Ford's Theatre; *Hope Runs Eternal* (NAACP nomination), Nate Holden Performing Arts Center; *Dreamgirls*, Westchester Broadway Theatre; *Women of Plums*, The Kennedy Center. She was last seen in Matt Sax & Eric Rosen's hip-hopsical *Venice* at the Kirk Douglas Theatre and in 2010 will appear in the feature films *Jonah Hex* starring Josh Brolin and *My Girlfriend's Back*. **FILM:** *Cover*, *Flip the Script*, *Winchell* (HBO), *True Grits* (Cannes Short Film Corner) and *'Round*

Midnight. TV: "CSI: Miami," "Crossing Jordan," "Strong Medicine," "The Guiding Light," "Barbershop" and "All My Children."

LANCE ROBERTS (Will Mastin) Originally from New York, Roberts now makes his home in LA where he has appeared in almost 100 professional shows including the original LA casts of Cats, I Love You You're Perfect Now Change, Forbidden Hollywood, The All Night Strut, Once on This Island and most recently Ain't Misbehavin' at the Music Center's Ahmanson Theater. San Diego audiences have seen him at San Diego Repertory, La Jolla Playhouse, Moonlight, Welk and Gaslight Theatres. NEW YORK: Forbidden Hollywood (original casts); Radio City's America and the revival of The Me Nobody Knows. TOURS: Ragtime, Dreamgirls, Five Guys Name Moe and many others. REGIONAL: Anthony and Cleopatra, Driving Miss Daisy, I'm Not Rappaport and many other original works. TV: "Numbers," "Related," "The Drew Carey Show," "Girlfriends" and "Zoey 101," as well as DVD classics such as "Knots Landing," "Dallas," "The Colby's," "My Two Dads" and more. He has been playing Jafar at Disney's California Adventure since the beginning of its 7000 performance run in Aladdin, The Musical Spectacular.

ALONSO SAUNDERS (Murphy/Ensemble/understudy Sammy) LONDON WEST END: The Rat Pack Live From Las Vegas. BROADWAY: Chicago, Showboat. NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL TOURS: The Rat Pack, Chicago, The Wizard Of Oz. REGIONAL: Ragtime (Maine State Music Theatre), La Cage Aux Folles (Stages St. Louis), Oliver! (Paper Mill Playhouse), A Chorus Line (Theater By The Sea). FILM: My Father's Will. TV: "30 Rock."

SARRAH STRIMEL (Luella/Hedda/Ensemble) BROADWAY: Young Frankenstein (Inga u/s), The Producers (Ulla u/s), Encore Theatre Company's Stairway to Paradise. NATIONAL TOURS: Dirty Rotten Scoundrels (Jolene u/s), The Producers (1st and 2nd tours). REGIONAL: Minsky's (Mary u/s), Ahmanson Theatre; Lil Abner (Stupifyin' Jones), Goodspeed Opera House; Cats (Bombalurina), Houston Theatre Under the Stars; 42nd Street (Anytime Annie), Atlanta Theater of the Stars and Wolf Trap; as well as many shows at Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera, St. Louis' The MUNY and Starlight Theatre (Kansas City).



Photo Flash: Obba Babatunde Stars In Leslie Bricusse's SAMMY At The Old Globe Theatre

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by BWW News Desk

Broadway veteran Obba Babatundé will star as [Sammy Davis, Jr.](#) in the world premiere of Sammy.

The new musical is based on the life of Davis with book, music and lyrics by [Leslie Bricusse](#), and additional songs by Bricusse and [Anthony Newley](#). Directed by [Keith Glover](#) with choreography by [Keith Young](#) and music supervision by [Ian Fraser](#), Sammy will run in the [Old Globe Theatre](#) Sept. 19 - Nov. 8. Previews run from Sept. 19 - Oct. 1. Opening night is Oct. 2 at 8:00 p.m.

Tickets to Sammy are currently available by subscription only. Single tickets go on sale Aug. 23 at 10:00 a.m and can be purchased online at www.TheOldGlobe.org, by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the Box Office. (The full cast and creative team have not yet been announced.)

Babatundé was nominated for a Tony Award for his performance as C.C. White in the original Broadway cast of Dreamgirls. His additional Broadway credits include the revival of Chicago, Grind and Timbuktu! He also created the role of [Jelly Roll Morton](#) in Jelly's Last Jam. On television, Babatundé delivered an Emmy-nominated performance in Miss Ever's Boys, received a NAACP Image Award nomination for his performance as [Harold Nicholas](#) in Introducing [Dorothy Dandridge](#) and has appeared in 60 made-for-television movies. His theatrical films include The Celestine Prophecy, Material Girls, After the Sunset, The Manchurian Candidate, The Notebook and the upcoming The Black Man's Guide to Understanding Black Women.

The world premiere musical moves from [Sammy Davis, Jr.](#)'s days as a child working in vaudeville through his time with [Frank Sinatra](#) and [Dean Martin](#) as a member of the Rat Pack. Featuring the classic tunes that helped to make Davis an icon - "The Candy Man," "Mr. Bojangles" and "What Kind of Fool Am I" - Sammy traces the highs and lows of the ultimate triple-threat singer, actor and dancer. Davis became one of the greatest performers of his generation, paving new ground while struggling with issues of identity, race and a turbulent personal life.

Double Oscar and Grammy winner [Leslie Bricusse](#) has written more than 40 musical shows and films, and has collaborated with an array of musical talents, including [Anthony Newley](#), [Henry Mancini](#), [John Williams](#), John Barry, Jerry Goldsmith, [Jule Styne](#), [Quincy Jones](#), Andre Previn,

[Frank Wildhorn](#) and Peter Illyich Tchaikovsky (whose Nutcracker Suite he adapted into a song score). He has been nominated for ten Academy Awards, nine Grammys and four Tonys, and in addition to his Oscars and Grammy, has won eight [Ivor Novello](#) Awards. His stage musicals include *Stop the World-I Want to Get Off*; *The Roar of the Greasepaint-The Smell of the Crowd*; *Pickwick*; *Harvey*; *The Good Old Bad Old Days*; *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*; *Henry's Wives*; *Scrooge*; *One Shining Moment*; *Sherlock Holmes*; *Jekyll and Hyde* and *Victor/Victoria*. Bricusse has also written songs and/or screenplays for such films as *Doctor Dolittle*; *Scrooge*; *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*; *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*; *Superman*; *Victor/Victoria*; *Santa Claus - The Movie*; *Home Alone I & II*; *Hook*; *Tom & Jerry - The Movie*; and various *Pink Panther* films. His better-known songs include "What Kind of Fool Am I?," "Once in a Lifetime," "Gonna Build a Mountain," "Who Can I Turn To?," "The Joker," "If I Ruled the World," "My Kind of Girl," "Talk to the Animals," "You and I," "Feeling Good," "When I Look in Your Eyes," "Goldfinger," "Can You Read My Mind?" (the Love Theme from *Superman*), "You Only Live Twice," "Le Jazz Hot!," "On a Wonderful Day Like Today," "Two for the Road," "The Candy Man," "This Is the Moment," "Crazy World," "Pure Imagination" and "Oompa-Loompa-Doompa-Dee-Doo." In 1989, Bricusse received the Kennedy Award for consistent excellence in British songwriting, bestowed by the British Academy of Songwriters, Composers and Authors, and was inducted into the American Songwriters Hall of Fame - only the fourth Englishman to be honored - after Noel Coward, [John Lennon](#), and [Paul McCartney](#).

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Shakespeare Festival: *Twelfth Night*, *Cyrano de Bergerac* and *Coriolanus* (in repertory thru 9/27), *Sammy* (9/19-11/8), *The Savannah Disputation* (9/26-11/1), *Whisper House* (1/13-2/21).

The Tony Award-winning Old Globe is one of the country's leading professional regional theaters and has stood as San Diego's flagship arts institution for 74 years. Under the direction of Executive Producer [Louis G. Spisto](#), [The Old Globe](#) produces a year-round season of 15 productions of classic, contemporary and new works on its three Balboa Park stages: the 580-seat [Old Globe Theatre](#), the 250-seat [Arena Stage](#) at the San Diego Museum of Art's James S. Copley Auditorium (an interim second stage during construction of the new 280-seat Conrad Prebys Theatre Center) and the 612-seat outdoor Lowell Davies Festival Theatre, home of its internationally renowned Shakespeare Festival. More than 250,000 people attend Globe productions annually and participate in the theater's education programs and outreach services. Numerous Broadway-bound premieres and revivals, such as *The Full Monty*, *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, *A Catered Affair*, and the annual holiday musical, [Dr. Seuss'](#) *How The Grinch Stole Christmas!*, have been developed at [The Old Globe](#) and have gone on to enjoy highly successful runs in New York and at regional theaters across the country.

Photos by [Craig Schwartz](#)



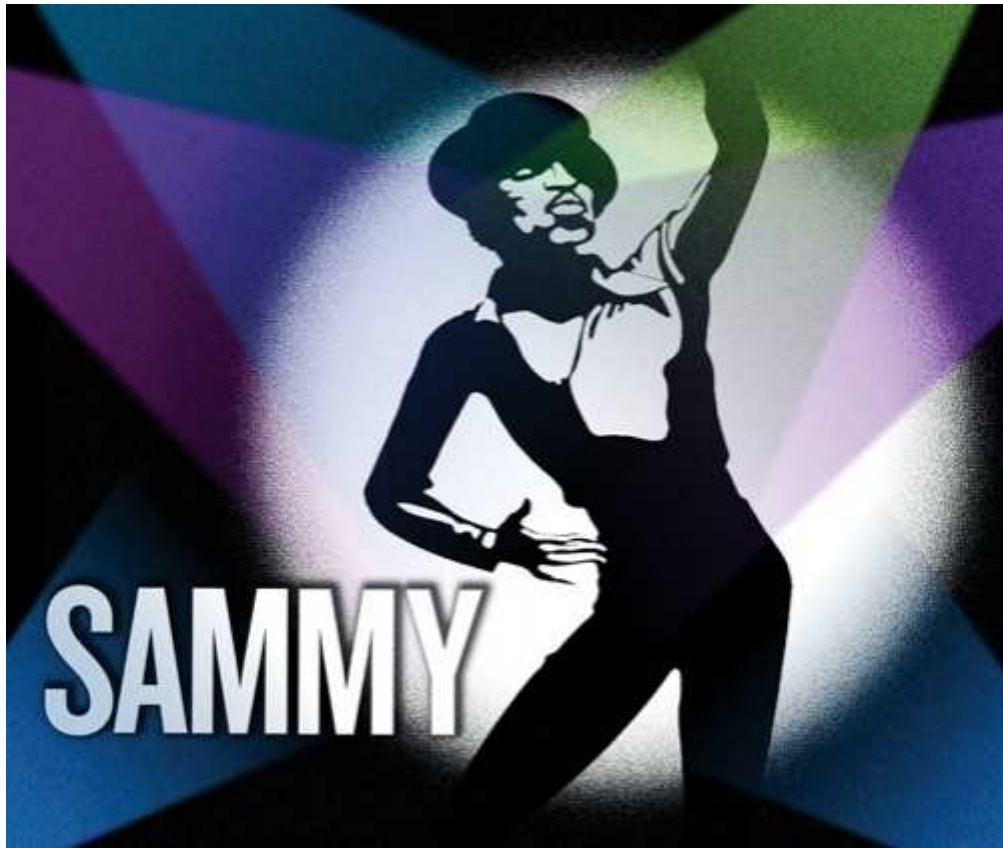
Obba Babatunde stars as [Sammy Davis, Jr.](#) in the world premiere of SAMMY



Obba Babatunde



Obba Babatunde



[Leslie Bricusse's SAMMY](#) at [The Old Globe](#)



Globe Receives Edgerton Award In Support Of World Premiere Of Leslie Bricusse's SAMMY

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by BWW News Desk



THE OLD GLOBE

Executive
Producer [Lou
Spisto](#) today

announced that [The Edgerton](#) Foundation's New American Play Award has been granted to [The Old Globe](#) in support of the world premiere of Sammy. The \$75,000 award will allow for an extension of the rehearsal period of Sammy, a new musical based on the life of [Sammy Davis, Jr.](#) with book, music and lyrics by [Leslie Bricusse](#). Directed by [Keith Glover](#), Sammy will run in the [Old Globe Theatre](#) Sept. 19 – Nov. 8, 2009. (The cast and creative team have not yet been announced.)

"[The Old Globe](#) is honored to receive the support of [The Edgerton](#) Foundation," said Spisto.

"Thanks to the Foundation's generosity, Sammy's extraordinary artistic team will receive additional rehearsal time to bring this terrific tale of one of America's greatest entertainers to life."

Launched in 2006, [The Edgerton](#) Foundation's New American Play Awards have provided 46 productions with the financial resources to increase rehearsal time with the full production team onsite. The Globe has previously received the prestigious award in support of the world premieres of Mark V. Olsen's [Cornelia](#), [Itamar Moses](#)' [Back Back Back](#) and Steven Drukman's [In This Corner](#).

The preview and opening night dates of Sammy have been revised and an additional week of performances have been added. The first preview is Saturday, Sept. 19 at 8 p.m. (The previously announced Sept. 17 and 18 previews have been canceled.) Additional matinee preview performances have been added on Saturday, Sept. 26 and Sunday, Sept. 27 at 2:00 p.m. Opening night is Friday, October 2. (The opening was previously scheduled for Thursday, Sept. 26). An additional week of performances have been added and the show will now close on Nov. 8 (previously announced as Nov. 1).

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Friday, Sept. 25 at 8:00 p.m., Saturday, Sept 26 at 2:00 p.m. and 8 p.m., Sunday, Sept. 27 at 2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m., Tuesday, Sept. 29 at 7:00 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 30 at 7:00 p.m. and Thursday, Oct. 1 at 8:00 p.m. Regular Performances: Tuesday and Wednesday evenings at 7:00 p.m., Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings at 8:00 p.m., Saturday and Sunday matinees at 2:00 p.m., and Sunday evenings at 7:00 p.m. Discounts are available for full-time students, patrons 29 years of age and under, seniors and groups of 10 or more.

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Old Globe Theatre's SAMMY Begins Previews 9/19

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Old Globe Executive Producer [Lou Spisto](#) presents the world premiere of Sammy, a new musical based on the life of [Sammy Davis, Jr.](#) with book, music and lyrics by [Leslie Bricusse](#), and additional songs by Bricusse and [Anthony Newley](#). Directed by [Keith Glover](#) with choreography by [Keith Young](#) and music supervision by [Ian Fraser](#), Sammy will run in the [Old Globe Theatre](#) Sept. 19 - Nov. 8. Previews run from Sept. 19 - Oct. 1. Opening night is Oct. 2 at 8:00 p.m.

Tickets to Sammy are currently available by subscription only.

Single tickets go on sale Aug. 23 at 10:00 a.m. and can be purchased online at www.TheOldGlobe.org, by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the Box Office.

"The opportunity to work with [Leslie Bricusse](#) and tell the story of the great [Sammy Davis, Jr.](#) was something we couldn't pass up," said Spisto. "Bricusse contributed to Sammy's canon of hits more than any other individual songwriter. Who better to give us an insightful book and a new score which includes the classics that helped shape this legendary entertainer? Though Sammy crossed many boundaries throughout his multifaceted career, there was much more to him than his iconic public persona. Our aim with this new work is to both honor [Sammy Davis, Jr.](#) for those who knew and loved him, and to also introduce this one-of-a-kind performer to a new audience."

Sammy moves from [Sammy Davis, Jr.](#)'s beginnings in vaudeville through the Rat Pack years with [Frank Sinatra](#) to ultimate recognition of his lifetime contribution to American culture. Featuring the classic tunes that helped to make Davis an icon - "The Candy Man," "Mr. Bojangles" and "What Kind of Fool Am I" - Sammy traces the highs and lows of the ultimate triple-threat singer, actor and dancer. Davis was one of the greatest performers of his generation, paving new ground while struggling with issues of identity, race and a turbulent personal life.

As previously announced, Broadway veteran Obba Babatundé headlines as [Sammy Davis, Jr.](#) The cast also features [Heather Ayers](#) (May Britt/Ensemble), [Ann Duquesnay](#) (Rosa Davis), [Mary Ann Hermansen](#) (Kim Novak/Ensemble), [Adam James](#) (Frank Sinatra), [Troy Britton Johnson](#) (Dean Martin/Cohn/Jennings/Ensemble), Ted [Louis Levy](#) (Sammy Davis, Sr.), [Keewa Nurullah](#) (Lola Folana/Ensemble), [Perry Ojeda](#) (Eddie Cantor/Ensemble), Victoria Platt ([Altovise Gore](#)/Ensemble), [Lance Roberts](#) (Will Mastin), [Alonzo Saunders](#) (Murphy/Ensemble) with Jenelle Engleson, Stephanie Girard, [Lauren Haughton](#), Anise Ritchie and [Sarrah Strimel](#) (Ensemble).

The Sammy creative team also includes [Alexander Dodge](#) (Scenic Design), [Fabio Toblini](#) (Costume Design), [Chris Lee](#) (Lighting Design), John H. Shivers (Sound Design), [David Patridge](#) (Sound Design), [Ned Ginsburg](#) (Orchestrator), Rahn Coleman (Music Director/Conductor), [Dominique Kelley](#) (Assistant Choreographer), [Tara Rubin](#) Casting (Casting) and [David Sugarman](#) (Stage Manager).

The multitaleented [Keith Glover](#) returns to [The Old Globe](#) having previously directed his own work, Thunder Knocking on the Door, winner of the American Theatre Critics Association's Osborn Award. He authored a new adaptation of the [Sammy Davis, Jr.](#) vehicle, Golden Boy (based on the original by [Clifford Odets](#) and [William Gibson](#)) and has directed many of his own plays including In Walks Ed which was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize, Dancing on Moonlight, produced by the New York Shakespeare Festival, Coming of the Hurricane, a finalist for the American Theatre Critics Award for Best Play, The Rose of Corazon, Jazzland, Dark Paradise, Shooting Star, Clandestine Crossing and The Sword of Kazarán. As an actor, he has appeared on stage, television and film. Glover received an Outstanding Writing in a Feature Film/Television Movie Image Award nomination for Life is Not a Fairytale: The [Fantasia Barrino](#) Story.

[Keith Young](#) choreographed the recent Broadway revival of On the Town. His regional credits include Crowns, Thunder Knocking at the Door and Cheer. His film credits include Nancy Meyer's upcoming feature It's Complicated with [Meryl Streep](#) and [Alec Baldwin](#), The Baster with [Jennifer Aniston](#), Rent, Something's Gotta Give, What Women Want, Dark Streets, The Holiday, Rat Race, Affair of the Necklace and The Parent Trap. On television, his work has been seen on The Academy Awards, The Emmy Awards, The Grammy Awards, The NAACP Image Awards, "Pushing Daisies," "The Unit," "So You Think You Can Dance," "The Drew Carey Show" (Emmy Award), "Seinfeld" and "Christopher Reeve: A Celebration of Hope" (American Choreography Award). Young has staged both live concerts and music videos for Madonna, Babyface, [Bette Midler](#), [Josh Groban](#), Outkast, [Phil Collins](#), [Clay Aiken](#), [LL Cool J](#), Talking Heads, Red Hot Chili Peppers, [Gladys Knight](#) and [Natalie Cole](#).

Like his mentor [Sammy Davis, Jr.](#), Obba Babatundé has been entertaining audiences

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since he was a child. A skilled actor, singer and dancer, Davis once said of Babatundé that "I feel safe knowing that with cats like Obba, when I get out of this business I am leaving it in good hands." Babatundé was nominated for a Tony Award for his performance as [C.C. White](#) in the original Broadway cast of Dreamgirls. His additional Broadway credits include the revival of Chicago, Grind and Timbuktu! He also created the role of [Jelly Roll Morton](#) in Jelly's Last Jam. On television, Babatundé delivered an Emmy-nominated performance in Miss Ever's Boys, received a NAACP Image Award nomination for his performance as [Harold Nicholas](#) in Introducing [Dorothy Dandridge](#) and has appeared in 60 made-for-television movies. His theatrical films include Philadelphia, That Thing You Do, After the Sunset, The Manchurian Candidate, The Notebook and the upcoming Moneyball opposite [Brad Pitt](#).

An accomplished showman and songwriter, [Adam James](#) was chosen by Tina Sinatra to portray her father, Frank, in Sinatra Remembered, the first-ever musical theater production about his life. James also co-starred Off Broadway in Our Sinatra at New York's legendary jazz venue, Birdland, and covered the role of Sinatra in the North American premiere of London's West End production of The Rat Pack. James replaced fellow Canadian crooner Michael Bubl  as the vocalist/emcee for the American tour of Forever Swing. He performs internationally with symphonies and big bands starring in A Toast to Ol' Blue Eyes, a show he co-created with conductor/arranger [David Martin](#). He has also appeared in concert with [Liza Minnelli](#), [Tony Bennett](#) and [Ray Charles](#). James was named "Best Vocalist" by Jazz Report Magazine, was a finalist at the Montreal Jazz Festival and was nominated for a 2004 Genie Award (the Canadian "Oscar") for singing and co-writing the theme song for the film, Mambo Italiano. Following the autumn release of his debut solo recording, [Adam James](#), he will perform in Vancouver during the 2010 Olympic Winter Games and compose songs for [Twyla Tharp](#)'s Come Fly With Me.

Tony Award winner [Ann Duquesnay](#) most recently starred in Sheila's Day in Johannesburg, South Africa and at Crossroads Theatre, New Brunswick, N.J. Her Broadway credits include Bring in 'Da Noise, Bring in 'Da Funk (Tony Award, Drama League Recognition Award and Grammy nomination (co-composer/lyricist)), [Hot Feet](#), It Ain't Nothin But the Blues, Jelly's Last Jam, revival of The Wiz, and Blues in the Night. She has appeared Off Broadway in Our Leading Lady ([Manhattan Theatre Club](#) - AUDELCO Award nominee), Cookin' at the Cookery ([Melting Pot Theatre](#) - Drama Desk nominee and Drama League Recognition Award), and Spunk (New York Shakespeare Festival - AUDELCO Award).

Emmy Award winner Ted [Louis Levy](#)'s professional training began in Chicago with Finis Henderson II, Master Tap Dancer and former manager of [Sammy Davis, Jr.](#) Levy collaborated with [George C. Wolfe](#) and [Gregory Hines](#) on the choreography of Jelly's Last Jam, for which he received a Tony Award and Drama Desk nominations, and the Outer Critics Circle Award. Levy also appeared on Broadway in Black and Blue and as Papa Jack in [Susan Stroman](#) and [Harry Connick, Jr.](#)'s Thou Shalt Not. He received a [Helen Hayes](#) Award for his portrayal of The Mikado in The Ford Theater's production of The Hot Mikado. He directed [Savion Glover](#)'s Dancing Under The Stars at the New York Shakespeare Festival's Delacorte Theater and contributed to the choreography Bring In 'Da Noise, Bring In 'Da Funk on Broadway. Levy made his film debut in [Spike Lee](#)'s Malcolm X, appeared with [Gregory Hines](#) in Bojangles and received an Emmy Award for his television debut performance in the PBS Special "Precious Memories." He is the recipient of the 2008 [Gregory Hines](#) Humanitarian Award.

