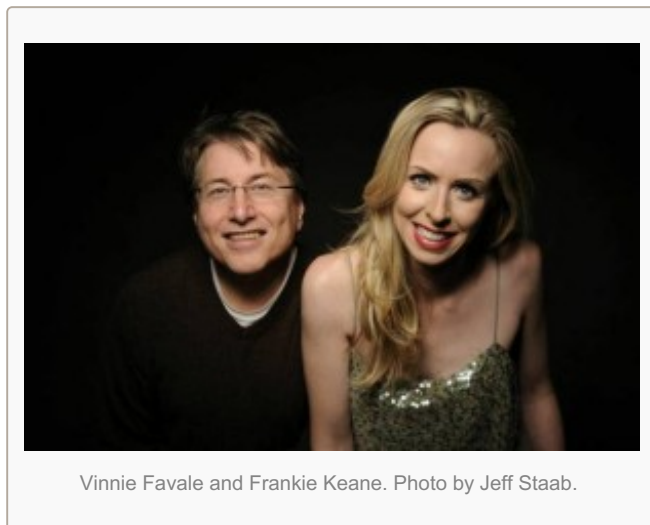


Vinnie Favale and Frankie Keane Open Up About Their New Musical 'Hereafter' - StageBuddy.com

Hereafter Musical opens October 25 at the Snapple Theater Center.

Vinnie Favale's path to the New York stage is not exactly typical. The CBS Vice President of Late Night, he started writing the songs that would eventually become part of *Hereafter Musical* as expressive outlet 11 years ago; it wasn't until he partnered up with Frankie Keane five years later that the project became a reality. No stranger to the screen and stage (as well as being an accomplished singer, songwriter and instrumentalist), Keane not only co-wrote the musical with Favale, but also stars as Anita, a beautiful, witty, and mysterious character.



Hereafter Musical brings a warm and personal light to a difficult part of life that all of us endure: learning how to go on with life after losing a loved one. The desire to connect and heal is the driving force behind the show and what leads the main characters to the home of medium Jason Richards as they search for answers. In addition to ensuring that their loved ones are at peace, these three women long for a way to find happiness again in their present lives.

StageBuddy got the chance to speak with Favale and Keane to discuss their working relationship, how *Hereafter Musical* came to be, and their personal experiences with mediums.

Vinnie, with such an impressive and long-standing career in entertainment and broadcasting, what has this experience in theater meant for you?

Vinnie Favale: It has been an incredible learning experience. In some ways, it feels like the early days of my TV career when I was just learning the ropes. Theater and TV are so different in the way things come together. It's been humbling at times but well worth it because unlike film or TV, this is a live experience and the audience that you are trying to entertain is actually in the room with you while it's happening. Given the subject matter, each audience member brings his or her own life experience to our show and their reaction often fuels what happens on stage with the actors.

How would you describe your own creative style?

VF: I think it's pretty unorthodox at least with regards to how *Hereafter* came together. Because of my responsibilities during the day, most of my work on the show (especially the lyrics) happened during what I call the "margins of my life". I live in South Jersey and work in Midtown so I have an average daily commute of 90 minutes each way. I used a lot of that time to work on the lyrics for the songs. I looked at it like one long crossword puzzle. I also spent a lot of late night hours and weekends working on the book and music demos with Frankie Keane (my writing partner).

Frankie, what about you?

Frankie Keane: My creative style is satiating the 19 voices in my head, I'm giving them an outlet in which to be satisfied...kinda kidding but not really! My creative style is 'let me vomit out all my ideas and then take a breath and let you deal with it'...just ask Vinnie...he has to clean it up all the time!

Creativity can get messy! What excites you most about your career?

FK: What excites me most about my career is that it is ever-changing. That requires me to keep learning and keep bettering myself and my craft and to keep on creating! It also has introduced me to so many creatives that have accomplished so much that cheer me on, and I have to pinch myself.

