

Singer brings Broadway to Lanfair



Jeff Barron, Reporter

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(Photo: Matthew Berry/Eagle-Gazette)

LANCASTER - With tunes such as "Cabaret," "New York, New York" and others, former New York City Opera member Paola Semprini brought a little bit of Broadway to the Lanfair Center for Rehabilitation and Nursing on Thursday as she presented "A Musical Journey."

The Verona, Italy, native last performed the show about three months ago at a Pennsylvania casino.

"It's exactly the same show people would see at the casino, except that I don't have the light and the smoke or the same orchestra," Semprini said. "It's music from 1948 to 1972."

With no orchestra present, she sang to a CD she rehearses with.

Semprini's friend, Pietro Tartamella, aka the Singing Chef on PBS, has been at Lanfair for about two weeks, and Semprini said she wanted to thank the staff for his care with a show.

"I brought him here two weeks ago after an operation, and I swear he was going to die," she said. "And within two weeks, this establishment made him flourish again. I am so happy about this. And as I was talking to the director about this, somebody mentioned that they had seen me somewhere. And I said it was probably on TV. That slipped, because usually I don't say it. Then they got online and asked me if I would do a show."

Semprini performed for about an hour, ending with a Frank Sinatra/Elvis Presley medley of "New York, New York," "My Way" and "I Can't Help Falling in Love With You."

She also performed standards such as "Sentimental Journey," "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" and "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" for about 25 Lanfair residents. The latter tune was a big hit for the 1950s act, The Platters.

Semprini brought an impressive musical resume with her, as she has performed with Andrea Bocelli and Luciano Pavarotti. She has performed in operas such as "Otello," "La Boheme" and "Madama Butterfly."

She also once performed "Aida" under Placido Domingo's direction, and she said she has a five-octave range.

Semprini is a former Manhattan resident who now lives in Crooksville. She was with the New York City Opera for 27 years, and she has also performed in Atlantic City casinos and Hilton hotels.

Semprini said she enjoyed her local performance, as did resident Paul Jablonka

"I thought it was great, tremendous," Jablonka said. "She had a real good show, and she involved all of the audience, which was nice. It was interesting. I enjoyed it. I thought she did a real good job."

Jablonka said he remembered most of the songs well enough to sing along to them, and some other residents did the same.

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