Double Oscar and Grammy winner [Leslie Bricusse](#) has written more than 40 musical shows and films, and has collaborated with an array of musical talents, including [Anthony Newley](#), [Henry Mancini](#), [John Williams](#), [John Barry](#), [Jerry Goldsmith](#), [Jule Styne](#), [Quincy Jones](#), Andre Previn, [Frank Wildhorn](#) and Peter Illyich Tchaikovsky (whose Nutcracker Suite he adapted into a song score). He has been nominated for ten Academy Awards, nine Grammys and four Tonys, and in addition to his Oscars and Grammy, has won eight [Ivor Novello](#) Awards. His stage musicals include Stop the World - I Want to Get Off, The Roar of the Greasepaint - The Smell of the Crowd, Pickwick, Harvey, The Good Old Bad Old Days, Goodbye, Mr. Chips, Henry's Wives, Scrooge, One Shining Moment, Sherlock Holmes, Jekyll and Hyde and Victor/Victoria. Bricusse has also written songs and/or screenplays for such films as Doctor Dolittle, Scrooge, Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory, Goodbye, Mr. Chips, Superman, Victor/Victoria, Santa Claus - The Movie, Home Alone I & II, Hook, Tom & Jerry - The Movie, and various Pink Panther films. His better-known songs include "What Kind of Fool Am I?," "Once in a Lifetime," "Gonna Build a Mountain," "Who Can I Turn To?," "The Joker," "If I Ruled the World," "My Kind of Girl," "Talk to the Animals," "You and I," "Feeling Good," "When I Look in Your Eyes," "Goldfinger," "Can You Read My Mind?" (the Love Theme from Superman), "You Only Live Twice," "Le Jazz Hot!," "On a Wonderful Day Like Today," "Two for the Road," "The Candy Man," "This Is the Moment," "Crazy World," "Pure Imagination" and "Oompa-Loompa-Doomp-Dee-Doo." In 1989, Bricusse received the Kennedy Award for consistent excellence in British songwriting, bestowed by the British Academy of Songwriters, Composers and Authors, and was inducted into the American Songwriters Hall of Fame - only the fourth Englishman to be honored - after Noel Coward, [John Lennon](#) and [Paul McCartney](#).

[Anthony Newley](#) garnered three Tony Award nominations (Best Actor, Best Musical Author and Best Composer and Lyricist) for Stop the World-I Want to Get Off and two Tony Award nominations (Best Director and Best Composer and Lyricist) for The Roar of the Greasepaint-The Smell of the Crowd, both written with his longtime collaborator, [Leslie Bricusse](#). After the worldwide success of these two hit musicals, Newley ventured into film with roles in Doctor Dolittle and Sweet November. Other film credits as director, actor or producer include Summertime, It Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time, Mr. Quilp and Can Hieronymus Merkin Ever Forget Mercy Humppe and Find True Happiness? His collaborations with Bricusse also produced the score to the television production of Peter Pan which starred [Danny Kaye](#) and [Mia Farrow](#), the film Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory, and the London stage production of the Good Old Bad Old Days. Together they created such standards as "What Kind of Fool Am I?," "Who Can I Turn To?," "Goldfinger," "Once in a Lifetime" and [Sammy Davis, Jr.](#)'s international hit record "The Candy Man." In television he played opposite [Joan Collins](#) in the "Tonight at Eight Thirty" series, "Red Peppers" and "Fumed Oak." His final television appearances were in "Eastenders" and "The Lakes." Newley devoted his time in later years to personal appearances in nightclubs and cabarets around the world performing his highly acclaimed one man show. During the last five years of his life he achieved enormous success in the musical version of Scrooge culminating in a record breaking season at London's Dominion Theatre.

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[Jan Fraser](#) came to New York from England in 1962 with [Anthony Newley's](#) and [Leslie Bricusse's](#) *Stop the World - I Want to Get Off*, where he was Musical Director and Arranger of both the original London and Broadway productions. He has conducted *Pickwick* on Broadway, served as Vocal Supervisor for *Doctor Dolittle* and was [John Williams'](#) associate on *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*. For the musical film *Scrooge*, starring [Albert Finney](#), both he and Bricusse received Academy Award nominations. He and Bricusse have now worked together for over fifty years. His association with Sammy Davis Jr. began in 1961, when he wrote Davis' first arrangement of "What Kind of Fool Am I," and continued for many years on Television Specials and [Mr. Davis'](#) revival of *Stop the World*. In 1977, he received his first Emmy Award for the Musical Direction of "America Salutes [Richard Rodgers](#)," beginning what was to become the longest run of individual Emmy nominations in the history of the Television Academy. In 2009 he received his thirtieth nomination, and was awarded his eleventh Emmy in 1993 for the 52nd Presidential Inaugural Gala. In December 2008, he was once again the Musical Director for TNT's 26th "Christmas in Washington," which he has conducted every year since its inception in 1982, and for which he has received three of his Emmy awards. His 2009 Emmy nomination was his tenth for this show. His film and television scores include *Torn between Two Lovers*, *Hopscotch*, *First Monday in October*, and *Zorro the Gay Blade*. His 1995 and 1997 Broadway albums with [Julie Andrews](#) on Philips Classics were both Grammy Nominees. In 1992, he made his debut as a guest conductor with the Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra. He is the past President of the American Society of Music Arrangers and Composers and recently completed his eighth two-year term as a Governor of the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.

TICKETS to Sammy are currently available by subscription only. Single tickets go on sale Aug. 23 at 10:00 a.m. and can be purchased online at www.TheOldGlobe.org, by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the box office at 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park. Performances begin on Sept. 19 and continue through Nov. 8. Ticket prices range from \$54 to \$89. Performance times: Previews: Saturday, Sept. 19 at 8:00 p.m., Sunday Sept. 20 at 7:00 p.m., Tuesday, Sept. 22, at 7:00 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 23 at 7:00 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 24 at 8:00 p.m., Friday, Sept. 25 at 8:00 p.m., Saturday, Sept. 26 at 2:00 p.m. and 8 p.m., Sunday, Sept. 27 at 2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m., Tuesday, Sept. 29 at 7:00 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 30 at 7:00 p.m. and Thursday, Oct. 1 at 8:00 p.m. Regular Performances: Tuesday and Wednesday evenings at 7:00 p.m., Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings at 8:00 p.m., Saturday and Sunday matinees at 2:00 p.m., and Sunday evenings at 7:00 p.m. Discounts are available for full-time students, patrons 29 years of age and under, seniors and groups of 10 or more.

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[Heather Ayers](#) (May Britt/Ensemble) [The Old Globe](#): *The Women, Ace*. BROADWAY: [Megan Mullally's](#) understudy in *Young Frankenstein*. OFF BROADWAY: *Five Course Love*, *Sarah, Plain and Tall*, *Forbidden Broadway Strikes Back*, and four [City Center](#) Encores! productions. REGIONAL: [Cincinnati Playhouse](#), Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, [Eugene O'Neill](#) Festival, [George Street](#) Playhouse, Dallas Theater Center, [GeVa Theatre](#) Center, Kansas City Repertory Theatre, [Barrington Stage Company](#), *Hasty Pudding Theatre* and others. RECORDINGS: *Young Frankenstein* and *Face the Music*.

OBBA BABATUNDÉ (Sammy) Like his mentor [Sammy Davis, Jr.](#), Obba Babatundé has been entertaining audiences since he was a child. A skilled actor, singer and dancer, Davis once said of Babatundé that "I feel safe knowing that with cats like Obba, when I get out of this business I am leaving it in good hands." Babatundé was nominated for a Tony Award for his performance as [C.C. White](#) in the original Broadway cast of *Dreamgirls*. His additional Broadway credits include the revival of *Chicago*, *Grind and Timbuktu!* He also created the role of [Jelly Roll Morton](#) in *Jelly's Last Jam*. On television, Babatundé delivered an Emmy-nominated performance in *Miss Ever's Boys*, received a NAACP Image Award nomination for his performance as [Harold Nicholas](#) in *Introducing Dorothy Dandridge* and has appeared in 60 made-for-television movies. His theatrical films include *Philadelphia*, *That Thing You Do*, *After the Sunset*, *The Manchurian Candidate*, *The Notebook* and the upcoming and the upcoming *Moneyball* opposite [Brad Pitt](#).

[Ann Duquesnay](#) (Rosa Davis) mostly recently starred in *Sheila's Day* in Johannesburg, South Africa and at Crossroads Theatre, New Brunswick, N.J. BROADWAY: *Bring in 'Da Noise, Bring in 'Da Funk* (Tony Award, Drama League Recognition Award and Grammy nominee (co-composer/lyricist)), *Hot Feet*, *It Ain't Nothin But the Blues*, *Jelly's Last Jam*, revival of *The Wiz* and *Blues in the Night*. OFF BROADWAY: *Our Leading Lady* ([Manhattan Theatre Club](#) - AUDELCO Award nominee), *Cookin' at the Cookery* ([Melting Pot Theatre](#) - Drama Desk nominee and Drama League Recognition Award), *Spunk* (New York Shakespeare Festival - AUDELCO Award). REGIONAL: *Hallelujah Baby* ([Arena Stage](#) - [Helen Hayes](#) Award), *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (Denver Center Theatre), *Lady Day* (Theatre on the Square - Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Award), *Porgy and Bess* ([Houston Grand Opera](#)), *Betsey Brown* (McCarter Theatre). NATIONAL TOURS: *The Civil War*, *Bubbling Brown Sugar*, *The Wiz*. OTHER: Narrator of [Aretha Franklin's](#) autobiography audiobook, *Aretha from These Roots*; historical voices in Ken Burns TV documentaries.

[Mary Ann](#) Hermansen ([Kim Novak](#)/Ensemble) BROADWAY: *Chicago*, Weissler Productions; *Carrie*, [Royal Shakespeare Company](#). NATIONAL TOURS: *Chicago*, *Smokey Joe's Café*. FILM: *Blast from the Past*, *That Thing You Do*, *Forrest Gump*, *Forget Paris*, *A*

Hollywood Story. TV: "Strong Medicine," "General Hospital" (recurring), "Alien Nation," "Doogie Howser, M.D."

[Adam James](#) ([Frank Sinatra](#)) An accomplished showman and songwriter, [Adam James](#) was chosen by Tina Sinatra to portray her father, Frank, in Sinatra Remembered, the first-ever musical theater production about his life. James also co-starred Off Broadway in Our Sinatra at New York's legendary jazz venue, Birdland, and covered the role of Sinatra in the North American premiere of London's West End production of The Rat Pack. James replaced fellow Canadian crooner Michael Bublé as the vocalist/emcee for the American tour of Forever Swing. He performs internationally with symphonies and big bands starring in A Toast to Ol' Blue Eyes, a show he co-created with conductor/arranger [David Martin](#). He has also appeared in concert with [Liza Minnelli](#), [Tony Bennett](#) and [Ray Charles](#). James was named "Best Vocalist" by Jazz Report Magazine, was a finalist at the Montreal Jazz Festival and was nominated for a 2004 Genie Award (the Canadian "Oscar") for singing and co-writing the theme song for the film, Mambo Italiano. Following the autumn release of his debut solo recording, [Adam James](#), he will perform in Vancouver during the 2010 Olympic Winter Games and compose songs for [Twyla Tharp](#)'s Come Fly With Me.

[Troy Britton Johnson](#) ([Dean Martin](#)/Cohn/Jennings/Ensemble) BROADWAY: The Drowsy Chaperone, Damn Yankees, The Best Little Whorehouse Goes Public, The [Will Rogers](#) Follies. NATIONAL TOURS: Hairspray, The Full Monty. OFF BROADWAY: Vampire Lesbians of Sodom. REGIONAL: She Loves Me, Huntington Theatre; The Drowsy Chaperone, [Ahmanson Theatre](#); Violet, [Laguna Playhouse](#); Strike Up the Band, Bells Are Ringing, Reprise Theatre Company; A House in the Woods, Goodspeed Opera; That's Christmas, Shubert Theater. FILM: Blood Night, Life in Flight, Calling it Quits. TV: "The Drew Carey Show," "Beverly Hills 90210," "The [Rosie O'Donnell](#) Show."

TED [Louis Levy](#)'s ([Sammy Davis, Sr.](#)) professional training began in Chicago with Finis Henderson II, Master Tap Dancer and former manager of [Sammy Davis, Jr.](#) Levy collaborated with [George C. Wolfe](#) and [Gregory Hines](#) on the choreography of Jelly's Last Jam, for which he received a Tony Award and Drama Desk nominations, and the Outer Critics Circle Award. Levy also appeared on Broadway in Black and Blue and as Papa Jack in [Susan Stroman](#) and [Harry Connick Jr.](#)'s Thou Shalt Not. He received a [Helen Hayes](#) Award for his portrayal of The Mikado in The Ford Theatre's production of The Hot Mikado. He directed [Savion Glover](#)'s Dancing Under The Stars at the New York Shakespeare Festival's Delacorte Theater and contributed to the choreography Bring In 'Da Noise, Bring In 'Da Funk on Broadway. Levy made his film debut in [Spike Lee](#)'s Malcolm X, appeared with [Gregory Hines](#) in Bojangles and received an Emmy Award for his television debut performance in the PBS Special "Precious Memories." He is the recipient of the 2008 [Gregory Hines](#) Humanitarian Award.

[Keewa Nurullah](#) (Lola Folana/Ensemble) NATIONAL TOUR: On the Record (Disney Theatricals). REGIONAL: Monty Python's Spamalot (Las Vegas), Peter Pan (The MUNY), Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat (The MUNY and Kansas City Starlight Theatre). FILM: Save the Last Dance. TV: "Victoria's Secret Fashion Show."

VICTORIA PLATT ([Altovise Gore](#)/Ensemble) BROADWAY: Original Broadway production of Jelly's Last Jam directed by [George C. Wolfe](#). REGIONAL: Pippin, [Mark Taper Forum](#); Atlanta, [Geffen Playhouse](#); Asphalt, REDCAT; Smoke, Lilies and Jade, The Public Theater; All Night Strut, Fullerton CLO Music Theatre; Last Days of Judas Iscariot, Black Dahlia Theatre; The Hot Mikado, [Ford's Theatre](#); Hope Runs Eternal (NAACP nomination), Nate Holden Performing Arts Center; Dreamgirls, Westchester Broadway Theatre; Women of Plums, The Kennedy Center. She was last seen in [Matt Sax](#) & [Eric Rosen](#)'s hip-hopical Venice at the [Kirk Douglas](#) Theatre and in 2010 will appear in the feature films Jonah Hex starring [Josh Brolin](#) and My Girlfriend's Back. FILM: Cover, Flip the Script, Winchell (HBO), True Grits (Cannes Short Film Corner) and 'Round Midnight. TV: "CSI: Miami," "Crossing Jordan," "Strong Medicine," "The Guiding Light," "Barbershop" and "All My Children."

[Lance Roberts](#) ([Will Mastin](#)) Originally from New York, Roberts now makes his home in LA where he has appeared in almost 100 professional shows including the original LA casts of Cats, I Love You You're Perfect Now Change, Forbidden Hollywood, The All Night Strut, Once on This Island and most recently Ain't Misbehavin' at the Music Center's Ahmanson Theater. San Diego audiences have seen him at San Diego Repertory, [La Jolla Playhouse](#), Moonlight, Welk and Gaslight Theatres. NEW YORK: Forbidden Hollywood (original casts); Radio City's America and the revival of The Me Nobody Knows. TOURS: Ragtime, Dreamgirls, Five Guys Name Moe and many others. REGIONAL: Anthony and Cleopatra, Driving Miss Daisy, I'm Not Rappaport and many other original works. TV: "Numbers," "Related," "The Drew Carey Show," "Girlfriends" and "Zoey 101," as well as DVD classics such as "Knots Landing," "Dallas," "The Colby's," "My Two Dads" and more. He has been playing Jafar at Disney's California Adventure since the beginning of its 7000 performance run in Aladdin, The Musical Spectacular.

ALONSO SAUNDERS (Murphy/Ensemble/understudy Sammy) LONDON WEST END: The Rat Pack Live From Las Vegas. BROADWAY: Chicago, Showboat. NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL TOURS: The Rat Pack, Chicago, The Wizard Of Oz. REGIONAL: Ragtime (Maine State Music Theatre), La Cage Aux Folles (Stages St. Louis), Oliver! ([Paper Mill Playhouse](#)), A Chorus Line (Theater By The Sea). FILM: My Father's Will. TV: "30 Rock."

[Sarrah Strimel](#) (Luella/Hedda/Ensemble) BROADWAY: Young Frankenstein (Inga u/s), The Producers (Ulla u/s), Encore Theatre Company's Stairway to Paradise. NATIONAL TOURS: Dirty Rotten Scoundrels (Jolene u/s), The Producers (1st and 2nd tours). REGIONAL: Minsky's (Mary u/s), [Ahmanson Theatre](#); Lil Abner (Stupifyin' Jones), Goodspeed Opera House; Cats (Bombalurina), Houston Theatre Under the Stars; 42nd Street (Anytime Annie), Atlanta Theater of the Stars and [Wolf Trap](#); as well as many shows at Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera, St. Louis' The MUNY and Starlight Theatre (Kansas City).

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TM Feature

Oh, Brothers!

Real-life siblings Obba and Akin Babatunde show off their talents in the musical dramas *Sammy* and *Blind Lemon Blues*.

By: [Patrick Lee](#) · Sep 17, 2009 · San Diego

The acting world is full of talented siblings, from Peter and Jane Fonda to Shirley MacLaine and Warren Beatty. Somewhat less known, but highly respected, Obba and Akin Babatunde are showing off their craft 3000 miles apart. Obba, a Tony Award nominee for originating the role of C.C. White in *Dreamgirls*, begins performances on September 19 at San Diego's Old Globe Theatre as legendary entertainer Sammy Davis Jr. in [Sammy](#), while Akin has returned to the York Theatre in Manhattan in [Blind Lemon Blues](#), a biomusical about the 1920s blues singer Blind Lemon Jefferson. TheaterMania spoke separately with both men about these exciting projects.

THEATERMANIA: Were you familiar with Sammy Davis Jr. before you took the role?

OBBA BABATUNDE: I had the great pleasure and honor of knowing Sammy personally. We met in 1978 when I was co-starring in a world tour with Liza Minnelli. After he complimented my performance, I said: "I want to thank you for coming in through the kitchen so I could come in the front door."

His eyes welled up and tears went down his face as he thanked me for that. I knew him from that time until his passing. He'd sit me down like he was like my uncle and tell me to never quit. "Know that everything that could be done to you has already been done to me." That guided me many times in my own career.

TM: Do you consider him an important figure in African-American history?

OB: I would say that he's an important figure in American history. Sammy lived at a time when America was in great turmoil about race and he navigated his way through it in a way that probably no one before him had done. Sammy was headlining in hotels when Jim Crow laws were still in place. He was one of the men in the first integrated infantry. It is extremely important that we see his iconic life within the time frame in which he lived. At the end of the day, the show is a musical -- we didn't want to make it a history lesson -- but we do touch on many of the conflicting and controversial stories that were associated with his life.

TM: Did you look at archived footage to approximate his performance style?

OB: My intention was not to do an impersonation or a caricature of Sammy; I'd like to say it's my attempt at a reincarnation. Many people remember him through extreme caricatures, but he wasn't just the guy who said "hey man!" There was a heart that had been broken and a mind that had been challenged to be able to endure some of the most horrific attacks on his spirit. I say that it is not what happened to Sammy that made him heroic and iconic but how he responded, which was with tenacity and an absolute unwillingness to quit.



Obba Babatunde in *Sammy*
(© Craig Schwartz)

TM: When you say he suffered attacks on his spirit, which do you first think of?

OB: He had a relationship with [white actress] Kim Novak and they both were told that the relationship was not allowed. Additionally, to counteract the bad publicity, Sammy was forced into an arranged marriage with a woman he didn't even know. That resounds loudly because we're dealing with this situation today with the gay community being told who they are allowed to love and marry. It's just another form of modern day "Big Brother" control which is one of the things that Sammy fought. People can see him and his politics however they choose but what I knew about Mr. D is that he refused to be told who he could be. People said he converted to Judaism because he wanted to be white. Well, that speaks to the person's ignorance, because there were black Jews in Harlem in 1929. No matter which way he went, and we touch on this in the show, there was judgment at the cost of alienation from both blacks and whites at one point in his life.

TM: What do you most hope this show tells people about Sammy Davis Jr.?

OB: I would hope that we, like with Michael Jackson, are reminded that there was a great man inside this ball of talent who was probably defined and given to us to get us to take a look at ourselves -- as a country and as a society. I believe that Michael Jackson was the Sammy Davis Jr. of his time; they both carried a huge load and at the end of the day a person is more than their art and there's a human being inside the entertainer.

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 Theater News

Obba Babatundé, Ann Duquesnay, Ted Louis Levy, et al. Set for *Sammy* at Old Globe

By: [Dan Bacalzo](#) · Aug 14, 2009 · San Diego

Tony Award winner Ann Duquesnay, Genie Award winner Adam James, and Emmy Award winner Ted Louis Levy will join previously announced Tony nominee Obba Babatundé in the world premiere of the new musical [Sammy](#), featuring book, music and lyrics by Leslie Bricusse, and additional songs by Bricusse and Anthony Newley. Keith Young will direct the production, which will play the [Old Globe Theatre](#), September 19-November 8, with an opening on October 2.

The musical is based on the life of Sammy Davis, Jr. (played by Babatundé), moving from his days as a child working in vaudeville through his time with Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin as a member of the Rat Pack. It will feature a number of classic tunes including "The Candy Man," "Mr. Bojangles" and "What Kind of Fool Am I." Keith Young will choreograph the musical, with music supervision by Ian Fraser.



Obba Babatundé as Sammy Davis, Jr.
(© Craig Schwartz)

Duquesnay will play Rosa Davis, James will play Frank Sinatra, and Levy will play Sammy Davis, Sr. The cast will also feature Heather Ayers (May Britt/Ensemble), Mary Ann Hermansen (Kim Novak/Ensemble), Troy Britton Johnson (Dean Martin/Cohn/Jennings/Ensemble), Keewa Nurullah (Lola Folana/Ensemble), Victoria Platt (Altovise Gore/Ensemble), Lance Roberts (Will Mastin), Alonzo Saunders (Murphy/Ensemble/understudy Sammy), and Sarrah Strimel (Luella/Hedda/Ensemble), with ensemble members Jenelle Engleson, Stephanie Girard, Lauren Haughton and Anise Ritchie.

The creative team will include Keith Young (choreographer), Ian Fraser (musical supervision), Alexander Dodge (scenic design), Fabio Toblini (costume design), Chris Lee (lighting design), John H. Shivers (sound design), David Patridge (sound design), Ned Ginsburg (orchestrator), and Rahn Coleman (music director/conductor).

Babatundé received a Tony nomination for his performance as C.C. White in the original Broadway cast of *Dreamgirls*. His additional Broadway credits include the revival of *Chicago*, *Grind* and *Timbuktu!* He also created the role of Jelly Roll Morton in *Jelly's Last Jam*. He received an Emmy nomination for *Miss Ever's Boys*, and a NAACP Image Award nomination for *Introducing Dorothy Dandridge*.

