

A Sure Fire Hit At Lab Theater by Di Saggau

Words cannot describe how impressed I was with "Cabaret" now showing at Laboratory Theater of Florida. Director Brenda Kensler has assembled a stunning cast and put together one of the most powerful renditions I have ever seen. The theater is transformed into the Kit Kat Klub, a seedy cabaret where the Klub's Master of Ceremonies, or Emcee, a brilliant Ty Landers, warms up the audience with his "Willkommen" and "everything is beautiful" routine. The club serves as a metaphor for ominous political developments in 1930s Berlin.

A stairway to the left leads up to a live orchestra. There are three red doors on the set. As the show begins we see wide eyes behind a slit in the middle door. Then out comes the Emcee to the delight of everyone, as he introduces the cabaret girls and waiters. Take note of how he recognizes Victor. The gals are battered and bruised and come in all sizes. The headliner is a British singer Sally Bowles (Taylor Adair). She meets Cliff Bradshaw (Jason Drew) a young American writer and the two end up rooming together.

There is another love story, that of Fraulein Schneider (Beverly Canell) who runs a boarding house and Herr Schultz (Joseph Loiacono) an elderly Jewish fruit-shop owner. The song they sing about a pineapple is delightful. The two become engaged, but their future together is doomed. During their engagement party Ernst Ludwig, (Scott Carpenter) reveals his true colors by sporting a Nazi armband. He warns Fraulein Schneider that marrying a Jew may not be wise.

Fraulein Kost (Lucy Harris) a prostitute who rents in the boarding house, starts singing "Tomorrow Belongs To Me" and soon everyone joins in, sending fear through the engaged couple. A chilling end to the first act. Keep your eyes open for a surprise bit of risqué humor on the top step.

As act two begins the cabaret girls, dressed in black, perform a kick

line routine which eventually becomes a goose-step and raised arms in "Heil" fashion. Meanwhile Sally tells Cliff that she's pregnant and he plans to take her back to America so they can raise their baby together. Sally protests and goes back to the club. Her rendition of "Life is a Cabaret" is sung with raw emotion as if her heart is breaking. The astonishing end to the musical leaves the audience speechless.

Lab Theater's "Cabaret" is gritty, dark and tawdry and it's so good I'm going back to see it again. Often the cabaret dancers take to the floor to interact with guests. Director Kensler has updated the show to project what a cabaret in 1933 Berlin was actually like. It's a little raunchier, a little dirtier, and oh so entertaining. My hat is off to everyone who took part in this production. Don't miss it. Tickets are available by calling 239-218-0481, and at www.laboratorytheaterflorida.com. Lab Theater is located at 1634 Woodford Avenue in Downtown Fort Myers.