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Tony Danza, at the Café Carlyle, where his set included Sinatra's "It Was a Very Good Year," arranged as a duet with Dave Shoup, background.

They Were Very Good Years, Worth Singing About

Late in his show "Standards and Stories," at Café Carlyle on Wednesday, Tony Danza, that talented eternally boyish guy from the neighborhood with the ingenuous grin and cocky attitude, pulled out an obscure ballad, "I Don't Remember Ever Growing Up," that hit an unexpectedly poignant note. Its composer, Artie Butler, wrote the music to that inescapable nightclub standard "Here's to Life,"

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MUSIC REVIEW

"Standards and Stories" continues through June 27 at Café Carlyle, Manhattan; 212-744-1600, thecarlyle.com.

with lyrics by Phyllis Molinary. "I Don't Remember Ever Growing Up," whose narrator has reached an age when "life goes by at twice the speed of light, leaving you with just your memories," is in the same vein of wistful summing up songs, although not half as good.

It was an astute choice for Mr. Danza, now 64, whose days as a glamour boy are numbered. Adding to the nostalgia was Ervin Drake's Sinatra standard, "It Was a Very Good Year," arranged as a duet for Mr. Danza and Dave Shoup, the guitarist in a group led by the musical director and pianist John Oddo, that also included John Arbo on bass and Ed Cacca-

vale on drums.

Mr. Danza reminisced about his mother's adoration of Frank Sinatra and recalled arranging for her to meet him. As a singer, Mr. Danza belongs to the Sinatra school of lounge performer, but he has a limited, rather shaky voice. He is much more an entertainer than a polished vocalist: a live wire who tap-dances, plays the ukulele, tells stories and, at his most endearing, radiates the irresistible charm of the grown-up kid who made it and emerged unspoiled.

Until the midpoint of the show, Mr. Danza seemed to be operating at half-speed, as he ran through standards that included

"That's All," "How About You?" and "Angel Eyes." The balance between music and comedic storytelling tilted toward singing, which was not a smart choice.

The show came alive in its last third, in which Mr. Danza sang three numbers from "Honeymoon in Vegas," the Jason Robert Brown-Andrew Bergman musical in which he starred as Tommy Korman, a crooked high-stakes gambler. His version of "Out of the Sun," Tommy's goofy lament over the death from skin cancer of his wife, a compulsive sunbather, brought down the house. The response gave him a shot of adrenaline and he was finally his old self.