For more information, visit www.TheOldGlobe.org.

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 Theater News

Obba Babatundé to Star in Leslie Bricusse's *Sammy* Musical at Old Globe

By: [Dan Bacalzo](#) · Jul 29, 2009 · San Diego

Tony nominee Obba Babatundé will star as Sammy Davis, Jr. in the world premiere of the new musical [Sammy](#), featuring book, music and lyrics by Leslie Bricusse, and additional songs by Bricusse and Anthony Newley. Keith Glover will direct the production, which will play the Old Globe Theatre, September 19-November 8, with an opening on October 2.

The musical is based on the life of Sammy Davis, Jr., moving from his days as a child working in vaudeville through his time with Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin as a member of the Rat Pack. It will feature a number of classic tunes including "The Candy Man," "Mr. Bojangles" and "What Kind of Fool Am I." Keith Young will choreograph the musical, with music supervision by Ian Fraser.



Obba Babatundé as Sammy Davis, Jr.
(© Craig Schwartz)

Babatundé received a Tony nomination for his performance as C.C. White in the original Broadway cast of *Dreamgirls*. His additional Broadway credits include the revival of *Chicago*, *Grind* and *Timbuktu!* He also created the role of Jelly Roll Morton in *Jelly's Last Jam*. He received an Emmy nomination for *Miss Ever's Boys*, and a NAACP Image Award nomination for *Introducing Dorothy Dandridge*.

For more information, visit www.TheOldGlobe.org.

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July 29, 2009

Headlines

Kerry O'Malley Joins the Cast of *Billy Elliot*

9 to 5 Sets September 6 Closing Date

Chad Kimball and Montego Glover Reprise Leading Roles for Broadway's *Memphis*

David Alan Grier Joins Mamet's New Play *Race*

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Headlines: Obba Babatunde to Play the Title Role in New Musical *Sammy*

by Broadway.com Staff

SHARE



Obba Babatundé in *Sammy*

Tony Award nominee Obba Babatundé has been tapped to star as Sammy Davis, Jr. in the world premiere of the new musical *Sammy* at San Diego's Old Globe Theatre. Featuring a book, music and lyrics by Oscar winner Leslie Bricusse (*Stop the World—I Want to Get Off*), and additional songs by Bricusse and Anthony Newley, the show will begin previews on September 19 and run through November 8. Opening night is October 2, directed by Keith Glover.

Sammy moves from Sammy Davis, Jr.'s days as a child working in vaudeville through his years with Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin as a member of the Rat Pack. Featuring classic tunes such as "The Candy Man," "Mr. Bojangles" and "What Kind of Fool Am I?" as well as new songs written especially for the musical, *Sammy* traces the highs and lows of the ultimate triple-threat singer, actor and dancer, who broke new ground while struggling with issues of identity, race and a turbulent personal life.

Babatundé was nominated for a Tony Award for his performance as C.C. White in the original Broadway cast of *Dreamgirls*. Additional Broadway credits include the revival of *Chicago*, *Grind* and *Timbuktu*. He also created the role of Jelly Roll Morton in *Jelly's Last Jam*. On television, Babatundé received an Emmy nomination for *Miss Evers' Boys*, an NAACP Image Award nomination for his performance as Harold Nicholas in *Introducing Dorothy Dandridge* and has appeared in 60 made-for-TV movies. Feature films include *The Celestine Prophecy*, *Material Girls*, *After the Sunset*, *The Manchurian Candidate*, *The Notebook* and the upcoming *The Black Man's Guide to Understanding Black Women*.

Sammy will feature choreography by Keith Young and music supervision by Ian Fraser. Additional cast and creative team members have not yet been announced.



Headlines: Duquesnay, Levy and James Join the Cast of *Sammy* at the Old Globe

by [Broadway.com Staff](#)



Ann Duquesnay

Tony winner Ann Duquesnay, Emmy winner and Tony nominee Ted Louis Levy and Adam James will join previously announced Tony Award nominee Obba Babatundé in the world premiere musical *Sammy* at the Old Globe Theatre in San Diego. The show, which is based on the life of Sammy Davis Jr., features music and lyrics by Leslie Bricusse and additional songs by Anthony Newley. It begins performances on September 19 and officially opens on October 2. The limited engagement, directed by Keith Glover and choreographed by Keith Young, runs through November 8.

Sammy moves from Sammy Davis Jr.'s beginnings in vaudeville through the Rat Pack years with Frank Sinatra to ultimate recognition of his lifetime contribution to American culture. The show features the classic tunes that helped to make Davis an icon, including "The Candy Man," "Mr. Bojangles" and "What Kind of Fool Am I."

Duquesnay will play Rosa Davis. Her Broadway credits include her Tony-winning performance in *Bring in 'Da Noise, Bring in 'Da Funk* as well as *Hot Feet*, *Jelly's Last Jam*, *The Wiz* and *Blues in the Night*. Off-Broadway, she appeared in *Our Leading Lady*, *Cookin' at the Cookery* and *Spunk*.

James, who will play Frank Sinatra in *Sammy*, was chosen by Tina Sinatra to play her father in the musical review *Sinatra Remembered*, going on to portray the crooner again in the West End production of *The Rat Pack*. Off-Broadway, he played the icon again in *Our Sinatra*. An accomplished jazz vocalist, James replaced fellow Canadian singer Michael Buble as the vocalist for the American tour of *Forever Swing*, and has appeared in concert with Liza Minnelli, Tony Bennett and Ray Charles.

Levy, who will portray Sammy Davis Sr., received a Tony Award nomination for his [AD] choreography in *Jelly's Last Jam*, and has appeared on Broadway in *Black and Blue* and *Thou Shalt Not*. He also contributed choreography to *Bring in 'Da Noise, Bring in 'Da Funk*. Off-Broadway, he was seen in *The Hot Mikado*. On screen, Levy appeared in *Malcolm X*, *Bojangles* and in the PBS special *Precious Memories*, which earned him an Emmy Award.

In addition to Babatundé, Duquesnay, James and Levy, the *Sammy* cast features Heather Ayers, Mary Ann Hermansen, Troy Britton Johnson, Keewa Nurullah, Victoria Platt, Lance Roberts, Alonzo Saunders, Sarrah Strimel with Jenelle Engleson, Stephanie Girard, Lauren Haughton and Anise Ritchie.

The *Sammy* creative team includes Keith Yong (choreography), Alexander Dodge (scenic design), Fabio Toblini (costume design), Chris Lee (lighting design), John H. Shivers (sound design) and David Patridge (sound design).

Diane Bell Marriage isn't fake, grandmother insists



San Diegan Mary Jo Shannon had a front-row seat at the wedding Sunday of reality TV star Khloé Kardashian and L.A. Laker Lamar Odom.

She's Khloé's grandmother and owns a baby boutique in La Jolla with her daughter Karen Houghton of San Marcos. Houghton also attended the elaborate Bel Air wedding with her daughter, Natalie, 11.

Accusations that the marriage was fake and merely a ratings ploy for E!'s "Keeping Up with the Kardashians" TV show, which videotaped the nuptials for its Nov. 8 episode, are not true, said Shannon, who chatted with the minister the evening before. After interviewing the couple at length, the pastor told her that he has faith their marriage will last.

SEE Diane Bell, B8

► DIANE BELL

CONTINUED FROM B1

Star-studded crowd expected for 'Sammy'

The newlyweds met at an L.A. party just a month before their wedding. The star-studded ceremony, underwritten by the Ryan Seacrest-produced show, took place at the mansion of Kardashian family friend and music mogul Irving Azoff.

"I first met the bridegroom the night before the wedding," said Shannon, whose other daughter, Kris, Khloé's mom, was married to L.A. lawyer Robert Kardashian prior to her current husband, Olympian Bruce Jenner.

Among wedding guests were Kobe Bryant, Luke Walton,

Sugar Ray Leonard, Kelly Osbourne, Ryan Seacrest, Chelsea Handler, Brittny Gastineau, Adrienne Bailon and Lara Spencer. The bride's TV co-stars, sisters Kim and Kourtney Kardashian, were bridesmaids, of course. During the reception, Kim repeatedly sneaked peaks at a football game on TV to keep tabs on her "on-again" romance with the New Orleans Saints' Reggie Bush.

Hollywood South

A star-studded crowd is expected tomorrow for the Old Globe Theatre's musical on the life of Sammy Davis Jr. Frank Sinatra's daughters, Tina and Nancy, are on the guest list of the post-performance party at Bertrand at Mister A's, as is Quincy Jones, a friend of "Sammy" creator Leslie Bricusse.

Also expected are Ginny Mancini, the widow of composer Henry Mancini; actress



Pet Doors USA asked for owner Paul Goodman's permission to include his dog Cashew's photo in its catalogs.

Paul Goodman

Anne Archer; "Happy Days" Marion Ross and her longtime beau, actor Paul Michael; Gregory Peck's widow, Veronique; screenwriter Tom Mankiewicz; actress Stephanie Powers, who

was a Hollywood High classmate of Nancy Sinatra; TV producer Terry Jastrow; plus actor Billie Dee Williams, of "Star Wars" fame, and TV producer George Schlatter, who brought us Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In."

Another dog star is born

After reading here about Abbey, a former animal shelter pooch who was adopted through FOCAS (Friends of County Animal Shelters) and became a model for Petco, Paul Goodman e-mailed me about his terrier-mix shelter dog.

She had been one of 10 small dogs scheduled to be euthanized at a shelter in Riverside, and Goodman adopted her through the Helen Woodward Animal Center. He named her Cashew because, with her blonde fur, she looked like a big cashew curled up in his lap en route home to University

Heights.

After a house remodel, Goodman caught a snapshot of Cashew sitting next to her new doggie door and included it with a note to the manufacturer. A short time later, Pet Doors USA asked for his permission to include Cashew's photo in its online and print catalogs.

She doesn't get royalties, but her owners did receive two T-shirts as a reward for their canine adoptee's "model" behavior.

San Diegans Ink

County Supervisor Ron Roberts walked his talk last week.

After kicking off the county's immunization campaign, he lined up for a flu shot himself. Roberts came prepared, thanks to Helene, his wife of 45 years. She had handed him four Tylenol when he left home that morning with instructions to take two before his injection and two later in the day. He reportedly didn't even get a sore arm.

Diane Bell's column appears Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

Please fax items to (619) 260-5009, call (619) 293-1518 or e-mail to diane.bell@uniontrib.com.

RANCHO SANTA FE REVIEW

October 1, 2009

Broadway veteran stars in Old Globe's world premiere of 'Sammy'

Broadway veteran Obba Babatundé is set to star as Sammy Davis, Jr. in the world premiere of "Sammy" at The Old Globe Theater. The new musical is based on the life of performer Sammy Davis Jr., with book, music and lyrics by Leslie Bricusse, and additional songs by Bricusse and Anthony Newley. Directed by Keith Glover with choreography by Keith Young and music supervision by Ian Fraser, Sammy will run in the Old Globe Theatre now through Nov. 8.

Tickets to Sammy can be purchased online at www.TheOldGlobe.org, by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the Box Office.

GAY & LESBIAN TIMES

September 17, 2009

BEST BET

Saturday, Sept. 19

Sammy. The premiere of *Sammy* at the Old Globe Theatre starts at 8 p.m. *Sammy*, based on the life of Sammy Davis Jr., takes the audience on a journey from his days as a child working in vaudeville to his time with Dean Martin and Frank Sinatra as a member of the Rat Pack. *Sammy* is written by two-time Academy Award and Grammy Award-winner Leslie Bricusse and features sixteen of Broadway's best singers and dancers.

The musical features the unmistakable classics that helped to make Davis an icon – from hits like "The Candy Man," "Mr. Bojangles" and "What Kind of Fool Am I" to new songs written specifically for the musical. *Sammy* will be performed again on Sunday, Sept. 20 at 7 p.m. The musical runs till Nov. 8. The Old Globe Theatre is located at 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park. For more information or to purchase tickets, call (619) 231-6752 or visit www.theoldglobe.org.



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» ENTERTAINMENT NEWS

Obba Babatunde to Play Sammy Davis Jr. On Stage

Date: Thursday, July 30, 2009, 4:07 am

By: EURweb.com

Tony Award nominee Obba Babatundé has been tapped to star as Sammy Davis, Jr. in the world premiere of the new musical, "Sammy," at San Diego's Old Globe Theatre, reports Broadway.com.

The show, directed by Keith Glover, will begin previews on Sept. 19 and run through Nov. 8. Opening night is Oct. 2.

"Sammy" moves from Sammy Davis, Jr.'s days as a child working in vaudeville through his years with Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin as a member of the Rat Pack. Featuring classic tunes such as "The Candy Man," "Mr. Bojangles" and "What Kind of Fool Am I?" as well as new songs written especially for the musical, "Sammy" traces the highs and lows of the ultimate triple-threat singer, actor and dancer, who broke new ground while struggling with issues of identity, race and a turbulent personal life.

Babatundé was nominated for a Tony Award for his performance as C.C. White in the original Broadway cast of "Dreamgirls." His additional Broadway credits include the revival of "Chicago," "Grind" and "Timbuktu!" He also created the role of Jelly Roll Morton in "Jelly's Last Jam."



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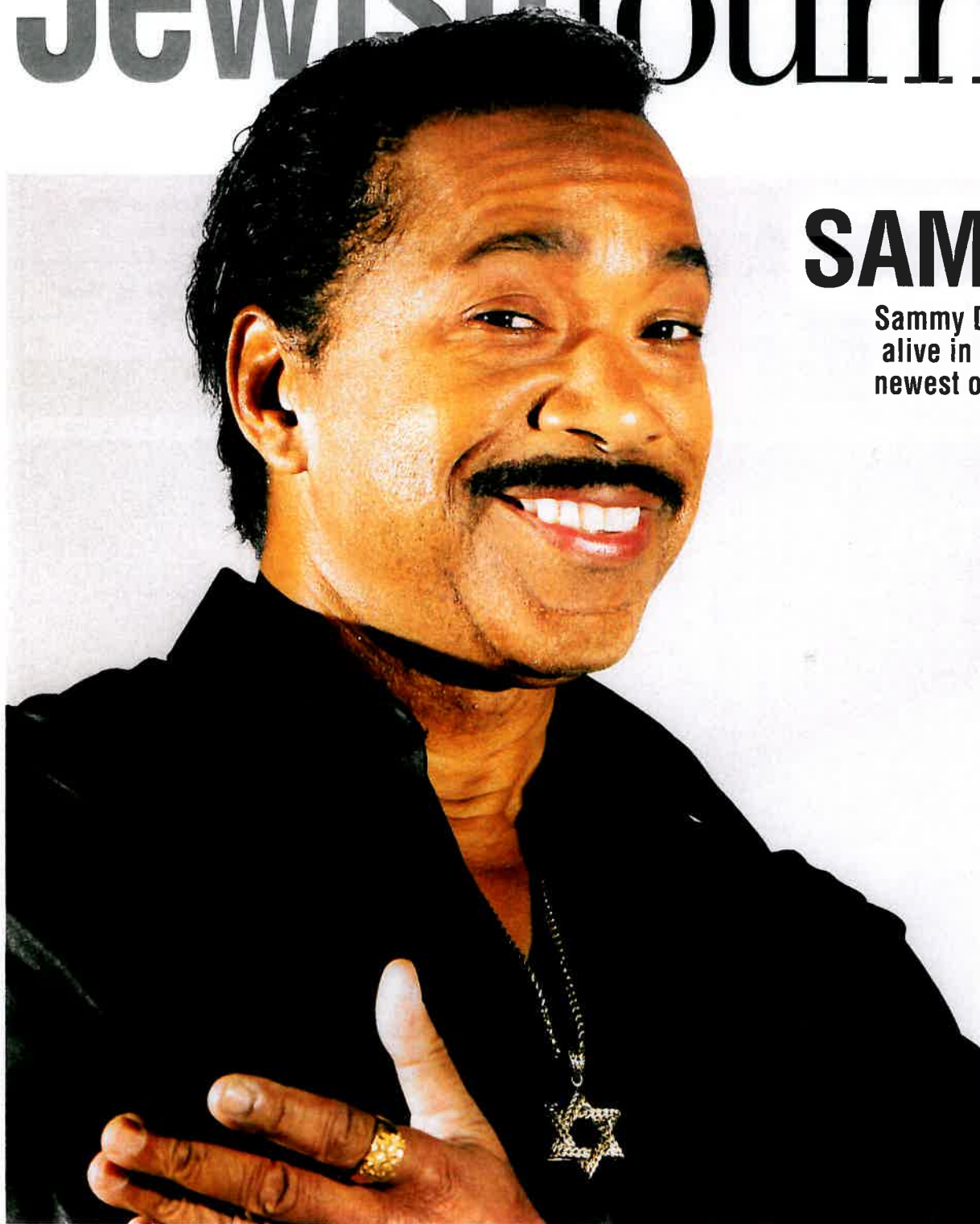
Tony Award nominee Obba Babatundé has been tapped to star as Sammy Davis, Jr. (Sara De Boer/Retna Ltd.)



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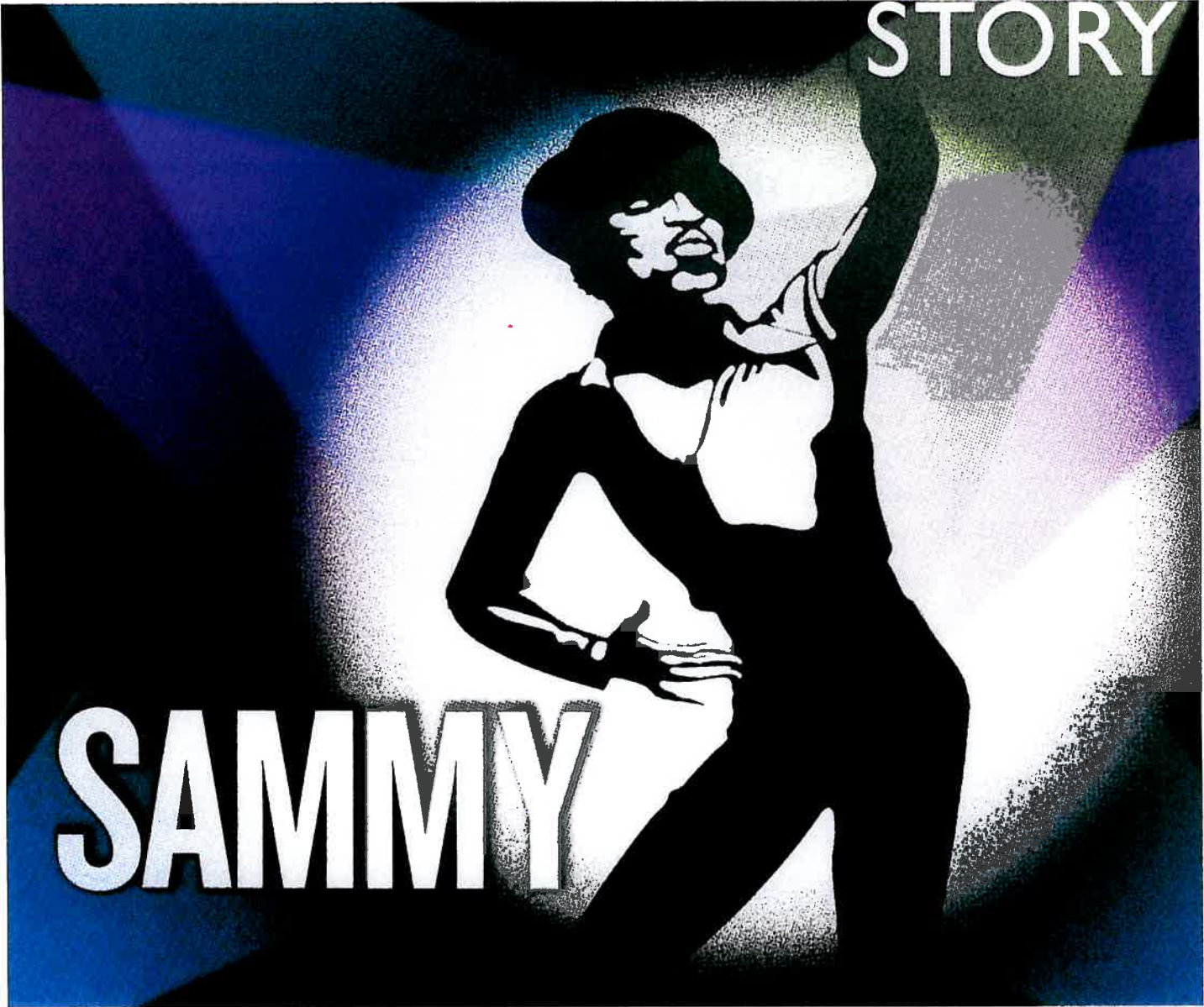


SAMMY!

Sammy Davis Jr. comes
alive in the Old Globe's
newest original musical

STORY BY PAT LAUNER

COVER
STORY



WHAT MADE SAMMY RUN?

A new musical about Sammy Davis Jr. premieres at the Old Globe

He may have been the first American Idol. One of the greatest entertainers of all time — a mega-talented singer, dancer, actor, comedian, impressionist and multi-instrument musician. He was also a master chef, a skilled photographer and a fast-draw shooting competitor. He broke down racial barriers. And he was the highest-profile black Jew in the U.S.

Sammy Davis Jr. died at 64 in 1990, but his legend lives on. Just this past June, a menorah of

his went up for auction. And this month, a world premiere musical about him opens at the Old Globe.

“He was larger than life,” says Old Globe executive producer Lou Spisto. “Whatever he did, he did it to excess. He had to have the biggest, the most, be the best. There’s a song in the show called ‘Livin’ Large.’ He was only 5 feet 2 inches, but he was a powerhouse. And he had a powerful effect on the ladies.”

The new show, “Sammy,” which features a cast of 17, is a collaboration by folks who really knew their subject.

The composer/lyricist is Leslie Bricusse, a Cambridge graduate and two-time Oscar and Grammy winner who was Sammy’s close personal friend. Bricusse, who’s written more than 40 musicals and film scores, created some of Davis Jr.’s most memorable songs, including “What Kind of Fool Am I?” and “The Candy Man.”

The director, Pulitzer-nominated Keith Glover, who wrote and directed the mythical blues musical, “Thunder Knockin’ at the Door” (produced at the Globe in 1999), has a strong understanding of the iconic performer. And Obba Babatundé, the veteran stage and screen actor who plays the title role, was Sammy’s protégé.

“If there’s a perfect team for the project,” Spisto says, “this is it. These guys really understand the man and his work.”

“‘Sammy’ is not a commercial production like “Dirty Rotten Scoundrels” or “The First Wives Club,” Spisto explains. Those projects were brought to the Globe with a creative lineup intact.

“We put this team in place,” Spisto says. “I don’t know if it’s Broadway-bound. We’ll see how it’s received. It certainly has the potential. But the arrangement is different this time. Leslie Bricusse is the Globe’s partner. And we couldn’t be happier.”

