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Production: **The Cabaret Cafe**  
Company: Molesey Musical Theatre  
Venue: Vera Fletcher Hall, Thames Ditton  
Date of Review: Saturday 7 March 2009

The Cabaret Café was a well-balanced compilation show of both modern and traditional musical theatre that pleasingly also struck a good balance of well known and lesser known songs. It's all too easy to fall into the trap of endless repetition of the most well known songs - which don't always combine to produce the best compilation show.

The songs were grouped into different sections which I am not sure had a great deal of significance, however, the production had no pretensions of being anything other than an enjoyable evening of song and movement - and clearly sent the audience home happy.

I don't plan to run through every number in detail - but what was particularly noticeable is that everyone was used by the director to be seen to perform to their best ability. So you should be congratulated on both the choice and allocation of songs. The length of the piece was also spot-on - again you avoided the pitfall of a compilation that goes on and on and on.....

I usually mention costumes further down the review - but they very much deserve full early praise in this case. There were an incredible number of changes - all seemingly performed to perfection and I know how difficult that can be to achieve within the confines of the Vera Fletcher Hall. Many congratulations to your costume designer and seamstress Sally Mitchell and the team for adding so much to the show in terms of visual effect. Come Follow The Band at the end of Act 1 was a real spectacle.

The show got underway in good, if not predictable, style with Cabaret - whilst the song worked and was well performed by Polly I thought it made for a little clichéd start.

Just Arrived worked well - very lively and punchy and well staged.

The Guys and Dolls number I felt needed just a bit more attitude and edge from the guys - I appreciate you are not replicating the actual staging of the song but it just lacked some punch and was a bit too laid back - the same comment applied to Nice Work If You Can Get It which was a little lackadaisical. The one man with two women on each arm is becoming a little stereotyped in my opinion.

Getting To Know You was sweetly sung by Annie.

Broadway Baby again scored good marks for costumes and was well performed. I was worried at the start of Lullaby Of Broadway about the speed - it seemed very slow at the outset but speeded up nicely and there was plenty of energy and tap dancing skills on display.

Castle On A Cloud was sweetly sung by Olivia whilst I felt Marilyn Monroe (programme said

Tell Me It's Not True ?) was acted well by Jenny but the moving around during the number distracted from the presentation.

There was plenty of energy from Emily and the chorus during Oom Pah Pah.

Stars, sung by Daniel, was the highlight of the evening. An amazing voice, and such a controlled rendition of a difficult song. Nicely staged too, well done.

It was a difficult act to follow but Geninne gave an excellent rendition of Fine Life - very strongly sung and a most enjoyable number.

Tell Me It's Not True is such a lovely song - and it was well built up during the number - I did feel however that the lighting let you down here - it was an obvious opportunity to have tried something a little more subtle and subdued.

Can't Help Lovin That Man - probably should have been sung as 'that' rather than the original 'dat' and the range of the number seemed to test Rosa a little.

Iain and Joan combined for a very agreeable performance of Who Wants To Be A Millionaire which was nicely staged and sung.

The Song That Goes Like This is a huge performance number which Steve and Olivia made a good stab at and extracted the humour at the relevant points.

Put On Your Sunday Clothes needed a stronger introduction vocally and unfortunately there was sound interference during this number which rather spoilt it - although again it was nicely costumed.

It Takes A Woman lacked something - I'm not really sure what, sorry, but felt it just lacked pizzazz.

Me Ol' Bamboo certainly didn't lack energy - really lively, nice movement and fantastic costumes - really good number that the audience enjoyed - well done Kevin and ladies.

Flash Bang Wallop, again lacked inspiration in the lighting department - but otherwise well performed. Something Wonderful seemed oddly placed in the show but was well sung by Audrey whilst you went out of the Act on a real high with Come Follow The Band which was excellent.

Act 2 started in equally strong fashion with I Feel Pretty and again a superb performance by Daniel of If I Loved You.

Honeybun was a real fun number that was nicely performed as too was its South Pacific compatriot Nothing Like A Dame.

Polly and the girls gave a good rendition of Thoroughly Modern Milly which featured good movement.

Lynn gave a strong performance of As If We Never Said Goodbye from Sunset Boulevard - a future Norma Desmond in-waiting!

The sequence ended with Tell Me On A Sunday, sweetly sung by Olivia, but just needed more acting for a stronger delivery.

Daniel nailed Any Dream Will Do, showing another side to his voice, and I enjoyed The Sound Of Music sequence which was again well costumed and Audrey gave a strong performance of Climb Every Mountain, just slightly shrill towards the end.

Lesley's Diva's Lament was mainly believable but even allowing for a considerable flexible approach that can be taken with this song, probably needed a stronger vocal delivery.

The final sequence began with a strongly performed version of Don't Tell Mama by Lynn - and the girls followed-up with Big Spender which worked well. Gloria seduced the gents of the front row of the audience in her version of When You're Good to Mamma, which was followed by Luck Be A Lady which had a good intro from Iain.

In Show Off, Geninne did just that - showed off her strong acting, singing and movement skills in an excellent number.

Again, sound gremlins rather got in the way of Alan's most enjoyable Mr Cellophane.

The show finished on a strong note with the finale that combined 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, Cabaret and Climb Every Mountain.

The programme was basic, but nicely produced with an original format.

Music was excellent throughout under the leadership of musical director Liz Cooper.

Final congratulations to the creative team of Lynn and Geninne Menzies for producing a first rate show. Well done to you all and thanks for the invite.

Best Wishes

**David Stewart**  
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