

arts & culture

# 'Cabaret' Brings Down the House At Studio Theatre Tierra Del Sol

**Audiences are calling The Studio's production of Kander and Ebb's iconic musical "simply marvelous."**

By TAYLOR STRICKLAND  
Daily Sun Senior Writer

As the lights came up on The Studio Theatre Tierra Del Sol's daring production of "Cabaret," shocked murmurs and nervous laughter could be heard over the musical's opening number, "Willkommen," as the performers paraded around in Bohemian costumes and the character simply known as The Emcee, played by actor Zummy Mohammed, welcomed the audience to the Kit Kat Klub.

"Leave your troubles outside," Mohammed said in character. "There are no troubles here — in here, life is beautiful."

Based on John Kander and Fred Ebb's adaptation of Christopher Isherwood's semi-autobiographical novel, "Cabaret" transports audiences to the seedy underbelly of 1931 Berlin and the hedonistic Kit Kat Klub. As Germany gradually yield's

to the emerging Third Reich, the club's entertainers and patrons are forced to either confront the evil beyond the stage door or slip further into the fantasy the club provides.

Set during the waning years of the Weimar Republic, "Cabaret" follows a young American novelist, Clifford Bradshaw, who comes to Berlin in search of inspiration.

"I just love the many layers this show has," said actor Joseph Carrier, who plays Bradshaw. "This show just keeps coming back and back, because it always has something to say."

Bradshaw is introduced to the Kit Kat Klub by Ernst Ludwig, a seemingly affable German man played by Russell Stephens. Once at the club, Bradshaw falls in love with a dancer named Sally Bowles — a freespirted Englishwoman who dreams of becoming a star.

"You just kind of see gradually as the musical goes on, the marginalized groups that are being targeted," said Maya Rowe, who plays Bowles. "It hits some really hard points of the privilege of looking away and how a lot of our protagonists are choosing to turn a blind eye."



Joseph Carrier, from top, Maya Rowe and Zummy Mohammed star in "Cabaret," running through March 2 at The Studio Theatre Tierra Del Sol.

The emotional core of "Cabaret" usually revolves around the romance between Bradshaw and Bowles and their doomed attempt to build a relationship following Bowles' pregnancy. However, it was the romance between Herr Schultz, a Jewish widower played by Mark N.

Miller, and landlady Fräulein Schneider, who is played by Regina Harbour, that dominated The Studio's production.

Many audience members were charmed by Schultz and Schneider's unexpected courtship, smiling or humming along to Miller and Harbor's rendition of "Married." Once

such audience member was Kathy Morey, of the Village of Lynnhaven.

"The older gentleman that played Herr Schultz — first time he sang, I was blown away," Morey said. "It was like an opera-quality voice."

"Cabaret" starts off with a bacchanalian, frenetic energy

that gradually builds until the audience can feel the danger before the first Swastika appears on stage. However, The Studio production had audiences so engrossed with Schultz and Schneider's impending nuptials that they are nearly blindsided by the musical's sudden shift in tone.

A stunned silence replaced the applause that followed the previous numbers when Ludwig, finally revealed to be a Nazi, screams that Schultz "is not a German." The silence continued as Fräulein Kost, a sex worker and disgruntled tenant played by artistic director Whitney Morse, sings the Nazi propaganda song, "Tomorrow Belongs to Me."

"It was so well sung, but I almost felt guilty clapping for it," Morey said.

With its themes of debauchery, denial and fascism, "Cabaret" is often described as "eternally relevant." During intermission and after the show, audience members lingered to talk among themselves about the importance of the musical's message.

"I don't want to get too political, but there is a lot going on in a lot of the countries where the more authoritarian political people are rising up and being voted in and it's kind of scary," Morey said.

Although the entire production of "Cabaret" is sold out, tickets are now available for the next show in The Studio's season lineup. Jen Silverman's "The Roommate," a comedy about a pair of unlikely roommates, runs from March 26 to April 27 at The Studio. Tickets start at \$35. Go to thevillagesentertainment.com.



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