Bricusse, who lives half the year in Beverly Hills and splits the other half between London and Nice, France, seems pretty happy, too. This project has been a long time coming.

It all started 15 years ago.

“After we lost Sammy, I put together a fairly lavish songbook,” Bricusse says in his affable manner and impeccable English accent. “Over the years he’d recorded more than 60 of my songs.

“I had had talks with [conductor/producer/arranger/composer] Quincy Jones about putting together a show using a few existing songs and telling the story of Sammy’s extraordinarily complex life. But as it turned out, I wound up creating the show on my own.”

The four-time Tony Award nominee, who created musicals such as “Jekyll and Hyde” and “Victor/Victoria,” has written the book

Obba Babatundé stars as Sammy Davis Jr. in the world premiere of “Sammy,” a new musical by Oscar- and Grammy-winning composer Leslie Bricusse.



PHOTO BY CRAIG SCHWARTZ

and lyrics and composed the score for the new production.

THE COMPOSER AND THE ENTERTAINER

Bricusse clearly remembers the first time he heard Sammy Davis Jr. on the radio.

“It was the mid 50s,” he recalls. “I loved that voice. About five years later, Edie [Bricusse’s wife of 50 years] and I went to see him perform. Tony [Newley] and I had opened ‘Stop the World, I Want to Get Off’ about a year earlier, and Sammy was playing down the street in the West End [London]. He fell in love with the show and was the first to record songs from it.”

Those songs, including “What Kind of Fool Am I?” and “Who Can I Turn To?” (co-written with the late, great actor/singer/composer Anthony Newley) became Davis Jr.’s trademark

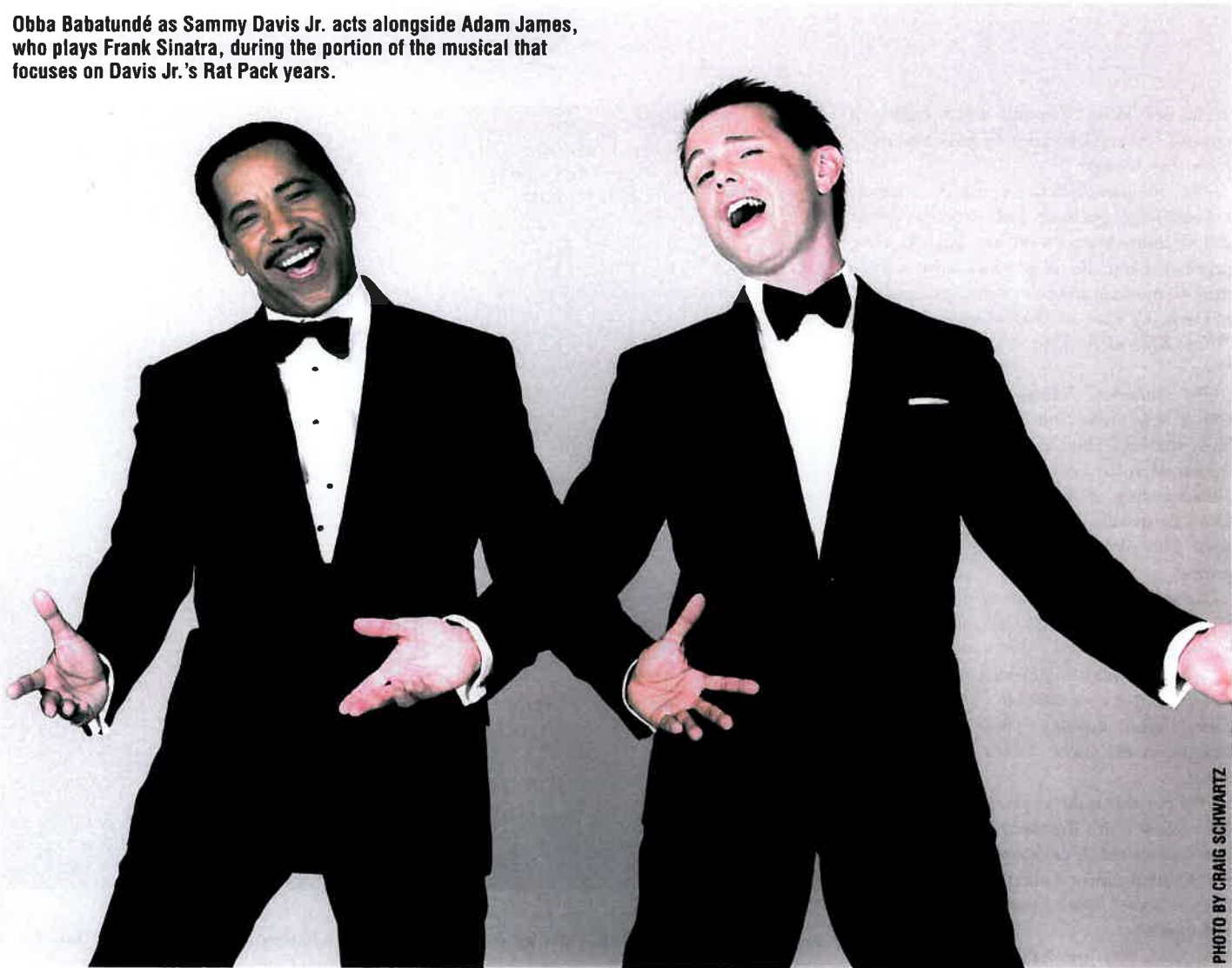
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When Bricusse met Davis Jr., the entertainer had just shocked the world by marrying the Swedish-born actress May Britt. This was his second wife (Loray White was his first) and his second dalliance with a white woman. In the mid-50s, he’d been involved with actress Kim Novak, but Harry Cohn, the head of Columbia Studios, where Novak was under contract, was hell bent on ending that liaison. He called in the mob and threatened Davis Jr.

SDJJ | coverstory

Obba Babatundé as Sammy Davis Jr. acts alongside Adam James, who plays Frank Sinatra, during the portion of the musical that focuses on Davis Jr.'s Rat Pack years.



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continued on page 42...

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...continued from page 40

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Burt Boyar, a friend and co-writer of Davis Jr.’s autobiography called, ironically enough, “Yes I Can,” (Davis Jr.’s motto), asserted that Davis



Davis Jr. with Evie and Leslie Bricusse at Evie's 1989 birthday party in Beverly Hills.

Jr. took his Judaism seriously. He regularly lit Chanukah candles, and he wouldn't take phone calls or do business on Yom Kippur. Reportedly, his only regret was that he couldn't go to Temple more often, because the star created such a stir — even in Hollywood — that it disrupted the services.

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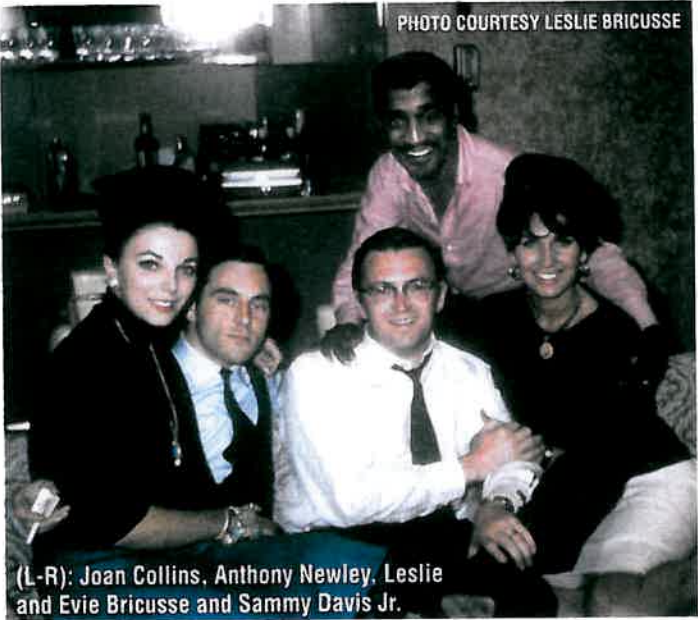
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“From that point, we became very close. It was an amazing relationship. A real special relationship. He came to see ‘Dreamgirls’ on Broadway. He said he enjoyed the relationship we had, the way I presented myself, the sense of professionalism and my commitment to entertainment. I knew him to the end.

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• “Sammy” runs at the Old Globe Theatre Sept. 19-Nov. 8. (619) 234-5623 www.theoldglobe.org.

"Sammy." (Photo by Craig Schwartz)

He may have been the first American Idol. One of the greatest entertainers of all time — a mega-talented singer, dancer, actor, comedian, impressionist and multi-instrument musician. He was also a master chef, a skilled photographer and a fast-draw shooting competitor. He broke down racial barriers. And he was the highest-profile African American Jew in the U.S.

Sammy Davis, Jr. died at 64 in 1990, but his legend lives on. Just this past June, a menorah of his went up for auction. And this month, a world premiere musical about him opens at the Old Globe.

“He was larger than life,” says Old Globe executive producer Lou Spisto. “Whatever he did, he did it to excess. He had to have the biggest, the most, be the best. There’s a song in the show called ‘Livin’ Large.’ He was only 5’2”, but he was a powerhouse. And he had a powerful effect on the ladies.”

The new show, “Sammy,” which features a cast of 17, is a collaboration by folks who really knew their subject.

The composer/lyricist is Leslie Bricusse, a Cambridge graduate and two-time Oscar and Grammy winner who was Sammy’s close personal friend. Bricusse, who’s written more than forty musicals and film scores, created some of Sammy’s most memorable songs, including “What Kind of Fool Am I?” and “The Candy Man.”



The director, Pulitzer-nominated Keith Glover, who wrote and directed the mythical, blues musical, “Thunder Knockin’ at the Door” (produced at the Globe in 1999), has a strong understanding for the iconic performer. And Obba Babatundé, the veteran stage/screen actor who plays the title role, was Sammy’s protégé.

“If there’s a perfect team for the project,” says Spisto, “this is it. These guys really understand the man and his work.”

“‘Sammy’ is not a commercial production like “Dirty Rotten Scoundrels” or “The First Wives Club,” Spisto explains. Those projects were brought to the Globe with a creative lineup intact.

“We put this team in place,” says Spisto. “I don’t know if it’s Broadway-bound. We’ll see how it’s received. It certainly has the potential. But the arrangement is different this time. Leslie Bricusse is the Globe’s partner. And we couldn’t be happier.”

Bricusse, who lives half the year in Beverly Hills and splits the other half between London and Nice, France, seems pretty happy, too. This project has been a long time coming.

It all started fifteen years ago.

“After we lost Sammy, I put together a fairly lavish songbook,” Bricusse reports, in his affable manner and impeccable English accent. “Over the year’s he’d recorded more than 60 of my songs.

“I had had talks with (conductor/producer/arranger/composer) Quincy Jones about putting together a show, using a few existing songs, and telling the story of Sammy’s extraordinarily complex life. But as it turned out, I wound up creating the show on my own.”

The four-time Tony Award nominee, who created musicals such as “Jekyll and Hyde” and “Victor/Victoria,” has written the book and lyrics, and composed the score for the new production.

The Composer and the Entertainer

Bricusse clearly remembers the first time he heard Sammy Davis Jr. on the radio.

“It was the mid 50s,” he recalls. “I loved that voice. About five years later, Edie (Bricusse’s wife of 50 years) and I went to see him perform. Tony (Newley) and I had opened ‘Stop the World, I Want to Get Off’ about a year earlier, and Sammy was playing down the street in the West End (London). He fell in love with the show, and was the first to record

songs from it.”



A gathering of talent: (from left) Anthony Newley, Henry Mancini, Sammy Davis, Jr., and Leslie Bricusse. (Photo courtesy of Leslie Bricusse)

Those songs, including “What Kind of Fool Am I?” and “Who Can I Turn To?,” co-written with the late, great actor/singer/composer Anthony Newley, became Sammy’s trademark numbers, and they appear in the new musical. In 1978, Sammy starred in that Bricusse-Newley show, right here in San Diego, at what was then the Fox Theatre, now Copley Symphony Hall.

“We became instant pals,” says Bricusse. “We spent a lot of time together. Even lived next door to each other for quite a while. Everything I wrote, he wanted to hear. He made the best album of ‘Dr. Dolittle’ that exists.”

When Bricusse met Sammy, the entertainer had just shocked the world by marrying the Swedish-born actress May Britt. This was his second wife (Loray White was his first) and his second dalliance with a white woman. In the mid-50s, he’d been involved with actress Kim Novak, but Harry Cohn, the head of Columbia Studios, where Novak was under contract, was hellbent on ending that liaison. He called in the mob and threatened Sammy.

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The Accident ... and the Jewish Connection

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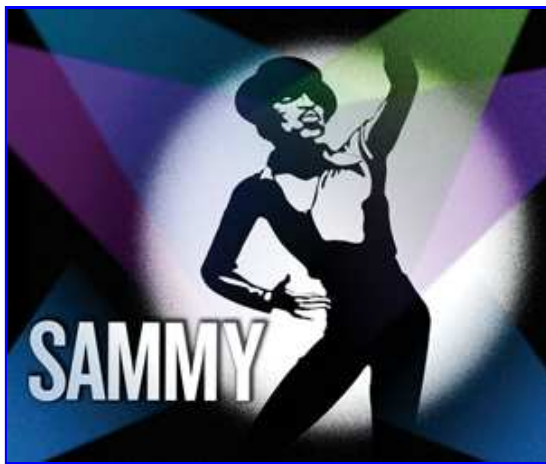
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SDNN theater critic Pat Launer wrote this story for [San Diego Jewish Journal](#), where it originally appeared.

Tags: [Anthony Newley](#), [Henry Mancini](#), [Leslie Bricusse](#), [Lou Spisto](#), [musical Sammy](#), [Obba Babatunde](#), [Old Globe world premiere](#), [Sammy](#), [Sammy David Jr.](#), [Judaism](#), [Sammy Davis Jr.](#), [Sammy Old Globe](#), [SDNN](#), [world premiere Sammy](#)

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Comment by: [Carolyn Passenau](#) Posted: September 11, 2009, 9:14 am

Your story brings back many fond memories, Pat. You said a lot about the man and his times. Heart-felt and soul-fully written. Thanks~carolyn

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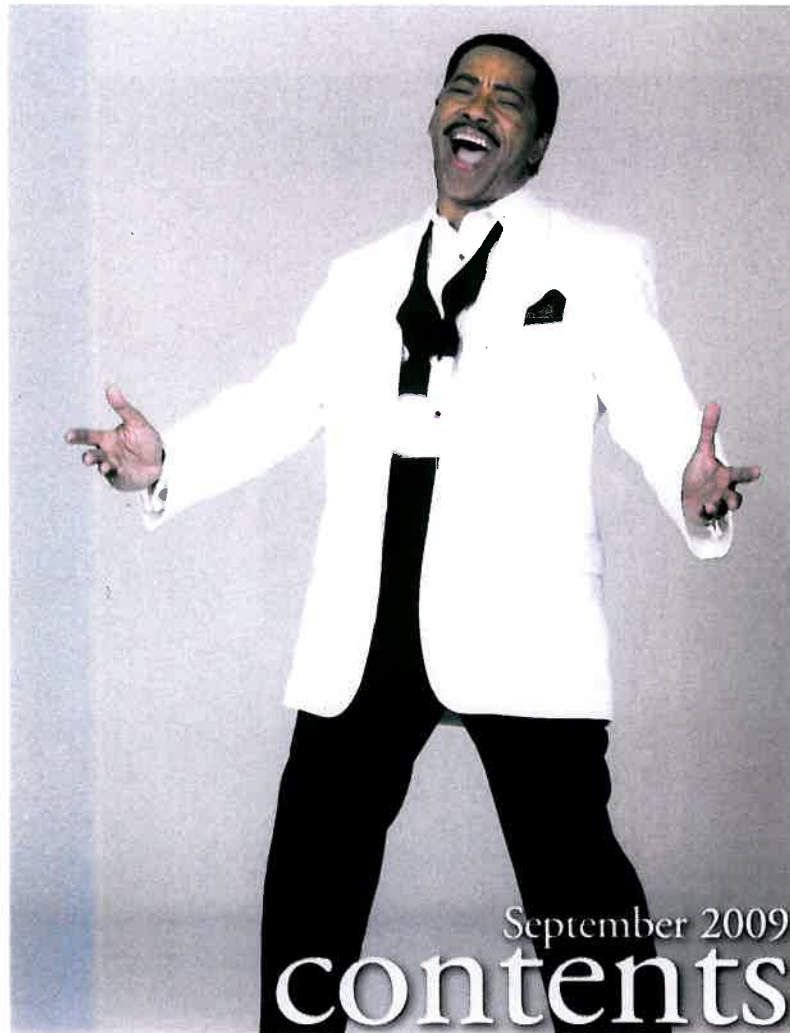
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SAN DIEGO JEWISH JOURNAL

September 2009



Features

38 COVER STORY: What Made Sammy Run?

A new musical about Sammy Davis Jr. premieres at the Old Globe

• by Pat Launer

DEL MAR TIMES

Tickets on sale Aug. 23 for world premiere of Sammy

Monday, August 17, 2009

Single tickets for The Old Globe's world premiere of Sammy go on sale at 10 a.m. Sunday, Aug. 23.

The new musical is based on the life of Sammy Davis, Jr. with book, music and lyrics by Leslie Bricusse, and additional songs by Bricusse and Anthony Newley.

Directed by Keith Glover with choreography by Keith Young and music supervision by Ian Fraser, Sammy will run in the Old Globe Theatre from Sept. 19 to Nov. 8. Previews run from Sept. 19 to Oct. 1.

Opening night is at 8 p.m. Oct. 2. Tickets to Sammy may be purchased online at www.TheOldGlobe.org, by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the Box Office.

Sammy moves from Sammy Davis, Jr.'s beginnings in vaudeville through the Rat Pack years with Frank Sinatra to ultimate recognition of his lifetime contribution to American culture.

Featuring the classic tunes that helped to make Davis an icon - "The Candy Man," "Mr. Bojangles" and "What Kind of Fool Am I" - Sammy traces the highs and lows of the ultimate triple-threat singer, actor and dancer.

Broadway veteran Obba Babatundé headlines as Sammy Davis, Jr. The cast also features Heather Ayers (May Britt/Ensemble), Ann Duquesnay (Rosa Davis), Mary Ann Hermansen (Kim Novak/Ensemble), Adam James (Frank Sinatra), Troy Britton Johnson (Dean Martin/Cohn/Jennings/Ensemble), Ted Louis Levy (Sammy Davis, Sr.), Keewa Nurullah (Lola Folana/Ensemble), Victoria Platt (Altovise Gore/Ensemble), Lance Roberts (Will Mastin), Alonzo Saunders (Murphy/Ensemble/understudy Sammy), Sarrah Strimel (Luella/Hedda/Ensemble) with Jenelle Engleson, Stephanie Girard, Lauren Haughton, Perry Ojeda and Anise Ritchie (Ensemble).

The Sammy creative team also includes Alexander Dodge (Scenic Design), Fabio Toblini (Costume Design), Chris Lee (Lighting Design), John H. Shivers (Sound Design), David Patridge (Sound Design), Ned Ginsburg (Orchestrator), Rahn Coleman (Music Director/Conductor), Dominique Kelley (Assistant Choreographer), Tara Rubin Casting (Casting) and David Sugarman (Stage Manager).

Ticket prices range from \$54 to \$89.

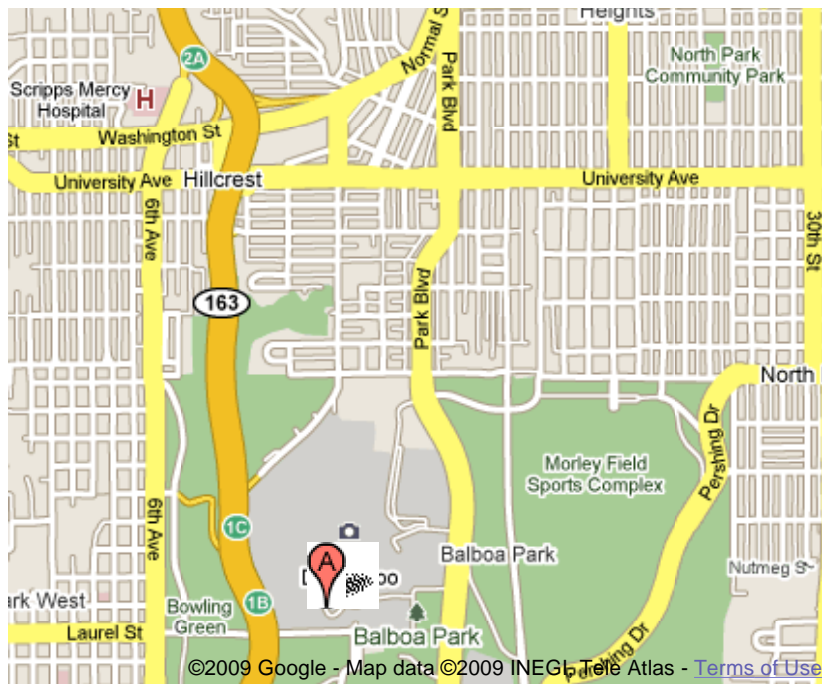
LOCATION

The Old Globe is located in San Diego's Balboa Park at 1363 Old Globe Way. There are numerous free parking lots available throughout the park. Valet parking is also available (\$10). For additional parking information visit www.BalboaPark.org.



Obba Babatundé as Sammy Davis, Jr. and Adam James as Frank Sinatra in the world premiere of Sammy, a new musical by Oscar and Grammy-winning composer Leslie Bricusse, at The Old Globe from Sept. 19 to Nov. 8, 2009.

Photo by Craig Schwartz



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LA JOLLA LIGHT

Enlightening La Jolla Since 1913

New musical at Old Globe re-creates journey of Sammy Davis Jr.'s life

Wednesday, September 16, 2009

By Diana Saenger

Sammy Davis Jr. was a childhood vaudevillian, recording artist, television and film star, Broadway and Las Vegas legend and member of the Rat Pack along with Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Peter Lawford and Joey Bishop. Davis' iconic presence during four decades marked him as an unforgettable entertainer. Memories and celebratory moments of Davis and his life unfold in The Old Globe's world premiere "Sammy," running Sept. 19 through Nov. 8.

The show spotlights the star's life from his vaudeville days to his fame with the Rat Pack and beyond. Tony-nominated Obba Babatundé stars as Davis in the musical. He met Davis when working with Liza Minnelli on a world tour that followed Davis' world tour. The two became lifelong friends.

"The first time I met him, I told him I wanted to thank him for coming in through the kitchen so I could come in through the front door," Babatundé said. "His eyes welled up, tears rolled down his face and he grabbed me and said thank you. No one can play Sammy. There is only one Sammy, but I'm so happy to have the opportunity to portray a lifelong legendary figure that I've patterned my career after."

Two-time Academy Award and Grammy Award winner Leslie Bricusse wrote the music and lyrics for "Sammy." Included will be Davis favorites - "What Kind of Fool Am I," "Candy Man," "Once in A Lifetime" - that Bricusse wrote, as well as new songs by him and Anthony Newley. Babatundé, who dances and sings 20 songs in the show, knows Bricusse has waited 30 years to pay tribute to Davis.

