



## REVIEW

### Theater Review (LA): The Kid From Brooklyn - The Danny Kaye Story

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I approached the new musical *The Kid From Brooklyn* with great trepidation. Danny Kaye was a childhood hero of mine and I couldn't imagine that anyone could capture this complicated story, let alone his musical stylings. I am glad to say that I was wrong. The writers Mark Childers and Peter J. Loewy have found the perfect actor in Brian Childers. By the end of the evening I was all but convinced he was Danny Kaye. Childers is able to capture, down to the smallest gesture, the unique talent the Kaye had for delivering a song, complete with hand gestures and his famous rapid tongue-tied delivery. What a joy to hear afresh "Tchaikovsky" and see a recreation of the famous "Triplets" which Kaye performed with Lawrence Olivier and Vivian Leigh. Childers has previously won awards for his portrayal of Kaye and I am sure will have a few more accolades in the future.

Childers is matched every step of the way by Karin Leone, who portrays Danny's long-suffering but talented wife Sylvia Fine. Theirs was a complicated relationship but in the end it was beneficial for both. She helped mold him from a basically untrained improvisational performer into a world-class star. He helped her by providing an outlet for her considerable musical talents as a songwriter and lyricist. She wrote much of his most famous material. I said she was long-suffering and that's because Danny Kaye was a relentless cheat both with men and women (Lawrence Olivier and Eve Arden). He could also be nasty, which I actually witnessed when he was onstage doing *Two By Two* and he yelled at the orchestra, so infuriating his fellow cast members that they almost came to blows onstage. According to *The Kid From Brooklyn* she also helped him realize the importance of family, and was influential in Kaye's subsequent involvement with the world's children through his affiliation with Unicef.

The two leads are wonderfully supported by two versatile and talented performers, Joshua Finkel and Christina Purcell. These two actors are required to act out all the other people involved in Kaye's life. No mean feat that, but Purcell and Finkel pull it off with aplomb. Purcell plays Kitty Carlisle, Eve Arden, Vivian Lee, and various secretaries, while Finkel takes on Billy Rose, Moss Hart, Sam Goldwyn, and Eddie Dukoff.

I enjoyed *The Kid From Brooklyn*, especially Brian Childers. My hero lived again, and when he sang "Inchworm" from Hans Christian Anderson a magical moment from my childhood was reborn.