

April 16, 2014

CABARET

They Say It's Spring: Lucie Arnaz Debuts at the Café Carlyle

By Rex Reed



Heeeeere's Lucie! It's hard to believe the one-woman show business gene pool named Lucie Arnaz has never played New York's chic Café Carlyle before. But in her dazzling and intelligent new cabaret act she's ushering in the new spring season better than a garden of daffodils. She calls it "Spring is Here," and she's not kidding.

Instead of hoisting anchor with clichéd tunes about robins' nests and Easter bonnets, she focuses on what spring underscores best—the many faces of love. Considering what she learned through the years from her parents—the Latin satin of Desi and the comic timing of Lucy, the world's favorite redhead—you can forget about calling her a chip off the old blockhead. She's hip and smart and musically well-schooled, and learning more by the year. Hitting the cabaret circuit, she has never been better.

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Things gets right into the groove with her opening number, the torrid “Love,” introduced by Lena Horne but polished within an inch of its life by Lucie (and there’s some Lena in her pounce). “Fools Rush In,” demonstrating a special fondness for Johnny Mercer, has just the right throbbing vibrato in the upper register, and more than enough warm caressing in the basement of her considerable vocal range.

The joys of spring and the arc of romance it brings with it continue through 16 more hand-picked songs worth hearing again, colorfully arranged by accompanist-pianist-musical director Ron Abel and assisted by Tom Hubbard on bass and Ray Marchica on drums. The results are witty (Cy Coleman-Carolyn Leigh staple “When in Rome”), bouncy (“You Can Always Count on Me”—Cy Coleman again, with swinging lyrics by David Zippel), melancholy (David Friedman’s “Listen to My Heart”) tender (“Namely You,” one of the very few tender ballads from the famously raucous *Li'l Abner*) and powerful (Craig Carnelia’s showstopper “Just a Housewife” from the wonderful but short-lived Broadway musical *Working*).

In the course of the well-spent evening, she squeezes the humor, seductiveness and tempo out of every aspect of love—the findings, fallings, fantasies and all the F-words. Love is what Lucie Arnaz gets back from an audience on its feet with enjoyment and adoration.

No wasted songs without purpose here. No lousy atonal rock anthems thrown in to prove her versatility. Hilarious, moving, eternally lovely and in perfect voice, she makes the valuable time you spend in her company really count—each moment, each minute and each second in it. Lucie Arnaz’s time has come. Isn’t it time somebody smart created, polished and produced a Broadway show just for her? I’m more than ready for a multi-faceted show business icon with a lot to give, giving it all she’s got.

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