"All the music tells the story of Sammy's life and of Davis' iconic colleagues," Babatundé said. "Mary Ann Hermansen as Kim Novak tells part of Sammy's journey, and when she dances like the wind and sings like an angel, she's stunning. Adam James plays Frank Sinatra, and when you close your eyes and listen to him, you'll believe it's Frank on the stage. Dean Martin is portrayed by Troy Britton Johnson, and the cast fell on the floor laughing during rehearsals when he did his slurred rendition of Dean. Victoria Platt, who plays Altovise Gore, is also a wonderful singer, dancer and actor. We are fortunate to have cast who share their talent and generosity."

The cast also includes Heather Ayers (May Britt/Ensemble), Ann Duquesnay (Rosa Davis), Ted Louis Levy (Sammy Davis Sr.), Keewa Nurullah (Lola Folana/Ensemble) and Lance Roberts (Will Mastin). Direction is by Keith Glover and choreography by Keith Young. Globe Executive Director Louis G. Spisto said the aim of the show is to both honor Davis for those who knew and loved him, and to also introduce this one-of-a-kind performer to a new audience.

"We've worked hard to put together the best piece we can to honor this man," Babatundé said. "I'm hoping we will scratch the surface of the brilliance of Sammy's career and to inspire those who are unaware of not only the magnitude of his talent and accomplishments, but the era in which he was able to excel. He was headlining when Jim Crow laws were still in place. While he, his uncle and his dad were playing in big hotels, they could not eat in the same restaurant, come in through the front door of that hotel and in some cases even use the same restroom. His willingness to go into battle for the right to be who he was defines a great courage."

Hard work aside, Babatundé knows the audience will enjoy this show full of music and memories of admired stars. Babatundé has starred in "Dreamgirls," the revival of "Chicago," and created the role of Jelly Roll Morton in "Jelly's Last Jam." About his portrayal as Davis, he said: "For me, it's a joyful but very emotional journey. Knowing Sammy, I think he would say, 'Good luck in playing me, man; it was tough for me to play me.'"

'Sammy'

Sept. 19 through Nov. 8.

Old Globe Theatre

(619) 234-5623

www.oldglobe.org



Obba Babatundé and Adam James have some fun portraying Sammy Davis Jr. and Frank Sinatra in 'Sammy.'
Photo by: Craig Schwartz



VIDEO COURTESY OF:



Diana Saenger

Diana Saenger is a freelance writer for the La Jolla Light. To make comments about articles, contact talkback@lajollalight.com.

THEATER | SAN DIEGO

Old Globe to premiere Sammy Davis Jr. musical

By JIM TRAGESER
jtrageser@californian.com

Speaking with Obba Babatundé about his upcoming role starring as his late friend and mentor Sammy Davis Jr. in The Old Globe's world premiere production of "Sammy" brought the Broadway and television veteran quickly to the first time he met the legendary performer in Las Vegas in 1978.

"I was co-starring in a world tour with Liza Minnelli at the same time Sammy was doing his world tour," he recalled during a phone conversation last month from his temporary digs in San Diego.

"It was our last performance at Harrah's, at which he was to open the next night. Liza came into my dressing room before the show started and said, 'Obba — Sammy's here and he wants to meet you.' She knew I was a *huge* fan, and I said to her, 'Oh, wow, you know I want to meet him, but I'd rather him meet me

and me meet him after he sees me work.' My thinking in that was it's a little bit different when a professional sees another professional work — then you are sort of talking as performers to one another, rather than fan to a performer.

"But in this case, she said, 'His gums are giving him trouble and he's not going to stay for the show — he just wanted to come by to say hi.' So I threw my robe on and I went into her dressing room — and there he was. His back was to me, and ... I stood there in awe, about to meet a legendary figure whom I had really patterned the style of my career after.

"He turned around, and I said, 'Good evening, Mr. Davis.' And he said, 'Sam ... call me Sam.' Well, I couldn't call him 'Sam' — he was too iconic for me! I said, 'It's very nice to meet you, Mr. D.' He said, 'Liza tells me you're marvelous — unfortunately, I'm not going to be able to see you

"SAMMY"

WHEN Previews run Saturday through Oct. 1; opens Oct. 2 and runs through Nov. 8; showtimes, 8 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays; 7 p.m. Sundays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays; 2 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays

WHERE Old Globe Theatre, Balboa Park, San Diego

TICKETS \$54-\$89

INFO 619-234-5623
www.theoldglobe.org

tonight.' I said I understood and I shook his hand and said 'It's an honor to meet you.'"

"After the show, I heard his voice in the hallway (saying) 'Great show, Liza — where's Obba's dressing room?' And I had a knock on my door, and when I opened the door, there he stood, and his words to me were, in his inimitable style, 'You, my man, were a bitch on wheels. You are a bitch on wheels. May I come in?' I said, 'Yes of course.' He came in and for the next, what seemed like eternity, he said some of the nicest things and words of

praise about my performance."

Thirty-one years later, Babatundé still gets a kick out of remembering that first encounter of what became a close friendship that lasted until Davis' death in 1990. Babatundé tours the country in a Sammy Davis Jr. solo tribute show, but he has a long list of Broadway and theater credits, including a Tony-nominated performance in "Dreamgirls," a revival of "Chicago," "Grind" and "Timbuktu!" He also created the role of Jelly Roll Morton for the musical "Jelly's Last Jam." His television credits include an Emmy-nominated performance in "Miss Ever's Boys," an NAACP Image Award-nominated role as Harold Nicholas in "Introducing Dorothy Dandridge," and parts in more than 60 made-for-TV movies.

Babatundé said — with no bragging or ego involved — he feels he was meant to play Davis on stage, even though it took awhile for it to happen.

"Seven years ago, I got a call from Quincy Jones, and he said, 'Hey man, I want to talk to you about an idea.' I was really jazzed about it, and then he went off to Europe. Time passed, and nothing came about."

Babatundé said he had heard a few years ago that English composer Leslie Bricusse — who had written "The Candy Man" and "What Kind of Fool Am I?" — two of Davis' biggest hits — was working on a stage musical about Davis' life. But until recently, he heard nothing more than rumors.

Then, "I finally got the call. I went in and met with (director) Keith Glover, (choreographer) Keith Young and (music supervisor) Ian Fraser. Next, I got a call that they wanted to fly me to New York to meet with Leslie and Lou Spisto, from the Globe. I left the room and went to the restroom, and when I came back, they said, 'We want you to do this.' And here we are now."



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LEISURE

NEW MUSICAL—SAMMY: ONCE IN A LIFETIME

San Diego's The Old Globe Theatre hosts the world premiere of a new musical about the incomparable Sammy Davis Jr.

By Darcy Alvey



Obba Babatundé as "Sammy"

Composer Leslie Bricusse, who wrote the book, music and lyrics, including new songs with Anthony Newley, was a close friend and inspiration to the legendary singer and dancer. He first met Davis in London early in his career when Sammy attended a performance of "Stop the World—I Want to Get Off," also by Bricusse, and fell in love with the score, including "What Kind of Fool Am I?," which became one of his signature songs.

"Sammy lived his entire life as though it would one day end up as a musical," says Bricusse, who saw Davis perform all over the world. "Lots of songs. Lots of drama. He is one of a great breed of African-American heroes in this country, people who survived prejudice and went from being second class citizens to first class heroes. He also made a lot of mistakes in his life and we deal with that in the show."

The production covers much of the life of Davis from his

San Diego's The Old Globe Theatre is giving birth to a new musical—"Sammy: Once in a Lifetime," premiering September 19 and running through November 8. Based on entertainer Sammy Davis Jr., "Sammy" chronicles the life and times of the extraordinary performer who commanded a stage as well as anyone before or since.



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beginning in vaudeville with his dad and uncle, to his days in the army, legendary performances at Ciro's and on the Broadway stage in "Golden Boy." Through it all he fought racism—in his personal life after marrying Swedish-born May Britt, and as a performer, not being allowed to spend the night in many of the hotels in which he performed.

"The show is a search for truth, a voyage of self-discovery," says director Keith Glover. "And it's a musical. We do musicals because they transform us."

TAKING THE LEAD

The key to mounting the project was finding the perfect Sammy, according to Glover. The answer came in the form of Obba Babatundé, veteran of stage and screen, who knew Davis well though their years performing on the road. Babatundé offers the essence of the quintessential entertainer without ever crossing the line into cliché. His voice is strong and deep, reminiscent, yet masterfully his own. His rehearsal rendition of "What Kind of Fool Am I?" gave me shivers.

In the preview we heard a smattering of songs, were privy to a taste of this and a touch of that. The bits and pieces, which also showcased a fabulous supporting cast—many of them Broadway veterans—left me wanting more, wanting the whole meal. I forecast a big future for "Sammy: Once in a Lifetime." It's too rich in story and music not to succeed on the world stage. Kudos to The Old Globe for bringing this uniquely American story to life. It's gonna do great things.



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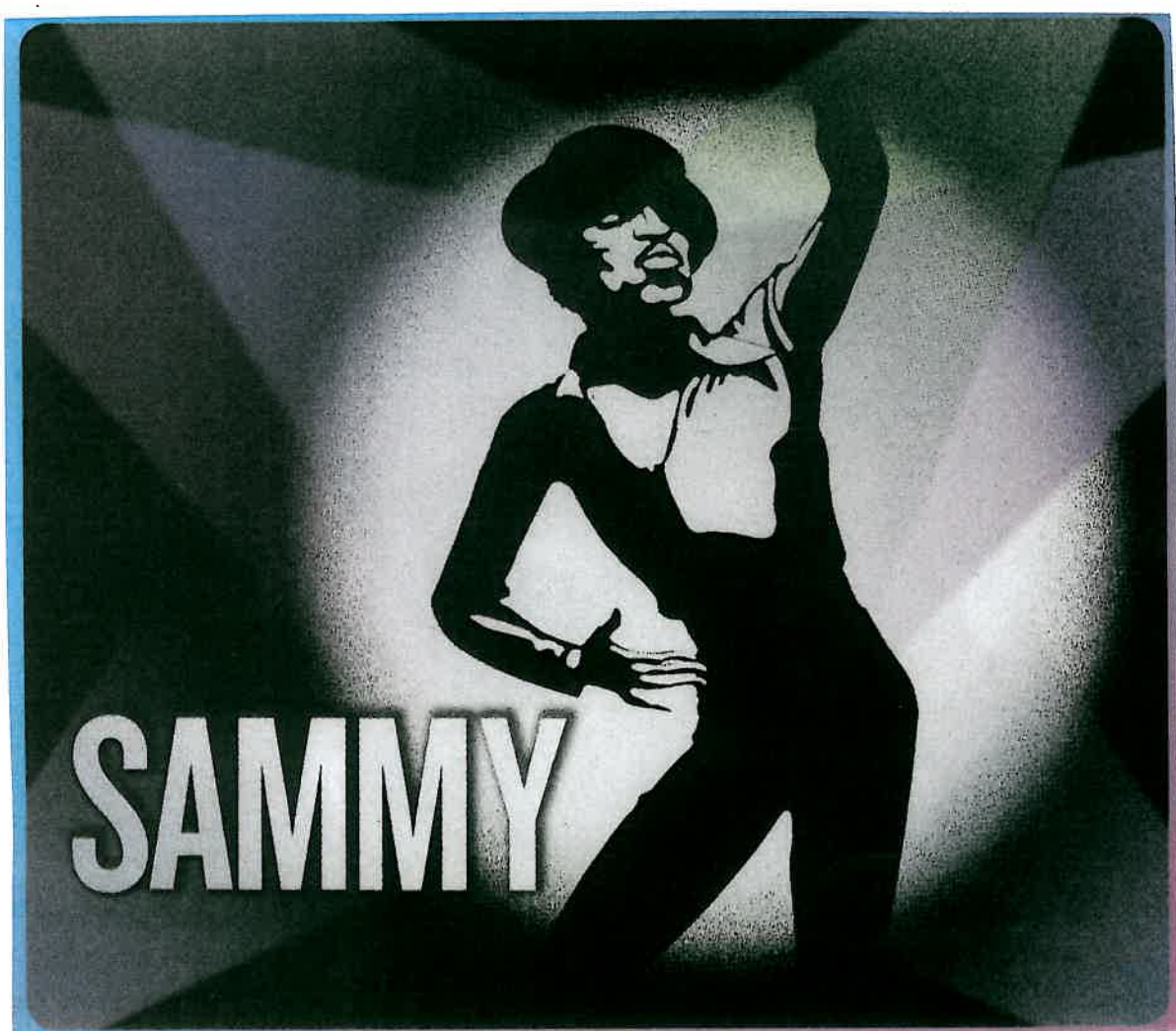
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VOICE & VIEWPOINT

September 17, 2009



One of the greatest entertainers of all time, Sammy Davis Jr. defined an era. The ultimate triple-threat – singer, actor and dancer, Sammy could do it all. With a cast of sixteen of Broadway's best singers and dancers, this world premiere musical, written by two-time Academy Award® and Grammy Award®-winner Leslie Bricusse, takes us from Sammy's days as a child working in vaudeville through his time with Dean and Frank as a member of the Rat Pack. Featuring the unmistakable classics that helped to make Sammy an icon — from hits like "The Candy Man," "Mr. Bojangles" and "What Kind of Fool Am I" to new songs written just for this musical — Sammy shows us the struggles and triumphs of the man who was adored by millions.

Sammy moves from Sammy Davis, Jr.'s beginnings in vaudeville through the Rat Pack years with Frank Sinatra to ultimate recognition of his lifetime contribution to American culture. Featuring the classic tunes that helped to make Davis an icon — "The Candy Man," "Mr. Bojangles" and "What Kind of Fool Am I" — Sammy traces the highs and lows of the ultimate triple-threat singer, actor and dancer. Davis was one of the greatest performers of his generation, paving new ground while struggling with issues of identity, race and a turbulent personal life.



Obba Babatundé as Sammy Davis, Jr. and Adam James as Frank Sinatra in the world premiere of *Sammy*, a new musical by Oscar and Grammy-winning composer Leslie Bricusse, at The Old Globe Sept. 19 – Nov. 8, 2009. Photo by Craig Schwartz.



Obba Babatundé stars as Sammy Davis, Jr. in the world premiere of *Sammy*, a new musical by Oscar and Grammy-winning composer Leslie Bricusse, at The Old Globe Sept. 19 – Nov. 8, 2009. Photo by Craig Schwartz.



Obba Babatundé as Sammy Davis, Jr. and Adam James as Frank Sinatra in the world premiere of *Sammy*, a new musical by Oscar and Grammy-winning composer Leslie Bricusse, at The Old Globe Sept. 19 – Nov. 8, 2009. Photo by Craig Schwartz.

SOME OF THE CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM



Obba Babatundé (Sammy)
Like his mentor Sammy Davis, Jr., Mr. Babatundé has been entertaining audiences since he was a child. A skilled actor, singer and dancer, Davis once said of Babatundé that "I feel safe knowing that with cats like Obba, when I get out of this business I am leaving it in good hands." Babatundé

was nominated for a Tony Award for his performance as C.C. White in the original Broadway cast of *Dreamgirls*. His additional Broadway credits include the revival of *Chicago*, *Grind*, and *Timbuktu*. He also created the role of Jelly Roll Morton in *Jelly's Last Jam*. On television, Babatundé delivered an Emmy and CableACE nominated performance in *Miss Evers' Boys*, received a NAACP Image Award nomination for his performance as Harold Nicholas in *Introducing Dorothy Dandridge*, and has appeared in 60 made-for-television movies and countless TV series. Some of his theatrical films include *Philadelphia*, *That Thing You Do*, *After the Sunset*, *The Manchurian Candidate*, *The Notebook* and the upcoming feature *Moneyball* opposite Brad Pitt.



Keewa Nurullah (Lola Folana/Ensemble)
NATIONAL TOUR: *On the Record* (Disney Theatricals). REGIONAL: *Monty Python's Spamalot*, *Las Vegas*, *Peter Pan*, *The MUNY*



Adam James (Frank Sinatra)
OFF BROADWAY: *Our Sinatra*. REGIONAL: *The Rat Pack — Live from Las Vegas*, *Forever Swing*, *Eddie!*, *Sinatra... Remembered*.



Mary Ann Hermansen (Kim Novak/Ensemble)
BROADWAY: *Carrie*, *Chicago*. TOURS: *Chicago*, *Thoroughly Modern Millie* and *Smokey Joe's Café*. FILM: *Blast from the Past*, *That Thing You Do*, *Forrest Gump* and *Forget Paris*. TV: "It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia," "CSI: NY," "Step It Up and Dance," "Strong Medicine," "General Hospital" and "Nip/Tuck." EDUCATION: UC Irvine and St. Mary's University.



Victoria Platt (Altovise Gore/Ensemble)
BROADWAY: Original Broadway production of *Jelly's Last Jam* directed by George C. Wolfe. Regional: *Pippin*, *Mark Taper Forum*; Atlanta, *Geffen Playhouse*; *Asphalt*, *REDCAT*; *Smoke, Lilies and Jade*, *The Public Theater*; *All Night Strut*, *Fullerton Civic Light Opera*; *Last Days of Judas Iscariot*, *Black Dahlia Theatre*.



Troy Britton Johnson (Dean Martin/Cohn/Jennings/Ensemble)
BROADWAY: Troy created the role of the tap dancing, blind-folded roller skating groom Robert Martin in *The Drowsy Chaperone*.



Ted Louis Levy (Sammy Davis, Sr.)
Emmy Award winner Ted Louis Levy's professional training began in Chicago with Finis Henderson II, Master Tap Dancer and former manager of Sammy Davis, Jr. Levy collaborated with George C. Wolfe and Gregory Hines on the choreography of *Jelly's Last Jam*, for which he received Tony Award and Drama Desk nominations, and the Outer Critics Circle Award.



Lance Roberts (Will Mastin)
Originally from New York, Lance now makes his home in L.A. where he has appeared in almost 100 professional shows including the original L.A. casts of: *Cats*, *I Love You You're Perfect Now Change*, *Forbidden Hollywood*, *The All Night Strut*, *Once on this Island* and most recently *Ain't Misbehavin'* at the Music Center's Ahmanson Theater.



Ann Duquesnay (Rosa Davis)



Heather Ayers (May Britt/Ensemble)

The Tony Award-winning Old Globe is one of the country's leading professional regional theaters and has stood as San Diego's flagship arts institution for 74 years. Under the direction of Executive Producer Louis G. Spisto, The Old Globe produces a year-round season of 15 productions of classic, contemporary and new works on its three Balboa Park stages: the 580-seat Old Globe Theatre, the 227-seat Arena Stage at the San Diego Museum of Art's James S. Copley Auditorium (an interim second stage during construction of the new 250-seat Conrad Prebys Theatre Center) and the 612-seat outdoor Lowell Davies Festival Theatre, home of its internationally renowned Shakespeare Festival. More than 250,000 people attend Globe productions annually and participate in the theater's education programs and outreach services.



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New Sammy Davis Jr. musical

October 2, 1:37 PM • [Frank Sinatra Examiner](#) • Rick Busciglio

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News from San Diego: "Sammy Davis Jr. may not be here now — he died in 1990 at age 64 — but his protegee? Babatunde (whose name is pronounced OH-ba Baba-TUHN-day) hopes the Old Globe Theatre's world-premiere musical "Sammy," in which he plays the title role, comes as close as possible to recapturing the pioneering performer's can-do spirit.

In the decades since Davis' heyday, the figure of the bantamweight singer-dancer-actor who became a showbiz giant has faded in popular memory to something approaching cliché? — a cartoon of a swingin' Rat Packer cruising Vegas in gold chains.

But Babatunde?, a 1982 Tony nominee (for "Dreamgirls") whose talents in many ways mirror his mentor's, says the show and his work in it are meant to go beyond the image and illuminate a life that blazed with fame and bravery but was roiled by racism, money troubles and Davis' personal weaknesses.

"I'm not playing a 'Hey, maaaaan,' kind of impersonation," explains Babatunde?, doing his own impersonation of some two-bit mimic's take on Davis. "If anything, I'm doing a reincarnation. I would like to be able to capture the essence of who the man was, and tell his story to the best of my ability."

The man adapting that life story for the stage — as well as contributing the show's music and lyrics — is another longtime Davis friend and collaborator, the Oscar- and Grammy-winning British composer and director Leslie Bricusse. It was Bricusse, often in partnership with the late Anthony Newley, who wrote some of Davis' biggest pop hits, from "The Candy Man" to "What Kind of Fool Am I?" (Bricusse's works include the stage musicals "Stop the World — I Want to Get Off" and "Scrooge," as well as music for the movies "Doctor Doolittle" and "Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory.")

One of the toughest tasks in putting together "Sammy," Bricusse says, has been in trying to condense and reconcile Davis' sprawling, exuberant and sometimes troubled existence. "Sammy's life was such a fireworks display in every way," Bricusse says of the performer he first met in London in the early '60s. "You need to capture many different facets of him, good and bad. And much more good than bad. But at times, as you'll see in the show, he was capable of being his own worst enemy.

"I've often said he was both the hero and the villain of his own life. His talent was the hero. His excess was the villain. And they fought against each other." The idea for "Sammy" originally came from the veteran producer-musician Quincy Jones. But it remained in limbo until February, when Globe CEO/executive producer Louis G. Spisto, meeting with Bricusse to talk about unrelated potential projects, happened to ask what else the writer-composer was up to. "I gave him 'Sammy' to read," Bricusse says. "And 24 hours later he called me back and said, 'Let's do this.'" Bricusse says the score includes six or seven existing tunes ("The Candy Man" among them) and about 15 new ones. The Globe is sole producer of the musical. (Excerpted from the San Diego Union-Tribune)

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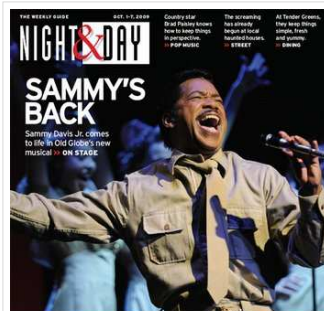
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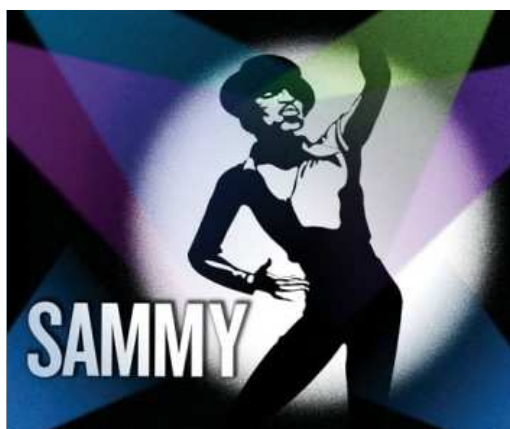


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SAMMY HITS THE BOARDS AT THE OLD GLOBE

Filed under: [BREAKING NEWS](#), [MUSIC NEWS](#), [NEWS OF THE DAY](#), [VIDEO CONTENT](#)



SAMMY, the stage musical based on the life and times of legendary performer SAMMY DAVIS JR., will see it's stage premiere this week-end at The Old Globe Theater in San Diego. Like several shows that premiered in San Diego (THE FULL MONTY, DIRTY, ROTTEN SCOUNDRELS,) SAMMY is hoping to eventually wend its way to Broadway. Ticket info and a great presentation tape follows:

SAMMY

Book, Music and Lyrics by Leslie Bricusse

Additional Songs by Leslie Bricusse and Anthony Newley
Directed by Keith Glover
Choreography and Musical Staging by Keith Young
Music Supervision and Vocal Arrangements by Ian Fraser


RUNS: Sept. 19 – Nov. 8, 2009, Old Globe Theatre

TICKETS: \$54-\$89

SYNOPSIS: Featuring the classic tunes that helped to make Sammy Davis, Jr. an icon, *Sammy* traces the struggles and triumphs of the ultimate triple-threat singer, actor and dancer.