How has your prior experience prepared you for *Hereafter*?

FK: My prior experience prepared me for me for being able to adapt to how quickly things can change at the drop of a hat. Being able to see someone's vision with *your* work, your words takes the ability to work *with* others...be adaptable.

Another experience that I had here in New York was with a director who was just unprofessional and mean. I learned to never treat people the way I was treated. Always be supportive of others gifts and if they need help, give it -- don't expect them to figure out what is in your head, you've lived with it, they haven't.

Vinnie, years before *Hereafter Musical* was a reality, you were looking for a way to make sense of personal experiences that you had in life, dealing with losing someone or relating to a family who lost someone.... Tell me how those experiences led you to where you are today.

VF: The genesis of the story happened when a local teenager died in a car accident near my home. I did not know him or his family. I read about it in the local paper and one of the things that stood out for me was that he had two sisters. I lost an older and younger brother when I was a teenager and this triggered a lot of painful memories. About a week after the accident I noticed the roadside memorial (it's still up there after 11 years). It inspired me to write a song called "Nineteen". The song came out beautiful but it really had no purpose other than to get it out of my system. Seeing that roadside memorial ever week was haunting and the fact that the song came out so well got me thinking that maybe it could have a life in a theatrical environment. But I dismissed that idea pretty quickly because it sounded so far out of my capabilities. Yet here we are 11 years later and the show is now running off-Broadway.



In writing, working on the music, and producing this show, what have been some of the biggest challenges?

VF: The handicap on the music side is my inability to play an instrument. I consider myself a good songwriter (both of the music and lyrics) but it is *very* difficult process to get it from what I've written and what I hear in my head to the final version. But luckily, I was blessed with having a writing partner who is also an amazing singer and songwriter herself. I convey the song to her and then she helps me convey it

to our musical director (and song whisperer) Bill Hindin. By the time we get to the actual demo, the song is not only what I wrote and heard in my head, but embellished with Frankie's vocals and vocal arrangement but also with Bill's musical arrangement.

As for challenges in producing the show, the entire process has been a challenge for me...and again, it's because of my handicap in that I've never done anything like this before and I am also one of the investors. It's something that I don't really like doing because in a better producer's hands (with more assets like a real marketing and promotion budget) I believe this show can be a huge hit. And one of the reasons we are doing this open-ended run is get the attention of producers out there that can come on board and carry some of this load.

In the show, three women visit the widely known medium, Jason Richards. What is your personal opinion/experience with mediums? Has working on the show changed your perspective?

VF: I know lots of people who have had life altering experiences with mediums (including Frankie). I have been to many psychic readings and I've yet to have that big moment (like the women get at the end of the show). I think my desperate, unfulfilled need for it to happen to me is what fueled the creation of the show. I still believe that it could happen but until it does, I'm happy with the theatrical version being a substitute.

Frankie, talk to me about your experience with mediums.

FK: I've been fortunate to have very good results with mediums that I had not intended on going to see. Working on the show has not changed my perspective at all, it's just reinforced my own experiences and hopefully other people will be as fortunate as I am with my with my experiences.

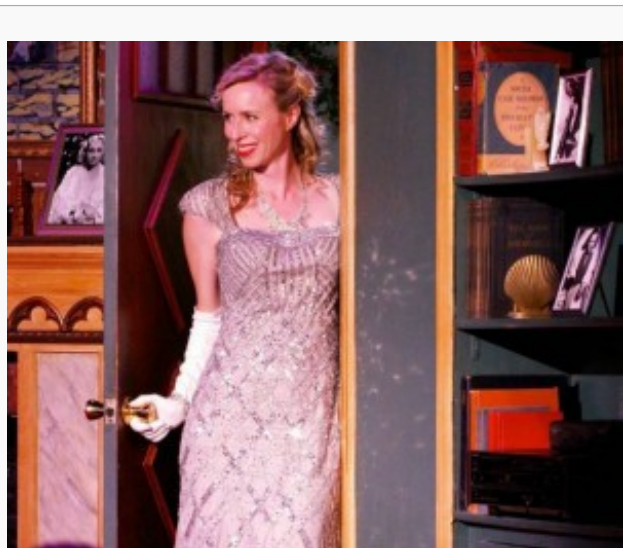
In addition to this compelling story, it is also a musical: why do you think the combination makes for such a unique experience?

