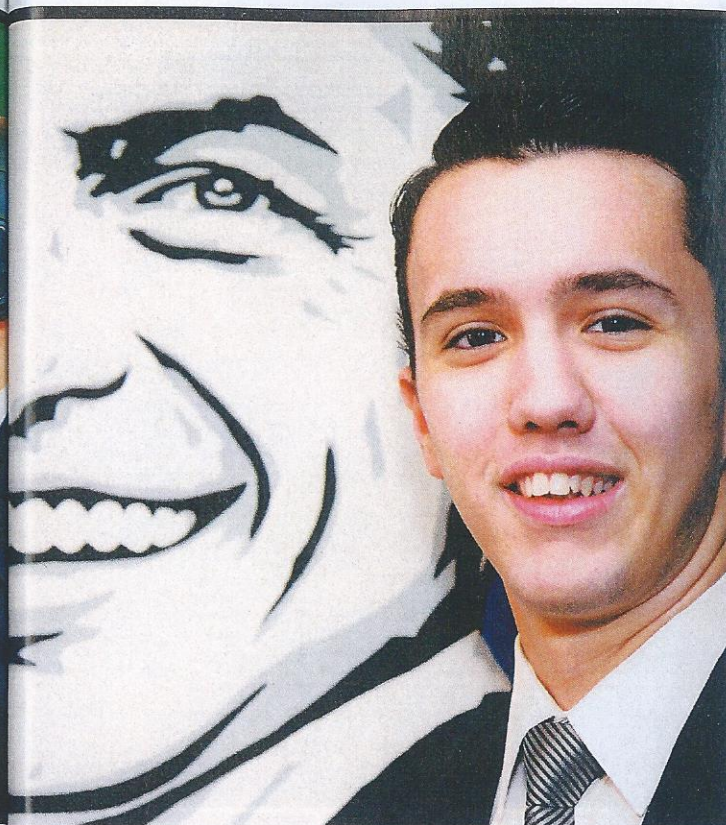


'THE KID' CAN SING

by LAUREN GORDON
photos by HECTOR VALENTIN



Remember the day Frank Sinatra died. My grandmother was bawling her eyes out in the dining room," reminisces 19-year-old crooner Brandon Tomasello as he adjusts his crisp suit sleeves. His mannerisms are that of an old soul.

He walks over to a bookshelf in his family's livingroom. He rushes his hands along a serious lineup of Frank Sinatra CDs. One by one, he calls out the titles of his collection. He starts with Sinatra's *Gold Album*, fondly remembering the first song, "Young At Heart." He recalls how he memorized Sinatra's breaths, still in love with his arrangements. He explains how his passion ultimately evolved into a career. He quickly backtracks.

While a third-grader at the Philadelphia Performing Arts Charter School, Tomasello says he met his own "Rat Pack" member - Stephen Garbesi, presently co-owner of FIMA Productions - a multimedia business he and Tomasello began in their junior year of high school. It also was back then when he first met the school's fiery

mentor, founder and CEO Angela Corosanite. Tomasello credits his reluctant singing career with his acceptance into the Philadelphia Boys Choir way back when.

"That audition was the beginning of my 'but I don't want to do it' phase," Tomasello laughs. "But Angela wouldn't have any of that."

She pushed Tomasello to excel at every turn. From the choir to starring rolls in plays like *Guys and Dolls*, a Sinatra signature performance, the talented teen said Corosanite was there to nudge him onto center stage - time and time, again.

After graduating high school, Tomasello accepted a part-time job at the Charter School. Corosanite asked him to sing a Sinatra tune at the School's annual gala. Despite his departure from the stage a half-dozen years prior, Tomasello entertained the thought of a comeback. He started rehearsing in the studio that he and Garbesi built. When Garbesi heard him sing Sinatra, he made up his mind. Brandon Tomasello would cut an album.

"No matter what I did, it came back to Sinatra," Tomasello says.

Singing, Tomasello adds, was not a top spot on his career path. His dreams included fighter pilot, maybe a funeral director. "I didn't choose Sinatra. Sinatra chose me," he laughs.

One quick year later, Tomasello found himself on the upper rungs of the entertainment ladder - a level that artists dream of reaching. With help from family and friends, his smooth vocals caught the attention of entertainment manager Joe Donofrio. The seasoned scout recognized the singer's ability and encouraged him to refine his sound through vocal lessons provided by Cathy Donofrio. As he set out to perfect the pitch, Tomasello wanted to mimic the look. Searching for something Retro, he said he was mesmerized by an old black & white photograph of Ole Blue Eyes that hangs on the wall of local jeweler Dan Olivieri. A suited Sinatra sports a stunning pair of cuff links, custom designed by Olivieri's father for the legendary entertainer back in 1951. He asked Olivieri to make him a pair of his own, along with a family crest engraved pinky

ring like the one Sinatra wore and a signature "Tomasello" lapel pin.

Fine-tuned and dressed to impress, Tomasello landed a regular gig at Atlantic City's Whiskey Lounge in Resorts International Casino. He got to perform with entertainers like Joe Piscopo (who dubbed him "The Kid") and Grammy winner Jimmy Sturr.

Brandon Tomasello credits Resorts CEO Dennis Gomes with giving him his first break. He let him perform his act, "Sing, Swing, Sinatra" at the casino's Superstar Theater - the same room where Sinatra himself performed many times. The young singer says he was overwhelmed by the show's rave reviews during its more than month-long recent run.

"I want to keep improving and learning how to do this the right way," Tomasello says.

But like all dreamers, this charismatic crooner has an ultimate goal. "To do this with a 22-piece orchestra and record an album for Capitol Records like Frank. Even if I never reach the historic level he did, doing this is like a dream come true." ■