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Brian Stokes Mitchell 'Plays with Music' in Cafe Carlyle debut



Brian Stokes Mitchell called his Cafe Carlyle debut "terrifying." But he got over it.

Brian Stokes Mitchell has a serious baritone.

If you've seen him in one of his 10 Broadway shows or, for that matter, "Mr. Robot" or "Trapper John, M.D.," you know that.

But his voice's mellow and delicate aspects really stand out in "Plays With Music," an easygoing, brightly polished debut show at the Cafe Carlyle.

With a top-tier trio, Mitchell begins with "There's No Business Like Show Business." It's a fitting start for an affable Upper West Sider who's spent more than half of his 57 years in the biz.



MICHAEL WILHOITE

Brian Stokes Mitchell plays melodica and piano in "Plays with Music."

Even so, the "Kiss Me Kate" Tony winner admitted he "was terrified" on opening night. He got over it.

"Getting Married Today," a rapid-fire anthem of nuptial angst, and "A Wizard Every Day," by newcomers Liz Suggs and Nikko Benson, reveal his game, goofy side. He toots a melodica for a number of tunes.

"Hello, Young Lovers" and "If Ever I Would Leave You" — Broadway hits you've heard a hundred times — ring with fresh resonance. Ditto "The Man I Love," thanks to his direct, honest approach.

"Build me a boat that will carry two," Mitchell sings in the folk song "The Water is Wide." He's so sweet, swoony and persuasive, you might make a beeline for the lumberyard.

"Plays With Music," through Sept. 26 at the Cafe Carlyle, 35 E. 76th St. \$65 and up; (212) 744-1600.

<http://www.nydailynews.com/entertainment/theater-arts/brian-stokes-mitchell-plays-music-cafe-carlyle-article-1.2362959>