

Local 512's Larry Branchetti TWU Songster Pays Homage To Sinatra, Other Pop Greats

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*Local 512 Member
Larry Branchetti be-
gan performing again
five years ago after a
17-year absence from
the stage.*



When Larry Branchetti sings, audiences are reminded of the legendary Frank Sinatra. But even though the American Airlines Fleet Service Clerk capitalizes on the striking similarity in his stage career, he makes it clear that he is not an impersonator. Singing like Sinatra just comes naturally.

"I've been listening to Frank Sinatra ever since I was a child," says Branchetti, who recalls that he also listened with his parents to Tony Bennett, Billy Eckstine, Nat King Cole and other pop greats. The Local 512 member credits his mother Carmella with getting him started during sing-a-longs at the piano.

"I'm self-taught; I don't read a note," Branchetti says. "But Sinatra records are the best lessons in the world."

While still a youngster he was asked to sing with a local band, and one job led to another. The Miami Shores resident

fers him the flexibility for Tommy's frequent doctor visits, necessitated by an earlier bout with bacterial meningitis.

After not performing for 17 years, Branchetti returned to the stage five years ago, soon winning praise for a show he does with other performers called "A Tribute to Frank Sinatra and Friends." Writing in the *Miami Herald*,

"Audiences can close their eyes and hear an old legend come to life with Branchetti's voice, which has the same pause, the same snap and the same pizzazz as Sinatra's."

Ivonne Perez said, "Audiences can close their eyes and hear an old legend come to life with Branchetti's voice, which has

performed for two decades, before giving up show business when he was in his late 20s. By then, he had started a career in airline sales and marketing, working for Alitalia, LAN Chile and Cayman Airways. After taking a leave of absence to be with his sick father in the Pittsburgh area, Branchetti returned to Florida and took the job with American Airlines about 10 years ago.

"I work with a bunch of good guys," he says, explaining that the job has been a godsend since it gives him the time to be with his son Tommy. As a single dad to the seven-year-old, Branchetti also appreciates the TWU contract which of-



Branchetti says the TWU contract gives him the flexibility to tend to son Tommy's medical needs.

the same pause, the same snap and the same pizzazz as Sinatra's."

"When I was growing up," Branchetti recalls, "I listened to Frank, Dean (Martin) and Steve Lawrence. My voice has shades of all their styles, but Sinatra is my greatest inspiration. I was always so impressed with the way he carried himself on stage. He could light a cigarette in the middle of a song and never miss a beat."

Hearing such tunes as My Way, The Lady is a Tramp and Come Fly with Me can be an emotional trip down memory lane for audiences. Making that connection with the audience is one of the rewards of performing, Branchetti says. "An avid (Sinatra) fan came up to me and said, 'A piece of me died when Sinatra did, but when I came here tonight and saw you perform, that part of me came back again.'"

The Local 512 member also sings with several Miami area bands and performs in other venues. On May 7 he sang at the Las Vegas Hilton in a tribute to football great Mike Ditka. The two found they have a lot in common, sharing the hometown of Aliquippa, Pennsylvania and a TWU connection: Ditka's late father, Mike Sr., was president of Rail Div. Local 1432 for 31 years.

Branchetti is also proud to put his talents to work for a number of charities. "That's one reason I got back into singing," he says. "It's my way of giving back for the Lord not taking my son when he was sick."