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Conjuring Big-Screen Romance

Imagine Alice in Wonderland as a beautiful dreamer besotted with old movies and vintage love songs. That enchanting, slightly unstable creature materialized at Café Carlyle on Tuesday evening in the person of **STEPHEN HOLDEN** Maude Maggart, a child of show business, whose new show, "The Door Opened," sprinkled fairy dust into the room. If you inhale too much of it, God help you. But in small amounts, it is an extremely seductive perfume.

With her ethereal voice, whose spinning vibrato invites otherworldly apparitions that you might be tempted to confuse with reality, Ms. Maggart, who was accompanied on piano by John Boswell, is a singular cabaret artist who conjures a dream world. Magical transformations are commonplace.

The show's songs evoke a black-and-white movie that bursts into color with the arrival of (you guessed it!) romantic love that is as intoxicating as it is incorporeal. "Did You Ever See a Dream Walking?," "Out of Nowhere," "Pure Imagination" and "Over the Rainbow" are among the more familiar titles in a show whose songs portray life on earth as a Hollywood fantasy. How seriously Ms. Maggart believes in this vision is anybody's guess. But she has the resources and the will to bring it to life.

Like her major influence, the cabaret diva Andrea Marcovicci, Ms. Maggart doesn't simply intend to entertain but to weave a spell. She does so with silky, long-lined musical phrasing and slow-motion quasi-balletic body language.

She devoted special attention to her close friend Marshall Barer, who died in 1998 and is best remembered as the lyricist for "Once Upon a Mattress." Two of Barer's songs are in the show. "Lost in Wonderland," with music by Antonio



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Maude Maggart performing songs from *Hollywood and Broadway* in "The Door Opened" at Café Carlyle.

Carlos Jobim, is a surreal fantasy based on Lewis Carroll that speaks of "tangles of tangles and sprinklings of angles and inklings of angels."

The show's deepest and most beautiful moment connected "Over the Rainbow," that ultimate Hollywood fantasy of escape, to "You Can't Go Home Again," Mr. Barer's setting of a gorgeous melody by David Raksin, the composer of "Laura." This wistful meditation on Thomas Wolfe's novel quotes the author and is the show's closest thing to a reality check. "Once the heart bids home goodbye, there's no return," it says. True enough. But you can still dream.