

Swingin' — and Singin' — like Sinatra

Teen singer Brandon Tomasello moves to the big room at Resorts

By ROBERT DIGIACOMO
At The Shore

Brandon Tomasello has gone from lounge act to headliner in a matter of months. The 19-year-old, who has been wowing patrons at The Whiskey Bar at Resorts Casino Hotel since his debut last summer, has moved up to the showroom.

Tomasello is the main attraction in "Sing Swing Sinatra," a new show running through Feb. 16, at Resorts' Superstar Theater.

"A lot of things came out of the lounge—the big thing that I was dreaming of was the Superstar Theater," Tomasello says. "Every time I walked past the door to the theater, I would peek my head through the crack to look in the room. For me, it's not the fact that it's a big room, but look who's performed in that room—everyone from Sinatra to Tony Bennett."

Although Tomasello is a newcomer to Atlantic City stages, the part-time Brigantine resident is not worried about playing to big audiences. He's performed on several occasions with the Philadelphia Boys Choir at the city's Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, and has gotten his chops at the Whiskey Bar, where he continues to appear on Saturday nights.

"I'm more nervous in front of a smaller crowd," he says. "For me, the more the merrier."

Still, Tomasello acknowledges the daunting task of starring in a Sinatra-themed show. The pro-

'Sing Swing Sinatra'

WHEN: 3:30 p.m. Thursdays. 8 p.m. Wednesdays. 3:30 p.m. Wednesday show on Jan. 11, Jan. 25. 3:30 p.m. Sunday show on Jan. 15. 8 p.m. Monday show on Jan. 16. 8 p.m. Tuesday show Jan. 31. Runs to Feb. 14. \$20.

WHERE: Superstar Theater, Resorts Casino Hotel, Atlantic City

HOW MUCH: Tickets, priced at \$20, are available at Resorts' box office or www.pressofatlanticcity.com/tickets

WEB SITE:
www.brandontomasello.com

duction features him in a concert setting performing to tracks, including "I've Got You Under My Skin," "All of Me," "Mack the Knife" and other Sinatra standards.

"It's not an impersonation," says Tomasello, whose father is an audio engineer next door at Trump Taj Mahal Casino Resort. "You can hear my own things in the songs, but there's only so much you can change when you're singing to Sinatra's arrangements."

Also on the setlist are non-Sinatra tracks, including "You're Nobody 'Til Somebody Loves You" and "Crazy Little Thing Called Love."

Having grown up with his grandparents in South Philadelphia, Tomasello comes by his love — and knowledge — of Sinatra naturally. He discovered

his grandmother's collection of CDs of Sinatra when he was 8, and after listening to "Young at Heart," he was hooked.

"It was the thing to connect me to my grandparents — it was a common interest we shared, and it was fun hearing her tell stories about Sinatra," he says.

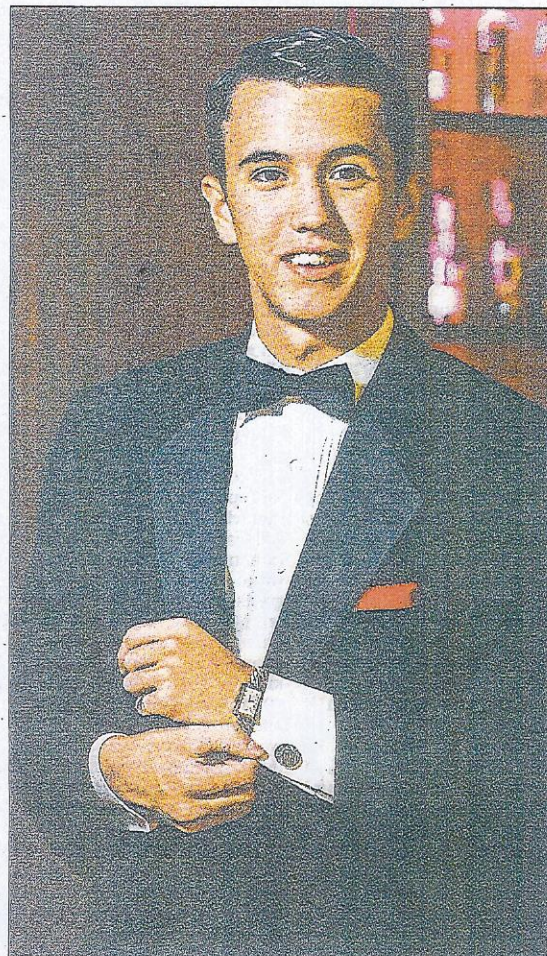
But neither the Chairman of the Board nor show business figured much in Tomasello's childhood ambitions, despite his attending the Philadelphia Performing Arts Charter School. He wanted to be a fighter pilot, and later thought he might go into the funeral business.

After creating a film and music production company with his childhood friend, Stephen Garbesi, while he was still in high school, Tomasello had an ah-ha moment. To test the recording booth, he tossed off a version of "Fly Me to the Moon" to the Sinatra arrangement.

"He said 'You're making an album,'" Tomasello recalls. "I said, 'No I'm not, I'm going to be a funeral director.'"

Tomasello did make the album, "It's Time," which came out in June. His career has since taken off.

His first real gig was performing "Save the Last Dance for Me" at the spring concert held by his old charter school at the Kimmel Center. His aunt then connected him to veteran A.C. area PR maven Neil Cirucci, who set up an audition for Brigantine-based producer-manager Joe



Brandon Tomasello makes his Atlantic City showroom headlining debut this week at Resorts Casino Hotel.

D'Onofrio, which led to the job at Resorts.

Having immersed himself in the world of Sinatra, from his phrasing to his sartorial choices — Tomasello had replicas of cufflinks and a pinky ring made for Sinatra by South Philly jeweler D. Olivieri — Tomasello still knows he has much more to glean.

"I didn't choose Sinatra — Sinatra chose me," he says. "I want to keep learning the songs and improve my singing and technique."

In the meantime, he recognizes the opportunity in his new show.

"(Opening night) is the biggest day of my life so far," he says.

Thumbs up from Joe Piscopo

Brandon Tomasello, the young star of "Sing Swing Sinatra," says he "instantly clicked" with entertainer Joe Piscopo over their shared love of all things related to the Chairman of the Board.

Piscopo, left, who had his own club at Resorts Casino Hotel in Atlantic City last summer, gave Tomasello a thumbs up during one of his early performances at the casino's Whiskey Bar.

"Joe would tell me stories of when he

met Sinatra — to me, that's like meeting God. That's something I'll never be able to do," Tomasello says.

Tomasello also has surprised Piscopo with his attention to Sinatra details, including commissioning replicas of Ol' Blue Eyes' cufflinks and a pinky ring and by finding patent shoes like the ones Sinatra wore in the '50s and '60s.

When Piscopo saw the latter, he quipped: "Where did you get them? Do you have his underwear, too?"

