Will-O-Way's 'Cabaret' captures pre-war Berlin

The Will-O-Way production of "Cab-aret," skillfully directed by Celia Mer-rill Turner, has a smashing finale, a lively cast and singers that do justice to

marvelous lyrics.
Ms. Turner and crew manage to capture the atmosphere of decadent Berlin in the days preceding World War II.
Death is in the air but the nightclubs

Death is in the air but the nightclubs are filled to bursting with dancing girk, sallors and citizens out on the town.

The show runs weekends through Aug. 26.

Tim Hall turns in a delicate, savvy, intense performance as the master of ceremonies. No one can top Joel Grey, and Hall doesn't try. He brings his own Marcel Marceau lightness to the part. Hall moves well and manages to covey nasty thoughts with lifted brows, a flash of his green eyes and a quick shrug.

shrug.

Hall gives us an M.C. who understands the Berlin scene. He makes a

review

grand living for the two girls he lives with by turning his country's prejudices into cabaret entertainment.

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Steve Lavender is convincing as
Ernst Ludwig, the friendly Nazi, who
shows the American innocent,
Bradshaw, how to "make large who
hoe," He finds Bradshaw rooms, introduces him to the Kit Kat Klub, takes
English lessons and we like Ludwig a
lot. He seems so "civilized."

SHIRLEY BENYAS, as Fraulein Schneider, has enough stamma, presence and experience to carry a show alone. Ms. Benyas' face registers all the nuances of a Berlin landlady who finds love in middle age and finds berself making the hardest compromises she's had to make in a life filled with compromises.

Ms. Benyas has a magic soprano and complete control of her voice. Her sense of timing is a pleasure to watch. She works from deep inside the role and she is very funny singing abour pineapples like a delirious school girl hard when bargaining over rents and deeply moving in the last act when she tells us she must survive.

Leo Mogill as Fraulein Schneider's elderly fiance — the fruit store owner, Herr Schultz — turns in a polgmant, endearing performance. Mogill is believable as the little shopkeeper, transformed for a few days. Smitten by love, Schultz kicks up his heels and sings the funny "Meekskite" umber with guste to the party in his fruit store.

But Schultz and his Fraulein are no Tristan and Isolde Schultz retreats into trying to convince his beloved that "it's nothing, it's children who are throwing bricks through my windows." Fraulein Schneider, the survior, knows her fellow countrymen better than

Herr Schultz does. Mogill sweetly de-livers a last bag of oranges and moves

livers a last bag of oranges and moves across town.

Lee Rosender is marvelous as Fraulein Kost, the brash renter who is "related" to all the sailors in Berlin. Ms. Rosender bounces a tough vulgarity off Fraulein Schneider's struggling sense of propiety. The two are natural enemies locked into needing each other.

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The Turner's poise, clear diction and understanding of a difficult role gives us a satisfying, dizzy Sally Bowles. Young Ms. Turner catches the death wish Sally shares with the citizens of the city she happens to be living in. Ms. Turner's best moments belong to the sceine where she amounces she has turned in her fur coat for an abortion and has 'padd' too much.

BRETT REYNOLDS is the sleep-

walking writer who falls for Sally, wakes up politically but is unable to wake anyone else. Reynolds sits around looking handsome and at loose ends. I missed the energy he brought to last year's 'Music Man'. Reynolds woke up during the last act and lent some tension to the abortion-departure scene. His pleasant, healthy-boy personality carried him through the show.

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Steven Cole, Tim Scully, Tim Christensen were good sailors, 'relations' Paul and Christopher Hart filled ot the male chorus and dancers.

Dancer and Choreographer Mitchelle Levine was especially good as the Russian dancer. And her fellow Kit Kat. Klub Girls, Lorraine Poirier, Carol

Music hall era lives again

Sunday night's pops concert at Meadow Brook Music Pestival saw William Bolcom and Joan Morris provide an evening of entertainment in the best tradition of the music halls.

Bolcom and Morris, specialists in early American music, charmed their way pleasantly through 25 American popular songs covering the period from the Gay 90s to the 1958 stages, they are

Veterans of concert stages, they are at their best when pianist Bolcom plays

a ragtime number or Ms. Morris, a mezzo-soprano, dramatically inter-prets a musical comedy song. Bolcom is a musical genius with a frim foundation in the classics. He has

written operas, etudes, concerti, string quartets and symphonies, yet is right at home with ragtime and early jazz.

WHEN THE RAGTIME revival came along in the mid 60s, it was Bol-com who was at the forefront. The leading pianist in that movement may have been Joshua Rifkin, but it was

Bolcom who introduced Rifkin to rag-time. Bolcom has recorded a number of albums of ragtime music.

At the Meadow Brook concert opening, on the Oakland University campus near Rochester. Bolcom played "Pineapple Rag," a Scott Joplin song from 1999. Ms. Morris sang lyrics, dadded and published by 1911. Very little is known about the lyricist Joe Snyder who seems to have disappeared without a

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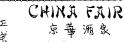


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