

## Hudson Reporter - Danny Aiello returns to film at Loews

by Al Sullivan

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Vincent Favale, vice president of CBS Late Night Programming, hadn't planned to film his musical video "Hereafter" at the Historic Landmark Loew's Theater in Jersey City. He had researched two other historic locations, one in Middletown and another in Staten Island, but neither had the historic elements he needed for his film, or else they gave off vibes that didn't seem right for the project.

So Favale, with credits that included work with Howard Stern and David Letterman, turned to the internet. He had grown up near a Loew's Theater, so he simply typed into Google, "Loew's New Jersey." He was amazed at what he found in Jersey City. It was almost too good to be true, he said, especially when he called and got good vibes from the staff. Favale, however, was wary. Sometimes internet information is akin to what you find on dating sites. Sometimes the information shows off only the best side, not the flaws. But once he came to Jersey City and Colin Egan, president of the Friends of the Loews Theater, turned on the lights, Favale realized he found what he wanted.

## **A mini movie**

Designed in part to revive interest in an Off-Broadway play “Hereafter, the musical,” that Favale co-authored several years ago, the 19 to 25-minute video delves into the realm of magical realism. The original play focused on the lives of three women who seek out a medium to reach those beyond the grave, but the video focuses on the medium, an older psychic played by veteran stage and screen star Danny Aiello.

His character is based on a romantic irony. He has helped others find their loved ones in the afterlife, but has always been denied access to the person he has loved since he was a young man.

A singer and Oscar-nominated actor, Aiello is well-known in Hudson County, especially in Hoboken, where for years he frequented local restaurants. In the opening of the video he is seated in his armchair at home watching TV, on which film critic Rex Reed plays the host of a program called “Hollywood Movie Classic,” which is showing a film featuring fictional movie star Anita Moriarty, played Frankie Keane; she is Aiello’s character’s unrequited love. Arlene Dahl, a superstar in her own right, plays herself in the video.

Keane, a resident of Weehawken and a well-established, singer, writer and actor, joked about her co-authoring the play and the video. “When I can’t get a part, I have to write one for myself,” she said.

In the video, Aiello, surrounded by his loved one’s movie paraphernalia, is transported out of his living room, and finds himself outside the old theater where the star’s name is on the marquee. He goes in, finds a seat, not yet aware that the ghost of the woman he loves is in the theater with him as well as on the screen.

The emotional high point of the video is when Aiello sings to the woman on the screen, and is eventually transported into the film where they sing together.

Dahl, who has been to the Loews in the past to introduce one of her classic films, is expected to return to the Loews for the debut of this video next year, 70 years after her first film debut in 1947.

### **Aiello was a good fit**

Favale, a producer of “The Late Show With Steven Colbert,” said he met Aiello years ago during a TV shoot.

“Danny sort of drags you into his world and we became friends,” Favale said.

Aiello coincidentally recorded one of the songs on a recent album, sparking the idea for the short-subject musical as a spinoff from the original play.

“We said this was a music video, but it’s really a mini-movie, a musical,” Favale said. “More than 50 percent of the film is music.”

But the film also sets up many of the emotional scenes with non-musical scenes giving it the texture of a short film.

With shoots still scheduled for other locations, Favale expects to have the debut at the Loew’s in 2017, and will submit it for several key film festivals before seeking a nomination in the short film category in Academy Awards.

Favale said the theme of the short film is similar to the original play: people looking to find the missing parts of their lives. “In this case, the main character helped others, but could not help find the person he loves,” Favale said.

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