

'Sailor Beware!' brightens stage

By JEFF SCHORR

review

Cabaret comes to Rochester. And it ain't a bad show!

A cast of five romps through the audience and two dozen cabaret, nightclub and torch numbers selected (under the heading "Sailor Beware!") to evoke a '30s and '40s atmosphere at the After Nine Room at Cooper's Arms in downtown Rochester.

Director Robert Casemore has tried to emphasize a more specific mood than the glibly humorous "The goal is the French-German cabaret imagery of pre-war Europe conjured up by names like Marlene Dietrich, Lotte

Lenya, Maurice Chevalier, Jacques Brel, Edith Piaf, Yves Montand, Charles Aznavour, Hildegarde — all cabaret products.

That goal, in the hour and a half production of two dozen period numbers, is largely met although it may be lost on younger generation attendees. (Just in case anyone might miss it, however, cast members invoke Hildegarde and Marlene Dietrich to spell out their

mood-creating intentions in the opening moments.)

THE SHOW is loosely held together by the two "sailors" who use jokes and sailor-on-leave small talk to introduce numbers. Topical humor (including groaners and sailor speech) strangely doesn't detract or confuse from the otherwise hardly topical songs and imagery of the program.

Perhaps this is due to the production being able to be enjoyed in segments. There is no overall plot that diners need concentrate on, which is probably good, given the late 10 p.m. starting hour.

Patrons are served both before and during the show. The cast of five, who bring impressive credentials to Roger Knapp's cozy, 90-seat downstairs and balconied After Nine Room, is just about maximum for the tiny stage.

The group was assembled by Casemore and producer Eric Jones under the banner of Metropolitan Repertory Company. "Sailor Beware!" its first production, continues Friday, Saturday and Wednesday (New Year's Eve) at 10 p.m.

The show includes a mixture of well-known songs and composers of the period, and a couple of not-so-well-known (unless one is a devotee of the coffee house, cabaret circuit). All numbers are appropriate and well done.

A STANDOUT voice in the cast is soprano Jeanine Head, a member of the Theatre Arts Department at Greenfield Village who particularly excels on "Stormy Weather," "Someone to Watch Over Me" and "The Last Time I Saw Paris."

Sue Chekaway, late of a Los Angeles nightclub engagement and with numer-

ous musicals in her background, is very comfortable on stage and does a splendid Marlene Dietrich impersonation in "Auf Wiedersehen."

The two "sailors" are the male members of the cast, John Beam and a deep-throated, Dick Deadeye-styled tar, Walter Kozicki.

They augment each other and fill several roles well while being the main connecting links throughout the show. Beam dresses in drag to the strains of "The Man I Love" in a humorous number which goes over well and teams with Miss Head outstandingly in "I'll Follow My Secret Heart." Beam and Kozicki compete to do versions of Maurice Chevalier in "Louise" and "Mimi" and each does it well, one emphasizing voice and one style.

Penny Masouris is the entirely capable fifth member of the "crew" although her voice is hard to hear in several numbers.

TUCKED AWAY up in a corner of the stage and above the action is the musical accompaniment — Joseph Mathia, at the piano, and not missing a detectable note. He also has a moment or two at center stage at the beginning and end of the program, hardly enough to showcase. But the music stands out.

He breathes life into Kurt Weill, Johnny Mercer, Richard Rogers, Lorenz Hart, George and Ira Gershwin, Noel Coward, Jacques Brel, Sammy Cahn, Jerome Kern, Cole Porter and Oscar Hammerstein II, with just the right noise or softness to suit the voices.

If these composers are your cup of tea if done well... slip heartily. (Well-known entertainer Chuck Mitchell, a Rochester native, will appear as a bonus in addition to the regular program each of those nights.)

Thursday, December 25, 1980

(OJC)



Pianist performs

Oxana Yablonskaya, Russian pianist, will appear in concert at 8 p.m. Jan. 9 on the Praeludium Series, at Orchestra Hall in Detroit. Tickets may be bought through the mail or in person. For further information, phone the box office at 833-3700. Ms. Yablonskaya is a prize winner of three international competitions.

Artists Series begins with Romantic touch

The American Artists Series will begin its 11th year Jan. 11 with a program of Romantic works by Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Gaure, performed by a chamber group of musicians of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

The season of six concerts runs through May 3, with concerts scheduled for Feb. 1, March 8 and 29 and April 12.

The scope of the series is wide and guest performers include international luminaries of the theater, Detroit Symphony Orchestra musicians and many of Michigan's fine concert artists.

This season's guests include actress Irene Worth; the prize-winning Ameri-

can String Quartet; and Tom Knebone and Dinah Christie, stars of Stratford, in a jazz review of songs and dances, "From Shakespeare to Sonheim."

Season tickets at \$35 for six concerts are now on sale and may be obtained by calling 647-2230. Individual concert tickets are available on the day of the concert at \$7.50 each when available. Concerts on Feb. 1 and March 8 are \$10 each. Student tickets (with ID) are half-priced.

Artistic director and series founder, Joann Freeman, will make several appearances as concert pianist with the series.

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