

each moment. Spending time with Marilyn Maye is certainly one way to make your day feel particularly special, and makes you look forward to crossing paths with her again soon.

NANCY ANDERSON: Ten Cents a Dance

Feinstein's/54 Below, NYC | July 5

Nancy Anderson is one of those special performers who puts smiles on the faces of those who are wise or fortunate enough to experience her on stage. With the revival of her "Ten Cents a Dance" cabaret show at Feinstein's/54 Below, she has called attention once again to her outstanding 2006 album with the same title. The album comprises songs from the 1920s and '30s. From an early age, Anderson was attracted to this music, and she relates how the songs and performers of these decades influenced the selections on her program.

Anderson opened with three songs that she came to know through recordings by vocalist Teddy Grace with the Mal Hallett Orchestra, a band that was based in Anderson's home town of Boston. They were "The Trouble with Me Is You," "The You and Me That Used to Be" and "I'm So In Love With You."

Another singer who became a favorite of Anderson was Peg LaCentra who was most known for a series of sides that she recorded with Artie Shaw in the mid-1930s. From LaCentra's years with Shaw, Anderson chose to sing "You're Giving Me a Song and Dance," "It Ain't Right" and "Darling, Not Without You."

Anderson's musical theater experience, and natural comedic flare were evident throughout her program, especially on "Alibi Baby" and "How'dga Like Ta Love Me?" She also gave a sensitive, dramatic reading to "True Blue Lou," a gem from 1929 that was recorded by the likes of Ethel Waters and Annette Hanshaw.

The tunes of Rodgers and Hart Have a particular attraction for Anderson, and she addressed "My Romance," "I Didn't Know What Time It Was" and "It Never Entered My Mind" in a well conceived medley.

The show closed with another Rodgers and Hart classic, "Ten Cents a Dance."

At the conclusion, the audience roared it approval, with many rising to their feet in a standing ovation. It impelled Anderson to reappear and sing "With One Look," a star turn from *Sunset Boulevard*, in the recent revival of which Anderson just understudied Glen Close for the featured role of Norma Desmond.

The support from musical director Ross Patterson on piano, J.J. McGeehan on guitar, banjo and ukulele, Aaron Heick on reeds and Don Falzone on bass was swinging and spot on.

This was an evening filled with joy on both sides of the lights. Anderson's vintage program fit perfectly in the environment that has been created for this welcoming room.

NANCY VALENTINE

Birdland, NYC | July 2

Vocalist Nancy Valentine has a passion for the music of Billy Strayhorn that led her to dig deep into his catalog for the program of songs that she recorded on her album *Lovesome*. In celebration of the release of the album, Valentine was joined by Dan Block on reeds, Joe Magnarelli on trumpet, John di Martino on piano, Marco Panascia on bass and Vince Cherico on drums for a sprightly set at Birdland.

The songs included familiar selections like "A Flower Is a Lovesome Thing" and "Something to Live For." Others were more obscure including "You Better Know It," "So This Is Love," "Oo, You Make Me Tingle," "You're the One,"

"Wounded Love" and "Maybe."

Four of the songs are more familiar as instrumentals. "Pretty Girl," with lyrics by Strayhorn, was most noted as "The Star Crossed Lovers," the nod to Romeo and Juliet in the *Such Sweet Thunder* suite composed by Strayhorn and Duke Ellington. "My Flame Burns Blue" has lyrics by Elvis Costello set to Strayhorn's last composition, "Blood Count." "U.M.M.G. (Upper Manhattan Medical Group)" was a song dedicated to the doctors who tended to Strayhorn during his terminal bout with cancer. Valentine performed a wordless vocal for this tune. Edmund Anderson wrote lyrics for "Lotus Blossom" that resulted in a song titled "Thank You for Everything."

Valentine performed her program with great enthusiasm and confidence, giving each selection a personal touch, with her voice nicely complementing Strayhorn's lyrics, as well as those by others as noted above. She carried off the wordless vocal on "U.M.M.G." with aplomb.

The band was exceptional. John di Martino flawlessly served as musical director. Nine of the arrangements were his work, with the other three penned by Tamir Hendelman. Block and Magnarelli sparkled when given the solo spotlight, while Panascia and Cherico were rocks of rhythmic support.

Strayhorn deserves wider recognition for his songwriting genius. When Valentine returned for an encore of "Take the 'A' Train," perhaps Strayhorn's most familiar composition, using three different lyrics, the reception from the audience indicated that they greatly appreciated this opportunity to enjoy Strayhorn on a deeper level than is usually available.

MARK WINKLER

Birdland, NYC | July 13

It was fitting that the ultra hip vocalist Mark Winkler had his New York CD release event for *The Company I Keep* at the equally hip jazz boîte Birdland. Before an audience that included several of his peers, Winkler gave all present a taste of the tunes from the new disc, and a few selections from his past releases.

Winkler called upon reedman Matt Garrison, pianist Allen Farnham, bassist Bill Moring and drummer Alvester Garnett to lend musical support for the evening. Also on hand was vocalist Roseanna Vitro to join Winkler for a couple of duets.

The initial offerings on Winkler's program were from his 2011 *Sweet Spot* album, "Like Young" and "But Not for Me," both nicely swung. As he turned to material from the new release, he started with a tune that he wrote with Marilyn Harris, "That Afternoon in Harlem," an engaging tune about visiting an elderly singer in her Harlem apartment."

Roseanna Vitro joined Winkler for a rendition of Donald Fagen's "Walk Between the Raindrops," and returned later to address "Stolen Moments," the Oliver Nelson tune with words by Mark Murphy. The new album has several duets, and these two were among them. Vitro took the role of Jackie Ryan on the former, and that of Claire Martin on the latter, doing a fine job in both instances.

Among the other selections were a couple of songs from Winkler's last album, *Jazz and Other Four Letter Words*, a touching ballad, "I Chose the Moon," and the witty "Your Cat Plays Piano." He also did "Midnight in Paris," a fun list song inspired by the film of the same name that is on the new disc. Winkler has a pleasant voice that he applies with equal facility to ballads and swingers. He is a wonderful reader of lyrics, finding the emotion and/or humor as the words dictate.

While the album was made in Los Angeles with West Coast musicians, Winkler was right at ease with the quartet of East Coast all-stars.

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