

Musical brothers make theatre swing

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Byline: Chris Smith

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THE brothers Vach know how to swing, and how to have fun. And how to pick a great pianist like Eddie Higgins.

The three musicians, along with Winnipeggers Gilles Fournier on bass and Rob Siwik on drums, made the Berney Theatre swing like crazy yesterday afternoon in the first of two concerts.

The musical brothers don't get many chances to perform together, but yesterday, "little brother" Allan's birthday, they were able to partake in their brand of small combo swing for two shows as part of the **Asper Foundation Jazz Performances**.

If any single instrument spells swing, the clarinet may just be it; in the hands of Benny Goodman or Allan Vach. But brother Warren, who has played with Goodman, makes the trumpet a close second - well, make that a tie.

From Ellington to Porter to Gershwin, the musicians played the best from the swing repertoire and made a quintet pack as much punch as the original big bands that performed classics such as Take The "A" Train and Cotton Tail.

The opening number, Just Friends, set the tone when Allan's solo elicited whoops from the audience. "A" Train, which is guaranteed to get everybody moving, was a gem and bassist Fournier had a ball both performing and watching pianist Higgins in action.

Higgins is an excellent pianist, and was given solo and trio spots to prove the point. Sleigh Ride, with a long introduction sampling Christmas carols, won the pianist prolonged applause. His boogie-woogie rendition of St. Louis Blues, played with Fournier and Siwik, was a rousing crowd-pleaser.

Allan and Warren Vach are both superb soloists, but a pleasure during the show was their interplay on numbers as the great rhythm section held down the fort. Fournier and Siwik are not strangers to each other and make a formidable pair on the bandstand, having backed many visiting musicians, but they really clicked with Higgins and the Vach brothers.

The Ellington classic Cotton Tail was a highlight of the show: it is so easily recognizable; it so easily swings like mad; and it showcased the musicians at their best.

The Vach brothers and Higgins rarely perform together, but a chance encounter in Palm Springs when Izzy Asper saw them perform, opened up another date for the formidable team.

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