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POP/JAZZ

## POP/JAZZ; 10 Hearts, And the Songs That Speak To Them

By BARRY SINGER

ASKING A CABARET SINGER to name a favorite song is an impossible question. Who can name just one? On the occasion of the Eighth Annual Cabaret Convention opening tomorrow night at Town Hall in Manhattan, The New York Times asked a few top cabaret singers to do just that. Here are their answers. BARRY SINGER

DAVID CAMPBELL

"ALEXANDER'S RAGTME BAND"

(Irving Berlin, 1911)

It's the history of the joy of popular music. In any style you care to sing it, it's just a great song.

BARBARA CARROLL

"ALL THE THINGS YOU ARE"

(Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein 2d, 1939)

I find it lends itself to an infinite variety of interpretations, which isn't to say there aren't hundreds of songs that do the same thing, but none quite like this one. The structure is so interesting. The harmonics are so beautiful. The lyric is so tender: 'You are the promised gift of springtime that makes the lonely winter seem long' is just the most glorious tribute to love. And it starts off in a minor key and ends in a major key. You got to love that in a song.

ANDREA MARCOVICCI

"SMOKE GETS IN YOUR EYES"

(Jerome Kern and Otto Harbach, 1933)

It's one of the shortest short stories in song ever, a perfect short story, with the most perfect emotional arc that starts in a place where everything is O.K., and then by the bridge you realize something's

terribly wrong. Musically, it's exquisite to sing, it just feels beautiful in the throat, but I'm talking as an actress. It covers the tragic gray area between love and loss.

AMANDA McBROOM

"ERROL FLYNN"

(Amanda McBroom and Gordon Hunt, 19927)

It's about my father. My father was a movie actor in the 40's -- the song is about his life in the movies and his friendship with Errol Flynn, but mostly it's about people's dreams not coming true and the memory of watching my father not fulfill his dreams. It always brings me close to him when I sing it, yet other people seem affected by it, too. Which is really nice. And I hope not too hubristic.

PHILLIP OFFICER

"LOST IN THE STARS"

(Kurt Weill and Maxwell

Anderson, 1949)

The poetry of the music and the lyrics together put you into an environment, a specific place, a very hauntingly spiritual space. I love that in a song.

DAVID STALLER

"MY ROMANCE"

(Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart, 1935)

It encompasses what love is and isn't. And because every time I sing it, afterward at least one person will ask me where I found those new lyrics. And there are no new lyrics to "My Romance." They're all there just as they've always been there since Hart wrote them. But that's the beauty of the song. And also the beauty of cabaret, I think, because the listener is forced to personalize the material in a way that one wouldn't otherwise -- as a living experience between two people. Which cabaret always is, no matter how many actually are in the room."

BILLY STRITCH

"COME RAIN OR COME SHINE"

(Harold Arlen and Johnny Mercer, 1946)

The story and the melody build at exactly the same time and I love the way it changes tonalities all over the place, yet it's like the same person wrote both the music and the lyrics. There's this sigh that comes over an audience when you do it. It never fails.

K. T. SULLIVAN

"IF LOVE WERE ALL"

(Noel Coward, 1929)

It sums up the life of a cabaret singer: "I believe that since my life began the most I've had is just a talent to amuse." And of course that talent brings sadness sometimes, as the song says, some loneliness, some hard times, some hard knocks. But it's the life we've chosen. "Heigh-ho, if love were all!" Bittersweet. And that's what's so great about cabaret. Those things can be portrayed on a very subtle and personal level.

MARGARET WHITING

"SOMEONE TO WATCH OVER ME"

(George Gershwin and Ira

Gershwin, 1926)

It's the first song my father taught me. My father, who was a great friend of George Gershwin's, sat down one day and said, "This is my favorite song," and he played it for me, and it's been mine too ever since. It's about looking and praying and asking for love, which is what three-quarters of all great songs are written about. The rest are about what happens after you get it.

SARA ZAHN

"THE STORY GOES ON"

(David Shire and Richard Maltby Jr., 1983)

Four years ago, when I was pregnant with my second child, my mom was dying of cancer; in fact, she passed away four weeks after my son was born. This one particular day, I was sitting on the bed, watching my mom sleep, and her breathing was quite labored -- it looked, actually, like the life was draining out of her. At that precise moment the baby kicked inside me. And the incredible words and music of that song, which I'd sung so many times, came flooding back to me. The lyric speaks so specifically to the physical and emotional experience of being "with child." It just became a very important song to me.

Photo (Craig Schwartz (Andrea Marcovicci); Stephen Mosher (David Campbell))