

## Soul Crooners 2



*Crooners Leon Pitts II, Chris Eisenberg, Nate Jacobs and Michael Mendez.*

Soul Crooners 2	
Arts Council Theatre	
Fri, Aug. 7	3 p.m.
Fri, Aug. 7	8 p.m.
Sat. Aug. 8	3 p.m.
Sat. Aug. 8	8 p.m.
<b>\$41</b>	

This will be a National Black Theatre Festival to remember for Nate Jacobs. The wildly talented entertainer will be presented with this year's Larry Leon Hamlin Producer Award at the Opening Night Gala on Monday, Aug. 3. On Friday, Aug. 7, the four-show run of "Soul Crooners 2" – which he conceived, adapted and stars in – opens.

NBTF-goers first fell under the spell of the Crooners in 2013. This new show offers more soul, as Jacobs and four other talented singers serve as guides on a musical tour of the "unforgettable melodies, heavenly harmonies and great vocalists of the 1970s." The production features about 40 songs made famous by an array of artists, from Billy Paul and Lou Rawls to The Delfonics and The Stylistics.

The renditions delivered by Jacobs and company – Chris Eisenberg, Michael Mendez, Leon Pitts II and Emmanuel Avraham – are so good that they could stand as classics in their own right. The Crooners are accompanied by a five-piece band made up of Todd Bellamy, Jamar D. Camp, Etienne J. Porter, James Johnston and music director/stage manager Jay Dodge II. They are

accounted in threads from the era by costume designer Cristy Owen.

"Soul Crooners 2" is being presented by the Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe, the Sarasota-based company Jacobs founded in December 1999. It is the only professional black theater company on Florida's west coast and one of only two in the entire state. Jacobs already had an established relationship with the N.C. Black Repertory Company and National Black Theatre Festival when WBTT made its festival debut two years ago. Fourteen years ago, the Black Rep staged Jacobs' side-splitting one-man comedy "Aunt Rudele's Family Reunion." The play, which Jacobs wrote, also had a run at the NBTF.

Besides offering high quality, award-winning entertainment, WBTT is a training and proving ground for gifted performers. The troupe's alumni include Apphia Campbell, who has performed her one-woman show, "Black is the Color of My Voice," in Shanghai and New York; Teresa Stanley, who has appeared on Broadway in "Rock of Ages" and "The Color Purple;" Alyssa White, an Apollo Theatre Amateur Night winner; and Crooner star Christopher Eisenberg, who made it to a top tier on "America's Got Talent" in 2010 when he was just 13.

A graduate of Florida A&M University, Jacobs does it all, as an actor, singer, comedian, playwright, composer and director. His other productions include "Motown 60s Review," "Magnificent Music of the 40s," "Love Sung in the Key of Aretha," "Jazz Hot Mamas" and "The Sam Cooke Story." ■

Dr. Anthony D. Hill, Professor Emeritus at The Ohio State University, is writing the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of his internationally acclaimed book, *The Historical Dictionary of African American Theatre*. The 1<sup>st</sup> edition of HDAAT is enshrined at OSU's Book Case of Distinguished Professors.



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