CREATIVE TEAM: Alexander Dodge (Scenic Design), Fabio Toblini (Costume Design), Chris Lee (Lighting Design), John Shivers (Sound Design), Ned Paul Ginsburg (Orchestrator), Rahn Coleman (Music Director/Conductor/Dance Music Arranger), Tara Rubin Casting (Casting) and David Sugarman (Stage Manager).


CAST: Heather Ayers (May Britt/Ensemble), Obba Babatundé (Sammy), Ann Duquesnay (Rosa Davis), Mary Ann Hermansen (Kim Novak/Ensemble), Adam James (Frank Sinatra), Troy Britton Johnson (Sgt. Jennings/Cohn/Dean Martin), Ted Louis Levy (Sammy Davis, Sr.), Keewa Nurullah (Lola Folana/Ensemble), Victoria Platt (Altovise Gore/Ensemble), Lance Roberts (Will Mastin), Alonzo Saunders (Murphy/Ensemble) with Jenelle Engleson, Stephanie Girard, Lauren Haughton, Anise Ritchie and Sarrah Strimel (Ensemble).



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Bonsallpalooza to raise money for music education

We've heard of Lollapalooza, Geezerpalooza and Kidpalooza — now comes Bonsallpalooza, a concert on Friday that benefits Bonsall schools.

San Diego singer-songwriter Steve Poltz, Fallbrook blues band Aunt Kizzy's Boz, local vocalist Patti Zlakat and late addition Michael Damian will perform on the bill at 8 p.m. Friday in the Grand Cabaret at Pala Resort Spa & Casino in Pala. Proceeds — tickets are priced from \$45 for general seating to \$65 for preferred seating — will benefit music education in the Bonsall Union School District. The money will be used for musical instruction and new instruments.

Visit bonsallschools.org.

Single tickets are on sale for the 25th annual San Diego Street Scene, which returns to downtown San Diego Aug. 28 and 29.

Organizers had a setback last week, when just two weeks after announcing the booking of festival co-headliner the Beastie Boys, the group had to cancel. Band member Adam "MCA" Rauch announced he is battling cancer of the salivary and lymph glands, and the band has indefinitely postponed its tour and upcoming album. Nonetheless, the festival's lineup still includes more than 45 bands on five stages over two nights in San Diego's East Village.

Among the featured acts are the Black Eyed Peas, M.I.A., Busta Rhymes, Modest Mouse, Conor Oberst and the Mystic Valley Band, Of Montreal, Thievery Corporation, Cake, Chromeo, the Dead Weather, Public Enemy, Devendra Barnhart, Girl Talk, Sharon Jones and the Dap Kings, Band of Horses, Silver-sun Pickups, Mastodon and Caexico.

Street Scene day passes are available online for \$65 (or \$122 for a two-day pass) plus ticket fees. VIP ticket packages are available, and prices will rise as the event approaches. For tickets, visit street-scene.com.

Active-duty military who buy a ticket to "G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra" at any UltraStar cinemas this weekend will receive a free regular-size popcorn.

The promotion, running from Friday through Sunday only at UltraStar's 13 locations, is a way to honor the service of local military. To receive the popcorn, military personnel need to show their military ID and "G.I. Joe" ticket stub at the concession stand.

BACKSTAGE



PAM KRAGEN

Grammy-winning singer Patti Page will make an appearance Aug. 17 at the Welk Resort Theatre to perform songs from her 60-year career and sign copies of her new memoir, "This Is My Song."

Page has sold more than 15 million albums and recorded more than 1,000 songs, including "Tennessee Waltz" and "Mockin' Bird Hill." The 80-year-old Page lives part of the year in Solana Beach.

Admission to the event, at 1:30 p.m. Aug. 17, is free. Page will briefly perform onstage, then meet well-wishers in the lobby and sign purchased copies of her book. The Welk Resort Theatre is at 8860 Lawrence Welk Drive in Escondido. Call 888-802-7469.

What organizers are billing as the largest "free art-entertainment show in San Diego history" gets under way Sunday in Carlsbad. The Carlsbad Art District Honors Show — a 3,000-square-foot exhibit of artwork from all over the country and from all age groups and experience levels — runs from noon to 8 p.m. daily, Sunday through Sept. 7, at Village Faire Plaza at Carlsbad Village Drive and Carlsbad Boulevard. The show will open with six hours of continuous live entertainment from 2 to 8 p.m. Sunday. Then, entertainment (musicians, magicians, dancers and more) will be presented nightly (from 5 to 7 p.m. Sundays-Wednesdays and 4 to 7 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays) for the duration of the exhibit. Visit www.sculptureschool.net.

La Jolla Playhouse has added a special engagement of "Aurelia's Oratorio" to its season next February.

The cirque-style theatrical piece is conceived and directed by Victoria Thierree Chaplin and will star her daughter, actress/acrobat Aurelia Thierree, and dancer/choreographer Jaime Martinez. The show — which uses puppetry, optical illusions, dance and flying effects — is a backstage look at the topsy-turvy life of a young woman whose surreal dreams come to life onstage. Aurelia Thierree was first seen at the Playhouse in 1995, when she was a young girl performing with her parents, Victoria and Jean Baptiste Thierree, in their touring family stage show "Cirque Invisible."

The family-friendly show, which has been performed worldwide to sold-out houses and return engagements, will be presented Feb. 3 through 28 at the Mandell Weiss Theatre. Tickets will be \$25-\$45. Call 858-550-1010.

The national Free Night of Theater will return this fall, and nearly two dozen San Diego County theaters and arts groups are expected to participate.

Created by the arts organization Theatre Communications Group in 2005, the program is a national initiative to get more Americans to attend live theater performances. Last year, more than 65,000 free tickets were distributed by more than 600 theaters in 120 cities. In San Diego, 17 theaters participated last year, up from a dozen the year before.

Although called a "free night," the program actually extends from Oct. 8 to Nov. 1. Some theaters will offer tickets over several nights. Already signed up to participate are 23 local organizations, including the La Jolla Playhouse, Patio Playhouse, New Village Arts Theatre, Cygnet Theatre, Diversionary Theatre, Mystery Cafe Dinner Theater, San Diego Repertory Theatre, Sledgehammer Theatre, Christian Community Theatre, Coronado Playhouse, Playwrights Project and Vanguard Theatre. Also participating are theater schools, including the Christian Youth Theatre for Kids in four cities, Coronado School of the Arts, University of San Diego Theatre Arts and San Diego State University School of Music & Dance. And jumping on board this year are some musical and dance organizations, including the San Diego Symphony, La Jolla Symphony and Chorus, San Diego Ballet and Camarada.

Theater groups say they like participating in the program because it allows them to use unsold tickets to expose their work to a new audience who might not otherwise have visited. Studies of the demographics of past ticket-holders for Free Night of Theater show that it attracts people who are younger, more ethnically diverse and lower-income than traditional theatergoers.

The San Diego Performing Arts League is coordinating the program

See Backstage, Page 22

Backstage

continued from Page 2

locally. A league survey of San Diego ticket-holders from last year reported showed that 75

percent of participants were visiting a theater they'd never patronized before, and 39 percent said they had since bought a ticket from that company.

Free Night of Theater tickets will become available in early September. For local in-

formation, visit sandiegoperforms.com and for the national Web site, visit freenightoftheater.net.

The Old Globe announced it has received a \$75,000 New American Play Award from the Edgerton Foundation,

which will be used to underwrite an extended rehearsal period for its upcoming world premiere musical "Sammy."

This is the fourth Edgerton grant the Globe has received for new plays it has premiered (others were "Cornelia," "Back Back Back" and "In

This Corner"). "Sammy," running Sept. 19-Nov. 8, is a new musical by Leslie Bricusse about the life and times of entertainer Sammy Davis Jr.

Pam Kragen is the entertainment editor of the North County Times.

financial restructuring," the lawsuit said. Since then, according to the lawsuit Leibovitz has refused to meet with parties interested in buying her collection of photographs and has refused access to her properties, in breach of her contract with Art Capital

In a statement, a spokesman for Leibovitz called the allegations "false and untrue."

MICHAEL JACKSON'S DOCTOR Dr. Conrad Murray, who is under investigation by the Drug Enforcement Administration, Los Angeles Police and the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, had his Las Vegas home raided this week much to the consternation of the Red Rock Country Club's Home Owners Association. It seems some of the well heeled residents were accepting money from the press, to permit them entrance into the gated community and renting their homes to camera crews. The HOA called a meeting. From now on anyone caught getting their palm's greased by the press will be fined.



SAMMY a new musical based on the life of Sammy Davis, Jr. with book, music and lyrics by double Oscar and Grammy winner Leslie Bricusse, and additional songs by Bricusse and Anthony Newley will open at the Old Globe theatre in San Diego on September 29. The production stars Emmy and Tony Award nominee Obba Babatundé as Davis.

David was a member of the famed Rat Pack which included Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Peter Lawford and Joey Bishop.

There are production about the Rat Pack as a group and for years rumors have circulated that separate Broadway productions would be mounted on the lives of Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin. However, this Davis vehicle is the first to actually make it to a stage.



Sammy Davis, Jr.
performing in Las
Vegas

. Directed by Keith Glover with choreography by Keith Young, the musical has music supervision by Ian Fraser. Star Babatundé was mentored by Davis.

"Casting is always critical, but for *Sammy*, you either get the right man or you do not attempt it, and we are incredibly fortunate to have found the perfect actor to play the role," said Old Globe executive producer Lou Spisto. "Obba has an abundance of the necessary performance skills, as well as a firsthand knowledge and understanding of both the professional and personal Sammy. He will add an immeasurable level of honesty to the portrayal of the great Sammy Davis, Jr."

The world premiere musical moves from Sammy Davis, Jr.'s days as a child working in vaudeville through his time with Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin as a member of the Rat Pack. Featuring the classic tunes that helped to make Davis an icon - *The Candy Man*; *Mr. Bojangles* and *What Kind of Fool Am I* - *Sammy* traces the highs and lows of the ultimate

triple-threat singer, actor and dancer. Davis became one of the greatest performers of his generation, paving new ground while struggling with issues of identity, race and a turbulent personal life.

The Edgerton Foundation's New American Play Award was been granted to The Old Globe in support of the world premiere of *Sammy*. The \$75,000 award allows for an extension of the rehearsal period. Launched in 2006, the Edgerton Foundation's New American Play Awards have provided 46 productions with the financial resources to increase rehearsal time with the full production team onsite.

JAY WHITE the talented Neil Diamond impersonator who headlines the Riviera Hotel in Las Vegas, is frequently seen with a mask over his face. He hasn't turned into an odd-ball Michael Jackson impersonator - rather White spends his free time as a hockey goalie. The Canadian born performer's first passion was to become professional an ice hockey goalie. By the age of 21 he had briefly appeared in a couple of semi-pro games of the IHL, where he returned in his late 30s as the practice goalie for the IHL Las Vegas Thunder from 1994-1998 and now with the Las Vegas Wranglers.

MY MOTHER'S ITALIAN, MY FATHER'S JEWISH & I'M IN THERAPY Written and performed by Steve Solomon.

One part lasagna, one part kreplach and two parts Prozac! Steve Solomon brings his award-winning Broadway show to the Mainstage of the Long Wharf Theatre in New Haven, CT for performances August 5 - 9 and August 19 - 30.

OLIVER! the stage musical by Lionel Bart, based on Charles Dickens' novel, *Oliver Twist*. Directed by Jerry Goehring.

Starring Broadway's Kevin Gray as Fagin and Aaron Serotsky as Bill Sykes plus Patrick Agonito as Oliver and Peter Charney as the Artful Dodger and featuring young actors from the Summer Musical Theatre Workshops.

Choreographed by Correy West, Musical direction by Leo P. Carusone.

On stage August 7-9 of the Edgerton Center for the Performing Arts on the Campus of Sacred Heart University in Fairfield, Connecticut.

OKLAHOMA Rodgers & Hammerstein's first collaboration remains, in many ways, their most innovative, having set the standards and established the rules of musical theatre still being followed today.

Directed by Robert Westburg. Music direction by Paul Linnes. Choreography by Sandy Brown.

Costumes by Janessa Jayne Styck. Set design and construction by Chris Chisom and bob Bryan.

Week-ends through August 30 at the Snoqualmie Falls Forest Theater in Fall City, WA.

August 19-23 at the Escenario Puerta del Angel in Madrid, Spain.

STEPHEN SCHWARTZ: MAKING GOOD featuring the West Coast Premiere of songs from his new opera *Séance on a Wet Afternoon*. Musical Direction by Charity Wicks & Chris Bratten. Directed by Billy Porter.

Starring Terrence Mann, Tracie Thoms, Opera Star Lauren Flanigan, Michael Arden, Valarie Pettiford, Matt Cusson, Nathan Lee Graham, David Burnham, Jennifer Leigh Warren, Elizabeth Brackenbury, Barrett Foa, Audra Mae, Michael Marcotte, Katy Mixon, Nicole Parker, Hila Plitmann, Aaron Refvem, Tami Tappan Damiano, Ty Taylor and Brenna Whitaker.

Followed by a second act extravaganza featuring Upright Cabaret All-Star performers interpreting Schwartz's most popular songs including *Defying Gravity*; *The Wizard & I*; *Popular*; *Day by Day*; *Corner of the Sky*; *Magic to Do* and *Morning Glow*.

One night only, Sunday, August 23 at the Ford Amphitheatre in Hollywood, CA.

SAMMY Book, Music and Lyrics by Leslie Bricusse. Additional Songs by Leslie Bricusse and Anthony Newley. Directed by Keith Glover. Choreography by Keith Young.

Featuring the classic tunes that helped to make Sammy Davis, Jr. an icon, *Sammy* traces the struggles and triumphs of the ultimate triple-threat singer, actor and dancer.

Previews begin September 19 at the Old Globe in San Diego. Casting has been completed.

The cast includes: Heather Ayers (May Britt/Ensemble), Obba Babatundé (Sammy), Ann Duquesnay (Rosa Davis), Mary Ann Hermansen (Kim Novak/Ensemble), Adam James (Frank Sinatra), Troy Britton Johnson (Dean Martin/Cohn/Jennings/Ensemble), Ted Louis Levy (Sammy Davis, Sr.), Keewa Nurullah (Lola Folana/Ensemble), Victoria Platt (Altovise Gore/Ensemble), Lance Roberts (Will Mastin), Alonzo Saunders (Murphy/Ensemble/understudy Sammy), Sarrah Strimel (Luella/Hedda/Ensemble) with Jenelle Engleson, Stephanie Girard, Lauren Haughton and Anise Ritchie (Ensemble).

The creative team is: Alexander Dodge (Scenic Design), Fabio Toblini (Costume Design), Chris Lee (Lighting Design), John Shivers (Sound Design), Ned Ginsburg (Orchestrator), Rahn Coleman (Music Director/Conductor), Ian Fraser (Music Supervision), Dominique Kelley (Assistant Choreographer), Tara Rubin Casting (Casting) and David Sugarman (Stage Manager).

QUARTERMAINE'S TERMS written by Simon Gray. Directed by Tony-nominated Maria Aitken.

This charming and heart-felt 1960's comedy follows an eccentric group of English teachers in Cambridge whose insatiable quest for knowledge has masked their secret longings for passion, romance, and true happiness.

The production stars Jeremy Beck, Ann Dowd, Morgan Hallett, John Horton, Simon Jones, Stephen Kunken and Jefferson Mays.

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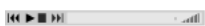
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'Sammy' performances at Old Globe in San Diego to begin Saturday



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04:43 PM PDT on Thursday, September 17, 2009

By FIELDING BUCK
The Press-Enterprise

Will it be satisfying and delicious?

'Sammy,' the big show this fall at San Diego's Old Globe, begins performances Saturday.

The musical traces the life of Sammy Davis Jr. using his hits such as "The Candy Man" and "What Kind of Food Am I?" The songs were written by Leslie Bricusse and Anthony Newley.

Story continues below



Craig Schwartz / Special to The Press-Enterprise

Bricusse has penned some new numbers for the show, which brings back the '60s in all their swinging glory, with characters such as Frank Sinatra and the Rat Pack.

Obba Babatundé, a Tony nominee from the original cast of "Dreamgirls," plays Sammy, and Adam James is Sinatra.

Saturday through Nov. 8. 1363 Old Globe Way, San Diego, \$54-\$89. 619-23-GLOBE, www.oldglobe.org

--Fielding Buck



THEATRE BITS: Lillias White joins Fela!; Babatunde's Sammy announces cast; NAACP honors McDonald, Santiago-Hudson.

August 17, 2009



*Tony Winner Lillias White will star in the Broadway musical Fela! as Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, the mother of legendary African composer and performer Fela Anikulapo-Kuti. As previously reported, Sahr Ngaujah, who starred in the title role Off-Broadway, will again star on Broadway. Previews at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre begin Oct. 19 toward an opening set for Nov. 23. Lillias White has appeared on Broadway in Barnum, Dreamgirls, Cats, Once On This Island, How To Succeed In Business..., Chicago and the Actors' Fund concert of Dreamgirls, which was preserved on disc.

*Complete casting has been announced for the world premiere of the new musical Sammy, starring Broadway veteran and Tony Award nominee Obba Babatundé in the starring role of Sammy Davis, Jr. Directed by Keith Glover with choreography by Keith Young and music supervision by Ian Fraser, Sammy will run in the Old Globe Theatre in San Diego Sept. 19–Nov. 8. Opening night is Oct. 2. Babatundé will be joined by the newly announced Heather Ayers (May Britt/Ensemble), Ann Duquesnay (Rosa Davis), Mary Ann Hermansen (Kim Novak/Ensemble), Adam James (Frank Sinatra), Troy Britton Johnson (Dean Martin/Cohn/Jennings/Ensemble), Ted Louis Levy (Sammy Davis, Sr.), Keewa Nurullah (Lola Folana/Ensemble) and Victoria Platt (Altovise Gore/Ensemble). Tickets are currently available by subscription only. Single tickets go on sale Aug. 23 at 10 a.m. and can be purchased online at www.TheOldGlobe.org, by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the Box Office.

*Tony Award winners Audra McDonald and Ruben Santiago-Hudson are among the winners of the 2009 NAACP Theatre Awards, to be presented on Aug. 31, the 100th anniversary of the founding of the civil rights organization. Loretta Devine (Dreamgirls, TV's "Grey's Anatomy") and Terry Crews ("Everybody Hates Chris") will host the awards ceremony at the Directors Guild of America Theatre in Hollywood. McDonald will be presented the Trailblazer Award, while Santiago-Hudson will receive an award for lifetime achievement. As previously reported, other honorees include Pasadena Playhouse artistic director Sheldon Epps, who will receive the Community Service Award, and Tichina Arnold ("Everybody Hates Chris"), who will receive the Spirit Award.



Our ambassador travels west

By Tim Smith

Pauls Valley Daily Democrat

August 09, 2009 02:00 pm

— In 2005, as part of expanding its mission, the Pauls Valley Arts Council welcomed professional actor, Obba Babatundé as the keynote presenter at its first Valley Of The Arts Festival.

Best known for his work on the television series, *Half and Half*, Mr. Babatundé is a Tony- (for the original stage production of *Dreamgirls*) and Emmy- (for *Miss Ever's Boys*) award nominated performer who is also featured in one of my favorite films, the delightful, *That Thing You Do*.

I just learned that he has been tapped to star at the Old Globe Theatre in San Diego in a new musical based on the life of Sammy Davis, Jr. Opening Oct. 2, "the new musical based on the life of singer-dancer-actor Davis with book, music and lyrics by ("double Oscar and Grammy winner") Leslie Briscusse "moves from Sammy Davis, Jr.'s days as a child working in vaudeville through his time with Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin as a member of the Rat Pack.

It will feature the classic tunes that helped make Davis an icon, "The Candy Man," "Mr. Bojangles" and "What Kind of Fool Am I."

For his generosity in helping inaugurate the council's first year of service, Mr. Babatundé was awarded an arts ambassador award.

Shrek, the Musical has been enjoying a successful run on Broadway and what is wonderful is that long after the initial New York run is over and the national tour begins traversing America and maybe even stopping in the West End of London, one can enjoy what I consider one of the most delightful musical scores I have heard in some time.

The three *Shrek* films are memorable for interweaving contemporary rock songs into the plot.

The musical version will be known equally for its music creativity, but not the music of others. The original soundtrack will captivate from the first moment it's loaded into the CD player. You Tube fans can catch live performances of some of this musical's comic gems.

And now, and speaking of musical wonders, it's on to *The Producers*. The Mel Brooks musical (the most honored Tony Award-winning show in history with a record 12 awards) landed at the Music Center this past week as the final show in the Lyric's season.

This included members from the original cast, and that is always an added bonus.

I was especially pleased to see Lewis J. Stadlen appearing in the title role of *Max Bialystock*. Stadlen may be little known outside New York, but he has an extensive list of credits. He also has a very distinctive vocal signature.

Catch more of him in the Nathan Lane, (who played the original Max) version of *The Man Who Came To Dinner*. His character, Banjo, is a tour de-force.

Live from the Highlands: It is 1987 and I experienced one of my most memorable directing years as I staged a little known comedy of Neil Simon's, *Fools* and the classic musical, *Cabaret*.

Look for an innovative theatre experience coming to The Valley at the end of August. Savoring these last days of summer, in our town!

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STAGE TUBE: The Old Globe: Behind The Scenes Of SAMMY

[Feedback](#)[Printer-Friendly](#)[E-Mail Article](#)Enter Your E-Mail Address: [Subscribe to Alerts for this Author](#)Thursday, September 3, 2009; Posted: 09:09 PM - by [BroadwayWorld TV](#)

Old Globe Executive Producer [Lou Spisto](#) introduces the creative team of the world premiere of Sammy, a new musical based on the life of [Sammy Davis, Jr.](#), on the first day of rehearsal. Director [Keith Glover](#), Music Director Rahn Coleman and choreographer [Keith Young](#) also share their thoughts about the show.

Sammy has book, music and lyrics by [Leslie Bricusse](#), and additional songs by Bricusse and [Anthony Newley](#). Directed by [Keith Glover](#) with choreography by [Keith Young](#) and music supervision by [Ian Fraser](#).

