

Catch the last of local Simon & Garfunkel tribute at Theatre On The Bay

 By [Debbie Hathway](#)

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If I had to put a soundtrack to my teens in the '80s, it would not be filled with hits from that period.

Instead, it would be a compilation of music introduced to me by my uncle, who used to love arriving from Grahamstown at my family home in Port Elizabeth for the weekend. We never knew when he would appear, but the sound of his clapped-out brown Volksie at the gate used to get me and my siblings running downstairs to welcome him.



I used to sit and listen to him play the guitar for hours – his favourites included Jim Croce, Peter Sarstedt, Olivia Newton-John, Carole King, Cat Stevens, Bread and Simon & Garfunkel – and they soon became mine.

A fusion

Here's to You honours the work of Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel at Theatre On The Bay until 17 August 2019 with a programme of well-loved and lesser-known songs that trigger those memories all over again. They were born in the early 1940s – and met when they were 11 years old.

It was the rock 'n roll era and they made their name as folk-rock singers (the Theatre on the Bay set had a country and western feel to me and country isn't the same as folk) until a fallout in 1958 "shattered" their friendship permanently.

Simon had made a solo deal behind his back and while Garfunkel would not talk about the fallout, he told *Rolling Stone*: "I think the main thing about us is that we're good. We're very good. We take two very different people, Artie and Paul, who have very different natures and found a fusion."

Talented cast

What's different about *Here's to You* is that it's performed by an extremely talented young cast of eight singers who all play musical instruments.

Wessel Odendaal directs the musical inclinations of *The Voice SA* 2017 runner-up Josh Ansley on guitar, Ashleigh Butcher on banjo/guitar/ukelele, Daniel Geddes on keyboards, Hanna So on piano/violin/cello, Justin Swartz on guitar/vocal percussion, Phindile Dube on percussion and Sanli Jooste on cello.



Josh Ansley, Sanli Jooste, Ashleigh Butcher

I was later reminded that Butcher is the daughter of a school friend – another PE reference – whose development I've been following via Facebook posts. I went back and had a look at a video of her singing “Over the Rainbow” in 2010. If her talent was clear then; you should see her now.

Opening-night nerves may have impacted the performers and the sound didn't do justice to some of their voices. I was relieved that they opted for a minimal script, I believe a tightly-scripted production only works well with trained actors or very experienced artists, otherwise the delivery can be a bit wooden.

Only a few songs gave a glimpse of what Ansley can do and that was later on in the show (Google his performances in *The Voice* if you haven't seen them already). Dube brought the house down every time it was her turn to shine while So's moment on piano, opening the second act, was an eye-opener after she'd been on the string instruments for most of the first act.

Eventually, everyone seemed to settle.



Justin Swartz, Hanna So, Daniel Geddes

Here's to You was VR Theatrical's first staged music concert in a theatrical setting. Theatre fans might remember their 2016 hit, *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change*, and they've staged several Broadway productions since then – including *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*.

The Simon & Garfunkel songbook features a feel-good and often toe-tapping selection of the duo's hits such as "Bridge Over Troubled Water", "Cecilia", "The Sound of Silence", "Scarborough Fair", "Mrs Robinson", "Graceland" and "The Boxer", which is my favourite. And everybody has theirs, which was evident by the happy smiling faces around me. It was just what we needed.

Here's to You is on at Theatre on the bay till 17 August, but is sold out, and at the Peter Toerien Main Theatre from the 31 January - 8 March 2020. Tickets are R100 to R350 at computicket.co.za or via 021 438 3301.

ABOUT DEBBIE HATHWAY

Debbie Hathway is an award-winning writer, with a special interest in luxury lifestyle (watches, jewellery, travel, property investment) and the arts.

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