

## REVIEW OF CABARET



I saw **CABARET** on Wednesday and am running out of superlatives. In short, it is a sumptuous feast that combines the dazzling, decadent energy of inter-war Berlin with a dark, brooding sense of the rise of fascism.

On first entering the theatre, transformed into the heavy faded reds and gaudy golds of the Kit Kat club, there was a kind of smoldering, smoky sense of promise. Then, from the first note played by a superb band, on stage throughout, and the looming, shadowy appearance of the ensemble, creating breath-taking pictures on the balcony, in corners and even among the audience, I was transported.

This is a knockout show – anyone who has seen the film with Lisa Minelli as Sally Bowles, will feel a constant sense of elated recognition as each of the memorable numbers, whether solo or full company set pieces, is brilliantly delivered. The cast, dressed in Liz MacFarlane’s deliciously saucy costumes with hints of the grotesque, takes us into their world, and we are seduced:

“We are here to serve you –  
So sit back, relax,  
Enjoy your drinks and welcome to the Kit Kat club.”

These words are spoken with panache by the irresistibly theatrical, sinewy Jonathan Hawkes, one of a triumvirate of commanding male Emcees mirrored by three excellent female counterparts. This casting of three actors in one role extends to those of Sally Bowles, Frauline Schneider, Herr Schultz, Frauline Kost, Ernst and the suave Maitre Ds. This is a brilliant sleight of hand on the part of the directors, Kathryn Norton-Smith and Peter Jolly, bringing out different facets in their characters and adding to Cliff’s sense of disorientation. Patrick Haviland, as American writer, Cliff, gives a highly accomplished, stylish performance throughout, entering wholeheartedly into the ménage presented to him by three stunning Sallys in Caitlin Albery-Beavan, Scarlett Tong and Marieke Audsley. Caitlin is extraordinary and heartbreaking as the softer, vulnerable side of Sally, while Scarlett provides a gritty, hard-edged quality and Marieke glitters with superficiality. I was “bowled” over by



the quality of the singing and very impressed, too, by their German accents! (Who was the voice coach?)



Many performances deserve singling out, like the diverse Fraulines Schneider, but this show is quintessentially an ensemble piece, with glorious choreographed pieces like the naughty “Two Ladies” and “Money”. You will be surprised, seduced, moved and delighted in a performance that lasts about two and a half hours but seems to whirl past leaving you wanting more, more, more...