



Backstage Pass

INSIGHTS ON STAGE, SCREEN AND BEYOND

Sharon Lobby Overflows With Talent at ‘Don’t Tell Nonnie’



HOW DO I BUY TICKETS?

The Villages Entertainment sells tickets in person at their four box office locations or online at thevillagesentertainment.com

is inspired by one of Morse’s favorite piano bars in New York, “Don’t Tell Mama,” and is in honor of her late grandmother, Sharon Morse, who she and her cousins called “Nonnie.”

“But the truth is, if my grandmother was still alive, we could definitely tell her about this event and she’d probably be up here helping me host it right now,” Morse said. “She loved to sing and perform.”

Without further ado, Morse invited to the stage the first singer of the night, Mark

Steven Schmidt, of the Village of Orange Blossom Gardens.

Schmidt sang “On the Street Where You Live” from “My Fair Lady.” It was a tough act to follow – Schmidt had a strong voice and held one powerful note for so long that accompanist Gary Powell jokingly stood up and walked away from his piano.

Schmidt recently performed in resident theater group KC Productions’ run of “My Fair Lady” and said he enjoyed the intimacy of “Don’t Tell Nonnie.”

“I love how it’s a cabaret setting,” Schmidt said. “You can come in and perform one song and then relax and enjoy the other performances. It’s like singing in your living room.”

Both residents and local artists performed.

Marcella Richardson, who frequents Villages Philharmonic Orchestra shows as a vocalist, sang “Happy Days Are Here Again.”

“There’s so much talent in

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By **KRISTEN FIORE** | *Daily Sun Senior Writer*

Moving around the lobby of The Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center in her usual theatrical fashion, Whitney Morse sang “Don’t Tell Mama,” as she affably patted people’s heads, danced among the sold-out crowd and perched on furniture armrests Monday night.

The first “Don’t Tell Nonnie” of the 2019-20 entertainment season had officially commenced.

“It has been a long time since I’ve seen your faces,” Morse said, after finishing her song.

“I have not hosted a ‘Don’t Tell Nonnie’ in about eight months. But hello, my friends!”

Morse quickly explained the background of the open-mic event for the newcomers present in the room. The show



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Marcella Richardson, of Oxford, sings during the first “Don’t Tell Nonnie” open mic event of the 2019-20 entertainment season at The Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center.

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the room,” said Richardson, of Oxford. “It’s a lot of fun. It’s like a speakeasy in here.”

And without a doubt, the lobby was filled with talent and variation. Participants sang everything from the operatic “Nessun Dorma” to hits like “Forever Young.”

But genre wasn’t the only variation. A neighborhood

vocal group, the DeSoto Divas, sang “Under the Boardwalk,” and Villager Sheila Valastro played her own guitar as she sang “Summertime.”

“I’ve always loved singing,” said Valastro, of the Village of DeSoto. “There are so many opportunities in The Villages to sing. You can sing whatever genre you want. That’s what’s so great. I moved down from New York and I was up in the burbs, so I didn’t have a lot of opportunities there.”

After her performance, Valastro joked that she was still shaking.

“But it’s great,” she said. “The sound system is great; the people are great.”

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