



## Hereafter Musical Review

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By Brandon Alvarado • October 1st, 2014

One of the hardest things to write, and perform successfully, is a show that tackles a taboo subject with a mix of poise and humor, and Hereafter is a show that does this very well. The story focuses on three women of three different ages and backgrounds, played by Eileen Fexas, Carolyn Mignini, and Courtney Capek, as they visit a medium, played by Paul Blankenship, to try and talk to the three family members that they lost. On the “other side,” the ladies’ three family members, played by Pierce Cravens (the understudy, Travis Artz, performed the night I went), Michelle Cabinian, and Dallas’s Deborah Tranelli, have to decide whether they want to communicate with their family members as well. The catch is, they will be taken into the “hereafter” if they choose to communicate with their families, according to the character, Anita, played by Frankie Keane (who is the co-writer of the show).

The show is opening in the Snapple Theater Center, which provides a small and intimate setting for the audience. The set design, which has the entire show take place in the office of the medium, will have the audience feel like they are in the room with the three women and their departed loves ones. The show is also a musical, and it includes strong singing performances from each of the actors as they sing about love, loss, and what the future holds for themselves and their loved ones. As well as the singing, the acting was wonderful, with the specific standouts being Frankie Keane, Deborah Tranelli, and Carolyn Mignini, who were able to make the audience members laugh and then cry within two scenes. But, all of the actors did a wonderful job of tackling the subject of death and the afterlife with grace, humor, and realness that audiences need when watching a show with a subject like this.

With Frankie Keane, Vinnie Favale, who is known for being a producer of Late Night with David Letterman and currently the Vice President of CBS Late Night Programming, wrote the script that was partially based off a story that Favale read that talked about an eighteen year old who was killed in a drunk driving accident. The script brings up multiple questions about moving on after someone you love dies. Here is one thing to note: the purpose of this script is not to question your religious beliefs. Rather, this is a story that questions being able to move on and how to move on after losing someone you love. In a time where so many people are lost due to different accidents and catastrophic events, this is a play that tackles the idea of how to handle grief and allow the living to keep living their lives after you believe that it is no longer a possibility. The women in the show lose three different people in their lives- one mother loses a son, another mother loses a daughter, and a soon-to-be mother loses her own mother- and are easily relatable to many people that struggle with their own losses. Although these women are not physically dead, they carry around their feelings of guilt and grief that keep them from truly living, and audiences become riders of the emotional roller coaster Favale and Keane created. If you need any other reasons that will convince you to see this play, think of this: you can expect Oprah Winfrey to make a movie based off this play in ten years and expect her to play one of the characters because she cried her eyes out and loved the show. Frankie Keane, I’m looking at you. She will definitely want to play your character.

For anyone going to see the show, make sure to grab the tissues that are provided for you at the doors of the theater. My friend and I cried our eyes out by the end of the show as we were both wallowing in our Skittles and M&Ms (which were only \$3 each- a steal for any New York City theater), and trust me, you will be doing the same by the end of the sure. So ladies and gentlemen, saddle up with your glass of wine (or some special Snapple Theater Center bottles of Snapple), your choice of comfort candy, and take a ride into the world of the Hereafter.