Sammy will run in the [Old Globe Theatre](#) Sept. 19 - Nov. 8. Previews run from Sept. 19 - Oct. 1. Opening night is Oct. 2 at 8:00 p.m. Tickets to Sammy are currently available by subscription only. Single tickets go on sale Aug. 23 at 10:00 a.m. and can be purchased online at www.TheOldGlobe.org, by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the Box Office.

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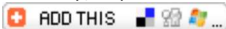
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STAGE TUBE: The Old Globe Presents The New Musical SAMMY

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Thursday, September 10, 2009; Posted: 08:09 PM - by [BroadwayWorld.TV](#)

Sammy, a new musical by Oscar and Grammy-winning composer [Leslie Bricusse](#), runs at [The Old Globe](#) Sept. 19 through Nov. 8, 2009.

Sammy has book, music and lyrics by [Leslie Bricusse](#), and additional songs by Bricusse and [Anthony Newley](#). Directed by [Keith Glover](#) with choreography by [Keith Young](#) and music supervision by [Ian Fraser](#).

Broadway veteran Obba Babatundé is set to star as [Sammy Davis, Jr.](#) in the world premiere of Sammy.

The world premiere musical moves from [Sammy Davis, Jr.](#)'s days as a child working in vaudeville through his time with [Frank Sinatra](#) and [Dean Martin](#) as a member of the Rat Pack. Featuring the classic tunes that helped to make Davis an icon - "The Candy Man," "Mr. Bojangles" and "What Kind of Fool Am I" - Sammy traces the highs and lows of the ultimate triple-threat singer, actor and dancer. Davis became one of the greatest performers of his generation, paving new ground while struggling with issues of identity, race and a turbulent personal life.

Opening night is Oct. 2 at 8:00 p.m. Tickets to Sammy are currently available by subscription only. Single tickets go on sale Aug. 23 at 10:00 a.m. and can be purchased online at www.TheOldGlobe.org, by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the Box Office.



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STAGE TUBE: The Old Globe's Press Presentation Of SAMMY



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Thursday, September 17, 2009; Posted: 07:09 PM - by [BroadwayWorld.TV](#)



Sammy, a new musical by Oscar and Grammy-winning composer [Leslie Bricusse](#), runs at [The Old Globe](#) Sept. 19 through Nov. 8, 2009. Old Globe Executive Producer [Lou Spisto](#), Composer [Leslie Bricusse](#), Director [Keith Glover](#) and Choreographer [Keith Young](#) introduce musical numbers from "Sammy," a new musical based on the life of [Sammy Davis, Jr.](#), at a rehearsal presentation.

Sammy has book, music and lyrics by [Leslie Bricusse](#), and additional songs by Bricusse and [Anthony Newley](#). Directed by [Keith Glover](#) with choreography by [Keith Young](#) and music supervision by [Ian Fraser](#).

Broadway veteran Obba Babatundé stars as [Sammy Davis, Jr.](#) in the world premiere of Sammy.

The world premiere musical moves from [Sammy Davis, Jr.](#)'s days as a child working in vaudeville through his time with [Frank Sinatra](#) and [Dean Martin](#) as a member of the Rat Pack. Featuring the classic tunes that helped to make Davis an icon - "The Candy Man," "Mr. Bojangles" and "What Kind of Fool Am I" - Sammy traces the highs and lows of the ultimate triple-threat singer, actor and dancer. Davis became one of the greatest performers of his generation, paving new ground while struggling with issues of identity, race and a turbulent personal life.

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STAGE TUBE: 'SAMMY the Musical' at The Old Globe

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Sammy, a new musical by Oscar and Grammy-winning composer [Leslie Bricusse](#), runs at [The Old Globe](#) Sept. 19 through Nov. 8, 2009.

Sammy has book, music and lyrics by [Leslie Bricusse](#), and additional songs by Bricuss and [Anthony Newley](#). Directed by [Keith Glover](#) with choreography by [Keith Young](#) and music supervision by [Ian Fraser](#).

Broadway veteran Obba Babatundé is set to star as [Sammy Davis, Jr.](#) in the world premiere of Sammy.

The world premiere musical moves from [Sammy Davis, Jr.](#)'s days as a child working in vaudeville through his time with [Frank Sinatra](#) and [Dean Martin](#) as a member of the F Pack. Featuring the classic tunes that helped to make Davis an icon - "The Candy Man", "Mr. Bojangles" and "What Kind of Fool Am I" - Sammy traces the highs and lows of the ultimate triple-threat singer, actor and dancer. Davis became one of the greatest performers of his generation, paving new ground while struggling with issues of identity, race and a turbulent personal life.

Opening night is Oct. 2 at 8:00 p.m. Tickets to Sammy are currently available by subscription only. Single tickets go on sale Aug. 23 at 10:00 a.m. and can be purchased online at www.TheOldGlobe.org, by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the Box Office.

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LOS ANGELES TIMES

September 13, 2009

San Diego's Guide to Good Times and Great Values

For up-to-the-minute event listings of everything happening in San Diego, visit www.sandiego.org/eventcalendar.

Through Sept. 25, Cruisin' Grand in Escondido: Relive the "American Graffiti" experience in a family setting every Friday along downtown's quaint Grand Avenue. A parade of pre-1970s vintage cars cruise the street from 5 to 9 p.m. www.downtownescondido.com/cruisin.html.

Through Jan. 3, 2010, "The Da Vinci Experience" at the San Diego Air & Space Museum: Two dozen fully functional models of Leonardo da Vinci's designs, 11 of which are full-sized, are arranged into three categories — transportation, military and mechanical — in this exhibit. www.sandiegoairandspace.org.

Sept. 15 – Nov. 15, Julian Fall Apple Harvest: This year, the Apple Harvest celebrates its 100th birthday in this historic East County mining town. Featured will be fall foliage, art shows, live entertainment and apple pie sales. www.julianca.com.

Sept. 19 – Nov. 8, World premiere of "Sammy" at the Old Globe Theatre: Broadway veteran Obba Babatundé is set to star as Sammy Davis Jr. in this new musical based on Davis' life. Previews run from Sept. 19 to Oct. 1. Opening night is Oct. 2. www.theoldglobe.org.

Sept. 13-18, San Diego Restaurant Week: Participating restaurants are offering three-course prix-fixe menus for \$20 to \$40 per person, depending on the restaurant. www.sandiegorestaurantweek.com.

Sept. 20, San Diego Chargers at Qualcomm Stadium in Mission Valley: This will be the season opener at home for this National Football League team. www.chargers.com.

Sept. 23-27, San Diego International Film Festival in the Gaslamp Quarter: American and international features, documentaries and shorts will be showcased. Other activities include Q&A sessions with directors, workshops, panel discussions and guest appearances by film and video artists.



Sept. 25 – Oct. 31, San Diego Haunted Hotel: Screamin' good times await in downtown San Diego at the Gaslamp Quarter's popular annual haunted house.

Sept. 26-27, Cabrillo Festival: The exploration of the U.S. West Coast by Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo in 1542 is commemorated at Cabrillo National Monument on Point Loma. www.nps.gov/cabr.

Sept. 26-27, 28th annual Adams Avenue Street Fair in Normal Heights: This fair will feature three beer gardens, six stages and more than 70 musical acts performing rock, country, folk, rockabilly and Tex Mex. Also featured are arts and crafts booths, carnival rides and circus acts. www.adamsaveonline.com/streetfair.

Sept. 26-27, 15th annual Pacific Islander Festival at Mission Bay's Sd Beach: This free-admission event showcases the cultures and customs of Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia with continuous entertainment, food and unique crafts. www.pifasandiego.com.

Sept. 27, San Diego Chargers vs. Miami Dolphins at Qualcomm Stadium in Mission Valley. www.chargers.com.

Los Angeles Times
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This page was edited and designed by the Custom Publications staff of the Los Angeles Times Marketing Department. Questions or comments? Contact Darlene Gunther at 213.237.3133 or e-mail her at darlene.gunther@latimes.com.

NEWS CHIEFTAIN

August 20, 2009



'SAMMY' ON SALE — Single tickets for the Old Globe Theatre's world premiere of Leslie Bricusse's "Sammy," a musical based on the life of Sammy Davis Jr., go on sale at noon this Sunday (Aug. 23). Pictured are Obba Babatundé, left, as Davis and Adam James as Frank Sinatra. Tickets range from \$54 to \$89 and may be purchased online at www.TheOldGlobe.org, by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the Box Office at 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park.

NEWS JOURNAL

August 20, 2009



'SAMMY' ON SALE — Single tickets for the Old Globe Theatre's world premiere of Leslie Bricusse's "Sammy," a musical based on the life of Sammy Davis Jr., go on sale at noon this Sunday (Aug. 23). Pictured are Obba Babatundé, left, as Davis and Adam James as Frank Sinatra. Tickets range from \$54 to \$89 and may be purchased online at www.TheOldGlobe.org, by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the Box Office at 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park.



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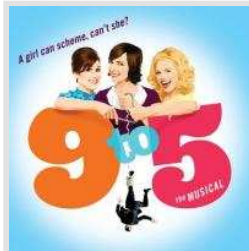
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'9 To 5: The Musical' To Close On Broadway 9/6; National Tour Begins September 2010



Photo Coverage: **'BIRDIE'** Cuts The Ribbon At Henry Miller's



Kimball And Glover Will Lead **MEMPHIS** On Bdw



Photo Coverage: Tituss Burgess Sings At Birdland



Trujillo To Make Directorial Debut With **HAVANA**



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Photo Coverage: Gavin Creel In Concert At Joe's Pub

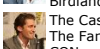
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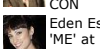
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Photo Coverage: EROTIC BROADWAY at the Triad 7/20 - After Party
(Jul. 28 12:48) - nthonny Francavilla and The Imagination Company presented the July 20th performance of **EROTIC BROADWAY** at The Triad, Off Broadway's sexiest, new late-night Monday series.



'CATCH ME IF YOU CAN' Begins Performances at Seattle's 5th Ave Theatre 7/28
(Jul. 28 8:11) - The 5th Avenue Theatre regrets to announce the cancellation of preview performances Thursday July 23 through Sunday July 26 of the upcoming **World**



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Last Update: 7/29 at 3:16 PM

London: BroadwayWorld.com Announces UK Expansion; Carrie Dunn Named West End Editor-in-Chief



SHREK THE MUSICAL Announces New Lottery Rush Tickets Beginning 8/1



Obba Babatundé To Star As Sammy Davis, Jr. In The New Leslie Bricusse Musical, **SAMMY**



THE FIRST WIVES CLUB Extends at the Old Globe Thru 8/30



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- ☐ Good idea
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9 to 5's Block, Janney and Hilty.
Credit: Joan Marcus

Punching Out: 9 to 5 Will Close Sept. 6; Tour Will Launch in Nashville

The marquee value of both songwriter Dolly Parton and the hit title 9 to 5 was not enough to keep the new musical version of the popular 1980 movie alive on Broadway. The musical will close Sept. 6, but a tour will appear in fall 2010.

[Related Multimedia](#)

A New "Candy Man": Tony Nominee Babatundé Will Be Sammy in New Musical

Broadway veteran and Tony Award nominee Obba Babatundé will star as showbiz legend Sammy Davis, Jr. in the world premiere of *Sammy* by lyricist-composer-librettist Leslie Briscusse.



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PLAYBILL.COM'S CUE & A: Isabel Keating

Isabel Keating — co-star of Primary Stages' Off-Broadway play *A Lifetime Burning* — fills out Playbill.com's offbeat questionnaire.

A Day in the Life . . . with Howard McGillin

Howard McGillin, who ended his Broadway stint as the world's longest-running *Phantom of the Opera* on July 25, gave Playbill magazine an exclusive look at what a day behind the mask was like.

Airheads in the Wind of Change

Vanities, the hit Off-Broadway play about the evolution of three Texas cheerleaders, is now a musical.

Latest News



Kimball and Glover to Make Music in *Memphis* on Broadway



Broadway-Aimed *First Wives Club* Gets Extra Week in San Diego



Howdy, Neighbor! M-G-M's "Summer Stock," Once a Garland Vehicle, Adapted for Stage



O'Neill Cabaret Conference Welcomes Fuller, Roberts, Edelman and cast of [title of show]



Adam Cooper's *Shall We Dance*, Featuring Rodgers Music, Opens in London



The Torch-Bearers, a Fresh Look at Kelly's Backstage Comedy, Begins in Williamstown



Paired at NYC's Irish Rep, Creedon's *After Luke and When I Was God* Begin



Shrek to Launch Broadway Ticket Lottery Aug. 1



CT TheaterWorks Announces August Hiatus; 2009-10 Season to Include *LaBute*, Mamet and McPherson



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Mamet's *Race* Gains David Alan Grier



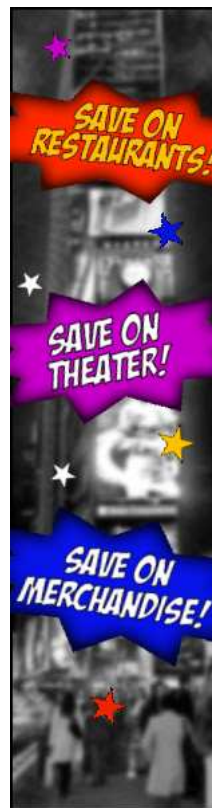
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- *Shrek* to Launch Broadway Ticket Lottery Aug. 1
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SDJJ | what's goin' on

by eileen sondak

a new season is upon us

With the return of the San Diego Symphony, La Jolla Music Society, Lyric Opera San Diego, California Ballet and the North Coast Repertory Theatre — just to name a few of the arts organizations launching their seasons in October — you can take your pick from a cornucopia of exciting arts events. And plan to take the whole family to “The Lion King” when it settles in at the Civic Theatre this month.

The San Diego Symphony celebrates the opening of its 2009-2010 season the weekend of Oct. 2. Maestro Jahja Ling will conduct the Takacs Quartet in a program that includes Dvorak's Symphony No. 8. The Opus Gala will take place Oct. 3, and this posh black-tie affair features Schumann's Piano Quintet (with Ling joining the keyboard artists), and a chamber orchestra version of Kodaly's Dances of Galanra.

The music plays Oct. 16-18 with Eri Klas conducting a concert featuring Julie Albers as soloist for Shostakovich's Cello Concerto No. 1. The program also includes Shostakovich's Symphony No. 10. Maestro Ling will be back at the podium for performances Oct. 30-Nov. 1. Jeff Thayer will snare the spotlight on violin while Jessica Rivera, Sasha Cooke, Tom Cooley, Jason Grant and the San Diego Master Chorale will sing. The program will include Mozart's Requiem Mass in D minor, as well as works by Wagner and Bruch.

The Old Globe's world premiere production of “Sammy,” a tribute to the versatility and virtuosity of Sammy Davis Jr., continues to mesmerize audiences with its dazzling dancing and interesting insights into one of the greatest entertainers of all time. The musical traces Sammy's life from his childhood in vaudeville to his Rat Pack days with Sinatra et al. With Sammy's protégé, triple threat Obba Babatundé, playing the lead, the show could be destined for a Broadway run. It features new songs along with Sammy's signature hits, and the fact that Sammy Davis converted to Judaism makes his story all the more fascinating. “Sammy” plays through Oct. 18.

The Globe's temporary second stage at the nearby Museum of Art is featuring the West Coast premiere

of “The Savannah Disputation.” This show (closing Nov. 1) is slated to be the last Globe production at the Arena Stage. The comic romp reveals how God works in hilarious ways. Kim Rubinstein directed the comedy, which features two sisters, an unexpected visitor and a truly devilish dinner party.

La Jolla Playhouse's Potiker Theatre continues to intrigue audiences with “Creditors,” a savagely witty play adapted from a work by August Strindberg. This thrilling world premiere (commissioned by the Playhouse) focuses on a seemingly innocent conversation between an artist and a mysterious stranger. The story develops into a tangled web, with strong undercurrents of sexuality, language and economics fueling the fires of suspicion and revenge. You can fall under its spell until Oct. 25.

Lyric Opera San Diego returns to its North Park home to kick off its eclectic season with “Anything Goes” Oct. 2. The classic Cole Porter musical is a comic gem, with songs the likes of “I Get a Kick Out of You,” “It's De-lovely” and the rollicking title song. Jimmy Ferraro returns to the Lyric to play Public Enemy No. 13 in this vintage musical set on the high seas. You can get on board through Oct. 11.

Broadway-San Diego had a mega-hit with “Wicked” this summer, and Disney's “The Lion King” promises to be another blockbuster for the organization. The

■ **The San Diego Rep gets its fall season underway Oct. 3 with “Long Story Short,” a musical journey through one couple's extraordinary 50-year relationship. This whirlwind musical is about a love affair between a Jewish guy and an Asian girl living in Southern California.**

The Civic Theatre comes alive with the sights and sounds of Africa as it welcomes Disney's “The Lion King” Oct. 13-Nov. 8.



PHOTO BY JOAN MARCUS • ©DISNEY



SDJJ | what's goin' on



You can see "Godspell," a lively musical from the creator of "Wicked," at the Lamb's Players' Horton Grand Theatre venue, where the show is set for an open-ended run.

stunning musical extravaganza will take over the Civic Theatre Oct. 13, where it will stay happily ensconced through Nov. 8.

The North Coast Repertory Theatre will feature David Ellenstein and Amy Biedel in "Talley's Folly," a love story that focuses on Matt Friedman and Sally Talley and their life-changing night in a Missouri boathouse back in 1944. The charming Pulitzer Prize-winning play, fraught with compassion and humor, opens Oct. 14, and Ellenstein does double duty as director as well as star. "Talley's Folly" hasn't shown up on a local stage in years, so be sure to see the heartwarming fable unfold before it closes Nov. 8.

La Jolla Music Society opens its 41st season Oct. 17, with performances in four different venues throughout the year. The Society's Revelle Series starts the ball rolling Oct. 17 with the Shanghai Quartet starring Lynn Harrell on the cello (at Sherwood Auditorium).

California Ballet's dance adaptation of "Alice in Wonderland" will light up the Balboa Theatre Oct. 3-4. This family-oriented ballet is a multimedia production that tells the wondrous tale with words, music, dance and visuals. Also on the program is a vivacious contemporary work set to a virtuoso guitar piece, which should make a striking showcase for the dancers.

The Welk Resort Theatre is still steeped in the nostalgia of the 1940s with "The Andrews Brothers," a musical that puts a new twist on the popular girl trio of the World War II years. The comedy begins when a USO show starring the Andrews Sisters fails to show up to entertain the troops in the South Pacific. What follows is a musical trip down memory lane with Lucille Ball-style shenanigans and goofy hijinks à la Bob Hope. Enjoy a lavish buffet prior to every performance. "The Andrews Brothers" runs

The San Diego Rep gets its fall season underway Oct. 3 with "Long Story Short," a musical journey through one couple's extraordinary 50-year relationship. This whirlwind musical is about a love affair between a Jewish guy and an Asian girl living in Southern California. Based on the play "An Infinite Ache" by David Schulner, the song-filled evening of theater begins with a blind date and takes us all the way to old age with the couple. Prior to the performance Oct. 6 you can attend a music and story-telling mini-concert with the playwrights (Brendan Milburn and Valerie Vigoda). Sounds like fun!

through Nov. 8.

The Lamb's Players' Coronado location will take us back to the 18th century for "Joyful Noise" Oct. 9. The Lamb's gave this play its world premiere in 1999, and it continues to be a hit around the country. The historical backstage drama is about the creation of one of the greatest works of all time — Handel's "Messiah." "Joyful Noise" tells the story of the very flawed humans who brought the masterpiece to life. Meanwhile, the Lamb's Horton Grand Theatre venue is featuring "Godspell," a lively musical from the creator of "Wicked." The raucous-raising show was the most popular production the Lamb's ever had, and it's strutting its stuff for an open-ended run at this downtown location.

J*Company kicks off its season Oct. 15 with a full-blown production of "South Pacific," a Rodgers and Hammerstein masterpiece that has been absent from local stages for quite a while. The memorable musical comedy (which takes place during World War II and abounds with hit songs the likes of "Some Enchanted Evening" and "Younger Than Springtime") is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year, and this production (running through Oct. 25) will do it up brown. On Oct. 22 you can participate in a sing-along while the movie version of the show screens in the background.

"The Da Vinci Experience" is offering San Diegans a spectacular look at the creative genius of the world's true Renaissance man, Leonardo Da Vinci. The San Diego Air and Space Museum is housing this special exhibit, which includes 12 reproductions of his artistic masterpieces and 60 precise and interactive replicas of the amazing devices Da Vinci developed more than 500 years ago. Da Vinci had an incredible body of accomplishments, and this fascinating exhibition lets us marvel at many of them in one visit. The show will be ensconced at the Air and Space Museum until January.

The San Diego Museum of Man will continue to entice visitors with "The Art of Andean Retablos: Religion, Tradition and Social Commentary" through Jan. 24. These exquisite art pieces tell the stories, histories and traditions of this highland people of South America. ☼



[Sammy, Bricusse Musical About Sammy Davis Jr., Gets Award and an Extra Week](#)

The Edgerton Foundation's New American Play Award has been granted to The Old Globe in support of the fall world premiere of Sammy, the new musical about Sammy Davis Jr. The \$75,000 award will allow for an extension of the rehearsal period of Sammy,

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By Wire News Sources on July 16, 2009

The Edgerton Foundation's New American Play Award has been granted to The Old Globe in support of the fall world premiere of *Sammy*, the new musical about Sammy Davis Jr.

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- [Mexico rejects any drug gang deal](#)
- [30 Rock leads the way for Emmys](#)
- [Court boycotted by 9/11 suspects](#)



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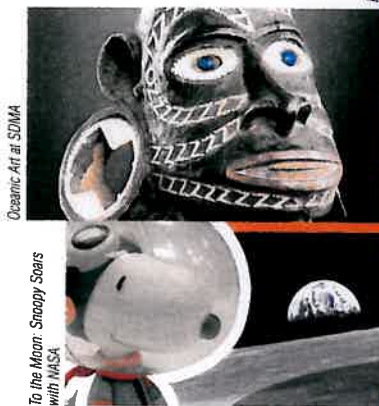
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SAN DIEGO THE PLACE

October 2009

What's Up in SD Special Events Calendar October 2009



Oceanic Art at SDMA

To the Moon: Snoopy Soars with NASA

Disney's **THE LION KING**

October 13 – November 8
San Diego Civic Theatre
1100 Third Ave., San Diego

Whether this is your first, second, or tenth time – there's no reason not to relive the phenomenon of *Disney's THE LION KING*. It's visually stunning, technically astounding, and features a musical score like none other you've ever heard. Giraffes strut, birds swoop, gazelles leap. Marvel at the breathtaking spectacle of animals brought to life by a cast of more than 40 actors, creating visual images that you'll be hard-pressed not to remember forever. Special note: family-friendly for all ages (but recommended for children 6+).

619-570-1100

www.broadwaysd.com

Wheelchair Accessible

Oceanic Art

Daily
San Diego Museum of Art (SDMA)
Balboa Park
1450 El Prado, San Diego

Maybe it's our constant exposure to sweet ocean breezes, but we really dig ancient Oceanic culture. So SDMA's *Oceanic Art* exhibit really floats our boat. Come check out nearly 100 pieces that represent ancient Oceanic traditions from Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia. Included are elaborate hand-carved sculptures, jewelry, weapons, and more.

