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Cabrillo Stage turns 'Cabaret' into ravishing spectacle

By KATIE HUGHES McKEE
 Posted: 07/29/2010 01:30:25 AM PDT

For some time there has been movement in Santa Cruz to support "local." In recent years, due to the influx of several corporate giants, this cry has become passionate. If you want to join the movement and have a dazzling, polished, professional afternoon or evening of entertainment, go see Cabrillo Stage's presentation of "Cabaret."

"Cabaret" is based on Christopher Isherwood's autobiographical novel "Goodbye to Berlin," set in 1931 as the Nazis were rising to power in this "anything goes" city. Director/choreographer Trevor Little mentions in his program notes that the Germans have a word, "zeitgeist," meaning: "spirit of the times." Isherwood's novel captured precisely the energies of Weimar, Germany and the Jazz Age, as did the 1951 play by John Van Druten, "I Am a Camera," and the subsequent 1966 musical adaptation, "Cabaret," with the deliciously wicked music of Kander and Ebb and choreography of Bob Fosse.

If you have only seen the film but not the play, expect more characters and more songs, but do not expect Liza Minnelli. Sally Bowles is a 19-year-old English girl who has stumbled into a life which is a bit more exciting and seedy than she would prefer, but she is putting a cheerful veneer over her desperation.

Briana Michaud, as Sally Bowles, is spectacular. She is the complete package: actor, singer, dancer, gorgeous. Vulnerable to slut in 60 seconds Ercee Roddy Kennedy is outstanding as well: ditto, the package. Engaging, sardonic, threatening.



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CS veterans Kathryn Adkins and Doug Baird give touching, nuanced performances as Fraulein Schneider and Herr Schultz. Andrew Ceglie and Ariel Buck, director and one of the star performers, respectively, of "I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change" are perfectly ingenuous and odious, respectively, in their roles of Clifford Bradshaw, Sally's boyfriend, and Fraulein Kost, the anti-Semitic prostitute. Josiah Frampton excels in the difficult role of Ernst Ludwig, a very appealing and earnest young man who turns out to be a Nazi.

The Kit Kat Girls and Boys will leave you breathless performing Little's creative, original take on Fosse's choreography. Maria Crush's costumes, as usual, capture the era to a T, from hairstyles to footgear, white tie to bustiers.

Jim Culley's scenic design has made the most of this new theatrical space, with pillars and platforms and flies, oh my! At last there is again a theater in town with flies! Kyle Grant's lighting design places us right inside the Kit Kat Klub.

Back to "local." There are times theater companies feel they must bring in a "ringer" for a lead to attract an audience. Briana Michaud has been in Cabrillo Stage musicals since she was a child in "Sound of Music." Trevor Little and his assistant choreographer Dustin Leonard started at Cabrillo Stage in high school and have gone on to be professionals. Artistic and musical director Jon Nordgren and his collaborative brothers are as local as you get. Support what I will again refer to as a jewel in our community, Cabrillo Stage, and be blown away by this production.

IF YOU GO

'cabaret'
 presented by: Cabrillo Stage
 When: Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, through Aug. 14, 7:30 p.m. Sundays, through Aug. 15, 2 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 8, 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 14, 2 p.m.
 where: Crocker Theater on the campus of Cabrillo College

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