VF: I love the whole idea of the musical format. We are making our actors go to some heavy places and I think like in life, we do that in our own heads a lot of the time. Sure, we'll open up to a friend and maybe cry on their shoulder but our inner sadness is powerful stuff. And the great thing about a musical is that a lot of the songs are infernal thoughts that give us deeper layers and insights into our character...more so than what the book can do on its own.

Frankie, you also star in the show. In addition to the artistic process, how would you describe being able to literally bring your work and vision to life through your character?

FK: I would describe being able to literally bring my work and vision to life through Anita as one of the most ridiculously fun experiences I've ever had. There's nothing like being able to write things for yourself or for your character and be able to laugh at them and hear other people laughing at what you've created.

Hereafter Musical is different than anything else I've ever worked on because it's taken over six years to see it completed and come to fruition. Normally I write a song and it takes me an hour or less, but this required a lot more work and a lot more thought and soul over a much longer time. It's like a child you're sending off to college...you're sad, but you know eventually they will find their place in this



Frankie Keane in "Hereafter Musical." Photo by John Filo.

world and make a difference.

How would you describe the dynamic between you and Vinnie?

FK: The dynamic between Vinnie and myself is like two siblings who love to get each other in trouble and crack each other up, but also have each other's back and finish each other's sentences. But most importantly...can always count on each other. We each have our own unique set of talents and only make each other stronger by sharing them.

Vinnie, what would you say?

VF: Our working relationship still amuses me after all of these years. We are very similar in so many ways but when we disagree on something (rarely), the results are *always* positive. And as someone who has worked in comedy for over 25 years, I am very critical about it and would actually prefer to not go for the laugh. Yet, it comes so easy to Frankie that as much as I resisted it in the beginning, the show's comic moments kept on growing because of her.

What is the greatest lesson you've learned from Frankie?

VF: Listen to *every* pitch no matter how absurd it may sound like. I'm very logical (maybe too logical). Frankie would pitch an idea that on first listen did not register with me. Not even close. But her stuff always came from an honest and funny place so I'd sit with it for a while. And in lots of cases we may have not used the idea as she pitched but it would often lead to something great.

Exactly, it is always a gift to be surprised. Frankie, what inspires you most about Vinnie?

FK: What inspires me most about working with Vinnie is his infectious energy. His sense of humor is wrong and I respond to that, lol! He's not afraid to look stupid for the greater good which is usually getting those around him to smile. He keeps me laughing all the time but most importantly it's his talent that's pretty amazing that's that's fun to feed off of. He (and his family) have *huge* hearts and he indulges all of my crazy ideas. I'm very blessed.

It sounds like audiences are in for quite a powerful experience. What is your hope for audience members seeing the show in terms of lasting impressions?

VF: Our hope is that they felt their time was well spent with us. And our big wish is that they take the show home with them in their hearts and minds. And if they think enough of it to tell a friend or to download some of our music, that would be very rewarding.

FK: My hope for audience member seeing the show is that they want to bring their friends back because they know it will help them with some struggles that they are going through. I've had people tell me it helped them and that is what makes it all worthwhile.

Hereafter Musical opens on Saturday, October 25, 2014 at 4:45 p.m. at the Snapple Theater Center (1627 Broadway). For more information, visit: www.hereaftermusical.com



Deborah Tranelli, Pierce Cravens, and Michelle Cabinian in "Hereafter Musical." Photo by John Filo.