619-232-7931

www.sdmart.org

Wheelchair Accessible



Disney's THE LION KING

Sammy at The Old Globe Theatre

Sammy

Through November 8
The Old Globe Theatre

1363 Old Globe Wy., San Diego
One of the greatest entertainers of all time, Sammy Davis Jr. defined an era. The ultimate triple-threat – singer, actor and dancer, Sammy could do it all. With a cast of sixteen of Broadway's best singers and dancers, this world premiere musical, written by two-time Academy Award® and Grammy Award®-winner Leslie Bricusse, takes us from Sammy's days as a child working in vaudeville through his time with Dean and Frank as a member of the Rat Pack.

619-23-GLOBE (234-5623)

www.theoldglobe.org

Wheelchair Accessible

To the Moon: Snoopy Soars with NASA

Daily
San Diego Air and Space Museum
Balboa Park
2001 Pan American Plz., San Diego
Just before the first man landed on the moon, Charlie Brown and Snoopy soared through space with NASA's *Apollo 10* mission in May 1969. The exhibition *To the Moon: Snoopy Soars with NASA* examines the history of *Apollo 10* and the *Peanuts* characters' role in that flight and in the NASA Manned Flight Awareness safety program.

619-234-8291


www.sandiegoairandspace.org

Wheelchair Accessible

All information subject to change. Please contact each individual event for up-to-date schedules, prices and more information.

odds

[By Tom Blair, SDNN](#)

Friday, July 31, 2009  no comments | [be the first to comment!](#)

3

tweets

retweet



Tom Blair is an SDNN columnist.

THE SLOW LANE: Okay, it's not exactly Pamplona. Nobody's going to be gored or trampled to death. Worst case, participants might step in something. But it's definitely high concept, and oh so San Diego. Heather Degan, owner of DowntownDogLover.com, is gearing up to launch the dog-friendly Web resource with San Diego's first "Running of the Bulldogs." The party starts at 1 p.m. August 8 at the San Diego Wine & Culinary Center park, across from the Convention Center. Degan says she expects about 50 entrants to navigate — she doesn't say "run" — two courses, one 2.5 blocks and one 6.5. The dogs will more likely "roll or slug around," she says. One bulldog entry, Degan notes, is recovering from recent surgery. He'll be pushed along the course in a wheelbarrow by his owner. My money's on him.

THE BIZ BUZZ: The Old Globe Theatre's world premiere musical *Sammy*, opening September 19, has Broadway written all over it. Based on the life of superstar Sammy Davis Jr., with music by Leslie Bricusse — who gave Davis his hits "What Kind of Fool Am I?", "Who Can I Turn To?" and "The Candy Man" — the production stars Obba Babatundé, a Tony nominee for *Dreamgirls*, who as a youngster was mentored by Davis. Babatundé's best review probably came from Davis himself, who once said, "I feel safe knowing that with cats like Obba around, when I get out of this business I'm leaving it in good hands." . . .

Entrepreneur magazine's latest ranking of America's most start-up friendly cities puts San Diego at No. 4, citing local government incentives, population growth and affordable business rents as positives. And *Forbes* magazine, which seems to be in the business of compiling lists these days, ranks us 12th best city for singles. Now, if you were a single entrepreneur . . .

More from Tom Blair

[Is Buick bailing on the Invitational](#)
[Johnny Depp at Comic-Con...](#)
[Flying squids, saving kids, and Carrie Prejean](#)

New satellite start-up: Bizmore, a Web-based Q&A resource along the lines of Yahoo Answers for executives at small and medium-size companies. Bizmore operates out of San Francisco, but it's a subsidiary of San Diego-based Vistage International, whose major investors include Michael Milken, the former junk bond king.

ALL IN THE GAME: Okay, the Padres are sinking slowly in the west. Does that mean it's time to move on to football? Absolutely. With the first pre-season game just two weeks away, Chargers fans are fired up. And so are the football prognosticators. If you believe in jinxes, look out. Most sports oddsmakers pick the Chargers to win

NON-EQUITY
-BUT OCCASIONALLY USE
EQUITY.

[SD Black Ensemble](#)
[Starlight Theatre](#)
[Talent To aMuse](#)
[Vantage Theatre](#)

NON-EQUITY

[Applauz Theatre](#)
[Ascension Theatre](#)
[Arts Off Broadway](#)
[Black Rabbit](#)
[Eveoke Dance](#)
[La Jolla Stage Co.](#)
[Scripps Ranch](#)
[Stone Soup Theatre](#)

COMMUNITY THEATRE
IF YOUR THEATRE ISN'T LISTED
PLEASE SEND ME THE LINK.

[Coronado Playhouse](#)
[North Park Vaudville](#)
[OnStage Playhouse](#)
[Pacific Coast Theatre Co.](#)
[Patio Playhouse](#)
[Point Loma Actors](#)
[PowPAC](#)
[San Diego Jr. Theatre](#)
[Such N' Such Productions](#)

SAN DIEGO THEATRE SCENE,
INC. IS SUPPORTED BY GRANTS
FROM:

The individual artists,
and arts and cultural
organizations in San
Diego reflect the
excitement foun



Column October 15, 2009

Hello Everyone

A cooling trend, rather nice with the fall colors. Out with those

My 2 Cents

If you want an evening of hot theatre, do not miss *Who's Afraid of the Big, Bad Daddy* through October 24. Edward Albee based the play on the very real lives of New York friends who had a marriage built on biting sarcasm. As Martha and **Dale Morris** as George bite into the script with a fierceness born of love. Director **Shana Wride** has used the small Compass stage very effectively, the wife who arrive in the early hours of a morning between the sarcastic sycophants with a dump of a living room. References to the experimental Aryan race and rantings in a brilliant play. Martha drinks; George pours her the drinks that lubricate her lascivious grasp the unsuspecting Nick (**Tyler Joshua Herdklotz**). Watched with dewy-eyed wife, Honey (**Kelly Iversen**), this is Bedington and Morris' play. They are cruelly sparring reaches a painful crescendo at the top of the third act, and quiets to a scene

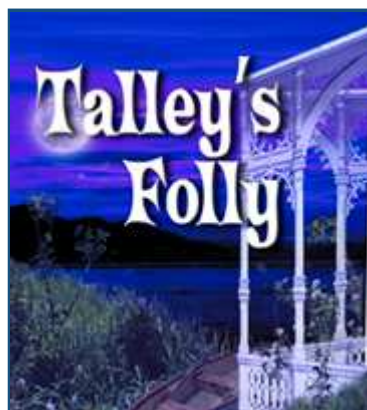
Keeping with the marriage theme, *Sideman* by **Warren Leight**, directed by **Scott** closed now at Diversionary, was a medley of marital woes and musical magic. Ver **Yaroch, Amanda Cooley Davis and Tom Hall**. Newcomer to our stages, **Jacqu** maturity and presence beyond her years.

The *Celebrity Sonnets* on the Old Globe stage last Monday had an almost full house the first night of Free Theatre in San Diego. All the funds raised will go towards the to be held in Balboa Park on April 24, 2010. Kudos to **Alex Sandie and also to Ma** execute this evening of celebration. And we are grateful to the Old Globe for hosting

Theatre News

Speaking of the Globe, I owe them an apology. This is what happens if you are to played Frank Sinatra (very successfully) and Bill Robinson was Mr. Bojangles. That means you read the column!

Here are some busy actors: Tom Hall will be in Intrepid's three Shakespeare LaterThanNever Productions. Brian Mackey is also in the Shakespeares, and the understudies in Boom! at the San Diego Rep. Jacque Wilke will feature in The New crochets costumes for cats! Then she moves on to The Heidi Chronicles at New Vill that production!) Amanda Cooley Davis is in Expecting Isabel for Moxie, then in May 2



Talley's Folly by Lanford Wilson opens this weekend **Biedel and David Ellenstein** (who also directs). The website featuring the actors and scenes from rehearsal

Monday, October 19 from 6:00 ~9:00 pm Join *Write O* Diego CityBeat's "Fiction 101" writing competition winners each. 28 VERY short stories, read aloud by San Diego Claire de Lune Coffee Lounge, 2906 University Avenue,

Man From Nebraska plays at Cygnet in Old Town through **Ellis-Troy and Amanda Sitton** of the cast were in the I think there is a Libby/Yaroch connection, but I'm not support actors, just as we do too!

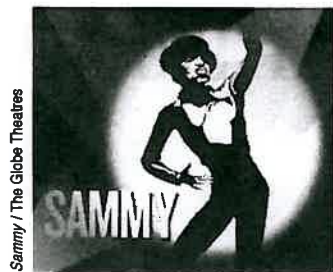
Long Story Short continues at the San Diego Repertory also through November 1. If an excerpt at the Star Awards. Lots of Surround Events for this production, which friends told me she absolutely loved.

SAN DIEGO INTERNATIONAL TIMES

September 1, 2009 YU YU

"Sammy" 「サミー」

伝説的エンターテイナーの半生を綴るミュージカル／ブロードウェイキャストによるプレミア



⑤ 歌手、俳優、ダンサーとして活躍したエンターテイナー、サミー・デイヴィス・ジュニア (1925-90) の半生を描くミュージカル。

サミーはニューヨーク・ハーレムでアフリカ系アメリカ人の父親とプエルトリコ系の母親の間に生まれる。一家がボードビル巡業で生計を立てていたことから、幼少より音楽、楽器、ダンスのレッスンを受け、3歳で初舞台を飾る。以降、アメリカ各地を転々とする生活を送り、1944年に徴兵により陸軍へ入隊。除隊後は歌、声帯模写、ダンスなどのマルチな才能を活かしてTVやナイトクラブ

で活躍した。1954年にレコードデビュー。人種差別が渦巻く社会で反発を受ける逆風に吹かれながら、交通事故で左目を失明するなどの困難も克服し、サミーは歌やタップダンスで人々を魅了し続けた。1959年にフランク・シナトラに異才を見出され、ディーン・マーティン、ピーター・フォードらと共に「ラット・バック」の一員となる。ラスベガスのホテル「サンズ」を中心にツアーを行い、映画『オーシャンと11人の仲間』などに出演し、やがて世界的な名声に手が届く成功を収める。

⑥ 数多くのヒット曲を生み出してきたアカデミー賞とグラミー賞受賞の人気作家、レスリー・ブリッカスが脚本、作詞、作曲を手がけるワールドプレミアのミュージカル。“The Candy Man”、“Mr. Bojangles”、“What Kind of Fool Am I”などのサミー・デイヴィス・ジュニアの往年のヒット曲が蘇るほか、ブリッカスがアンソニー・ニューリーと共に書き下ろした新曲もショーに盛り込まれている。演出はキース・グローヴァー。

主役のサミーを演じるのはブロードウェイの大ヒット作品“Dreamgirls”でC・C・ホワイトを演じ、トミー賞にノミネートされた俳優オッパ・ババタンデ。彼は“Chicago”、“Grind”、“Timbuktu”でブロードウェイの舞台に立ち、HBO制作映画“Miss Evers’ Boys”や“Introducing Dorothy Dandridge”などにも出演している。ブロードウェイで活躍する歌手やダンサー16名もキャストで登場する予定。

⑦ THE GLOBE THEATRES (Old Globe Theatre), 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park / 619-239-2255 (T)。期間—9/19(土)～11/8(日)。上演—火・水曜：7pm、木・金曜：8pm、土曜：2pm & 8pm、日曜：2pm & 7pm。チケット—TBA。http://www.oldglobe.org

SAN DIEGO

San Diego's Guide to

Good Times and Great Values

When autumn arrives, a soothing breeze sweeps over San Diego County, complementing the region's welcoming vibe. As the San Diego Chargers find themselves in another exciting football season, visitors can enjoy festivals and fairs, homemade apple pies and the autumn colors in the mountain town of Julian, plus haunting Halloween celebrations and diverse cultural entertainment. For a full lineup of fall activities, visit www.sandiego.org/falldeals.

Through Oct. 29, 10th annual San Diego Asian Film Festival at the UltraStar Cinema in Mission Valley's Hazard Center: Feature films, shorts, videos and workshops celebrate the work of Asian artists from around the world. www.sdaf.org.

Through Oct. 31, Kids Free Days at the San Diego Zoo and the San Diego Zoo's Wild Animal Park: Children ages 3 to 11 accompanied by adults receive complimentary admission into both parks. www.sandiegozoo.org.

Through Oct. 31, Brick-or-Treat at Legoland California: Every Saturday and Sunday in October, children ages 12 and under can trick-or-treat along the park's Brick-or-Treat Trail, a kid-sized cul-de-sac of spooky Lego homes with fun and creepy creatures. A costume contest will be held every Saturday. www.legoland.com.

Through Oct. 31, Haunted Trail of Terror at Marston Point in Balboa Park: Visitors are invited to run for their lives on this trail. www.hauntedhotel.com.

Through Nov. 1, Halloween Spooktacular at SeaWorld: This family-friendly weekend program features trick-or-treat stations, a Sesame Street-themed Halloween show, a Halloween-themed sea lion show and interactive Halloween characters along the pathways of the park. www.seaworld.com.

Through Nov. 8, Disney's "The Lion King" at San Diego Civic Theatre: Broadway San Diego presents this musical with Elton John and Tim Rice's music from the animated film along with three new songs by John and Rice. www.lionkingtour.com.

Through Nov. 8, World premiere of "Sammy" at the Old Globe Theatre: Broadway veteran Obba Babatundé stars as Sammy Davis Jr. in this new musical based on Davis' life. www.theoldglobe.org.

Through Nov. 15, Julian Fall Apple Harvest: This year, the Apple Harvest celebrates its 100th birthday as thousands of visitors venture to this historic East County mining town in the Cuyamaca Mountains to sample fresh apples, homemade apple pies and ciders. Visitors can also enjoy fall foliage, bed and breakfast inns, art shows, antique shops and live entertainment. www.julianca.com.

Through Jan. 3, 2010, "The Da Vinci Experience" at the San Diego Air and Space Museum: Two dozen fully functional models of Leonardo da Vinci's designs, 11 of which are full-sized, are arranged into three categories — transportation, military and mechanical — in this exhibit. www.sandiegoairandspace.org.

CALENDAR

Through Jan. 10, 2010, "Masters of Mid-Century California Modernism — Evelyn and Jerome Ackerman" at the Mingei International Museum: The exhibition comprises examples of the Ackermans' work in all media spanning their 50-year partnership, including new works completed within the past few years. www.mingei.org.

Through Jan. 31, 2010, "Miniature: Works by Marcel Duchamp and Joseph Cornell" exhibit at Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego (MCASD) in La Jolla: The exhibition explores the use of collage, assemblage and staged tableaux by these 20th century artists. www.mcasd.org.

Through Jan. 31, 2010, "Automatic Cities: The Architectural Imaginary in Contemporary Art," Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, La Jolla: This exhibit explores the psychological and metaphorical influence of architecture on contemporary visual art. www.mcasd.org.

Oct. 31, Monster Bash in the Gaslamp Quarter: From 6 p.m. to midnight, this annual outdoor music festival features bewitching live bands and an extreme costume contest. This ticketed event is for guests ages 21 and older. www.gaslampquarter.org.

Nov. 1, San Diego Chargers vs.



Through Nov. 15 The Fall Apple Harvest in Julian is celebrating its 100th birthday.



Through Oct. 31 Children accompanied by adults receive free admission to see the animals at San Diego Zoo and the San Diego Zoo's Wild Animal Park.



Nov. 18-22 The San Diego Bay Wine & Food Festival features five days of gourmet food, celebrity chef presentations and wine tastings in the downtown area.



Through Nov. 8 Broadway veteran Obba Babatundé stars as Sammy Davis Jr. in this new musical based on Davis' life at the Old Globe Theatre.

Oakland Raiders at Qualcomm Stadium in Mission Valley. www.chargers.com.

Nov. 6-15, First Annual San Diego Beer Week: A 10-day celebration with more than 100 experiences to choose from, including beer tastings, beer-and-cheese pairing events, home brewing demos and meet-the-brewer events. <http://sdbw.org/>.

Nov. 7-Feb. 28, Darwin: Evolution | Revolution exhibit at the San Diego Natural History Museum: The exhibit will explore the life and work of Charles Darwin, whose evolutionary theories on natural selection and evolution changed the face of science. Darwin's manuscripts, notebooks and artworks will be on display, as well as the intricate orchids that he used when developing his revolutionary theories. www.sfdnhm.org.

Nov. 10-Dec. 20, The World Premiere of "Bonnie and Clyde"

at the La Jolla Playhouse: San Diego's second Tony Award-winning theater, the La Jolla Playhouse debuts a story of America's most infamous couple on the run. www.lajollaplayhouse.org.

Nov. 15, San Diego Chargers vs. Philadelphia Eagles at Qualcomm Stadium in Mission Valley. www.chargers.com.

Nov. 18-22, San Diego Bay Wine and Food Festival: Wine and food enthusiasts gather for

this five-day event, the region's largest wine and culinary extravaganza, held at several venues throughout downtown San Diego. Gourmet food, celebrity chefs, wine tasting and an elegant Reserve and New Release tasting event are featured. www.worldofwineevents.com.

Nov. 27, Chargers 50th Anniversary Block Party. Fifty all-time Chargers players of old and new will be in attendance, and the celebration will feature national and local entertainment, a preview of the "Chargers 50th Anniversary" video, food and drinks. www.sandiego.org/event/Visitors/4768.

SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE

October 29, 2009

NIGHT & DAY



"Sammy," the new musical about the singular Sammy Davis Jr., has sweet dancing, big hits ("The Candy Man," "Once in a Lifetime") and a committed title performance by Obba Babatundé. But the sometimes relentlessly conventional show doesn't seem inclined to follow in its subject's barrier-busting footsteps. *David Brooks / Union-Tribune*

THE RAGE

September 2009





▶ What's Yacht to Like?

The high life sails into the Shelter Island Marina Sept. 17-20, as the 10th annual YachtFest San Diego shows off the yachts that make for many a sailor's dream. Besides boats of many sizes, the event includes luxury cars and the accessories your floating palace will require. Thur.-Sat. 11-6, Sun. 11-4. 2071 Shelter Island Dr., 858-836-0133, yachtfest.com.

▶ Packing 'Em In

Singer, actor and famed Rat Pack member Sammy Davis Jr. is celebrated in grand musical style in *Sammy*, starring Obba Babatundé (pictured), Sept. 19-Nov. 1 on the Old Globe Theatre's main stage: Tues. & Wed. at 7, Thur. & Fri. at 8, Sat. at 2 & 8, Sun. at 2 & 7; additional performance Mon., Sept. 21, at 7. 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park, 619-234-5623, theoldglobe.org.



CRAIG SCHWARTZ

Calendar

October 8-14

Your Week
AND WELCOME TO IT

Thursday | 8

BATS: FRIGHTFUL FACES!

Take a short bat-related hike and do some bat-crafting with Ant-Sized Adventures, where kids (aged 2-5) and parents will learn all kinds of fun bat facts, such as how these little critters are almost always more helpful than harmful. Then you'll have no need to fear any spooky bat decorations when trick-or-treating later this month. See [FOR KIDS](#), page 69.



evil told through the eyes of eight characters (Cinderella, Jasmine, Ariel, Aurora, Belle, Pocahontas, Mulan, and Snow White). See [FOR KIDS](#), page 69.

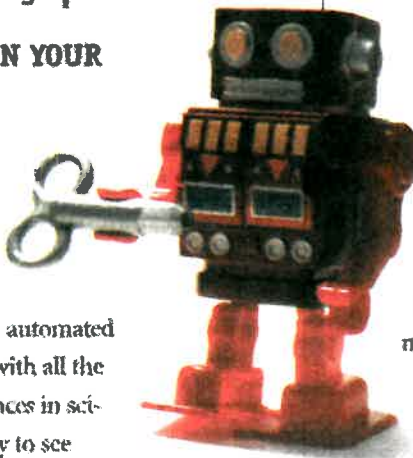
TAKE THE HAUNTED TRAIL

When darkness falls, Marston Point in Balboa Park is filled with creepy ghouls and goblins. This "all-outdoor haunted attraction" follows a mile-long trail through a twisted grove of pines and gnarled oaks. Be afraid, very. See [SPECIAL](#), page 66.

Saturday | 10

ROBOTS IN YOUR FUTURE?

Ethicists are discussing "robot rights" in anticipation of an automated world, and with all the recent advances in science, it's easy to see why. At the Robotic Education Expo held at Cuyamaca College, see engineering presentations, exhibits, and competitions such as Botball, iARoC, autonomous underwater vehicles, SeaBotix, and the Robo X Chess Team. See [SPECIAL](#), page 66.



(LEGO) LUKE, I AM YOUR FATHER!

Feel free to dress up as your favorite *Star Wars* personality and enjoy "all things Lego Star Wars" at Warwick's Bookstore.



SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11: LITTLE ITALY FESTA

Various *Star Wars* characters will be on hand, and you can take part in a costume contest and enjoy activities, food, and more, all to celebrate the launch of Dorling Kindersley's *Lego Star Wars: The Visual Dictionary*. See [FOR KIDS](#), page 69.

of the ocean's most intriguing and least-studied creatures for their Perspectives on Ocean Science lecture series. Learn about the sophisticated tools oceanographers employ to unravel the mysteries of the evolution of life...in the deep. See [LECTURES](#), page 71.

"DEVELOPMENT: CREATING SUSTAINABLE JUSTICE"

As part of the University of San Diego's 20th-annual social issues conference, panelists from the University of San Diego's Hahn School of Nursing and Health Sciences will discuss their international missions in a lecture titled "Is Health a Human Right?" Keynote speaker is global health advocate Dr. Paul Farmer. See [LECTURES](#), page 70.

Friday | 9

DREAMS DO COME TRUE!

Glitter, dancing, and gliding on ice! Disney on Ice presents *Princess Classics*, combining "exceptional moments" from all your Disney favorites. It's a tale of triumph against



Sunday | 11

LITTLE ITALY FESTA

Celebrate all things Italian at the Italian-American festival in the one neighborhood in San Diego that provides chairs on the sidewalks for pedestrians to sit and watch the goings-on. Food, art, retail vendors, entertainment stages, bocce ball tournament, stickball game, and more, plus the featured Gesso Italian Chalk Painting Contest. See [SPECIAL](#), page 65.

Tuesday | 13

SAMMY

Mr. Bojangles incarnate, Sammy Davis Jr., is the subject of writer-composer-lyricist Leslie Bricusse's musical biography premiering at the Old Globe Theatre. Directed by Keith Glover. See [THEATER](#), page 119.



Monday | 12

"NEW DISCOVERIES IN DEEP-SEA ANIMAL DIVERSITY"

Scripps biological oceanographer Greg Rouse unveils his latest findings on some

Wednesday | 14

THE WEDDING SINGER

The Pearl Hotel's "dive-in theater" event combines "eclectic film choices," food, drink, and light conversation at its poolside lounge and outdoor theater. Feel free to bring a swimsuit, and if you feel like making a night of it, keep in mind that local residents get a discount on rooms. See [FILM](#), page 68.

SAN DIEGO READER

October 1, 2009

CALENDAR



Sammy