

read the complete reviews - **JOAN JAFFE SINGS FUNNY...**

I saw Jon Peterson most recently, not on stage himself, but in the audience at the cabaret Don't Tell Mama, where he's gone to see his stage mama from the past. It was the fun show by a musical comedy actress who'd played his mother in one of the versions of the aforementioned Cohan show some years ago: JOAN JAFFE. Her show, with truth in advertising, is called Joan Jaffe Sings Funny. She's a pip. Apparently, nobody told her that vaudeville is dead, and thanks to whoever has diligently guarded the secret from her, because she's an endearing, enduring "old school" pal of a gal, who'll stick with shtick and is determined to bring chuckles and cheer. It works. Bright-eyed and bright-spirited, with a wink (or two) and a smile (or several), she enters rushing in from the back of the room lamenting in song about "the trouble with the world today," as she comically complains about what epitomizes our hardened rush-rush world: "Coffee in a Cardboard Cup," a song by Kander and Ebb. When it comes to making misery mirthful she's the queen--- with "Queens," the laugh-out-loud gripe about living in the geographically-challenged borough (Francesca Blumenthal's gem). And you can almost smell "the blubber frying" as she revives that oldie "April in Fairbanks," and banks on its jokes worth thawing out for a new generation. Three cheers for the daffy Jaffe, who amuses with silliness and hokey ha-ha lines. Like a determined farmer, no big old field of corn is too daunting for her to make thrive and bring to market, and she can milk a joke, too. Strutting, kibitzing with longtime cabaret pianist talent treasure Jerry Scott (who takes an impressive solo along the way), telling a joke about three clergymen at a funeral, she's plucky and just ducky. Though she doesn't have a powerhouse voice that throbs with emotion, she can be effective with an understated but heartfelt ballad, too. She'll be back at DTM on January 10 and 14, which means she'll probably keep some of her "How cold is it?" jokes in the act, but what better to break the ice and warm up an audience along with that coffee in the cardboard cup? And the ageless sprite delight called Joan Jaffe has mucho energy with or without the caffeine.

NiteLifeExchange.com 2009 Memories: by Rob Lester

The good news (and there isn't any bad news) about funny Joan Jaffe's funny show "Joan Jaffe Sings Funny" at Don't Tell Mama is that it is held over for another performance and the date is Sunday February 15 at 6pm. I'd hate to tantalize you with this good review and then tell you that I saw the final show in the run. You are really lucky that Sidney Myer has booked her back for one more night. I hope she'll continue to bring her back because she is one funny lady.

Stage, screen, TV actor, stand up comedian and partner in "The Joan and Hal Show" with her husband who directed this opus, Joan is billed as "moon.....not a star.....yet." She is utterly delightful. Most of the songs, including four from the pen of the clever Francesca Blumenthal, are comedic.....and wondrously so. We've heard them all before done very well by any number of cabaret singers and they always work. In Joan's hands "Queens" and "Little Luncheonette" as well as "Acapulco" and the tricky "On The Streets of Páree" sound brand new and as if they were written for her. She gets all the laughs in these brilliant Blumenthal numbers. Her timing is masterful.

Joan has two partners in this evening. One is Musical Director Jerry Scott who backs her pianistically as only he can. Joan gave him a solo spot in the middle of the show and he played an exciting version of "Malaguena" to great applause. Her other partner, actor/director/husband, Hal Blankenship, joined her to duet on Johnny Mercer's song and dance vaudeville turn "Two Of A Kind." Talk about teamwork! The interplay between them was palpable and genuinely touching. You don't want to miss this light-hearted entertainment in the pleasant little "Back Room" at Mama's.

Jan Wallman - Cabaret Exchange

Sings Funny...

read the complete reviews - **JOAN JAFFE SINGS FUNNY...**

Veteran performer Joan Jaffe makes her entrance from the rear of the house at Don't Tell Mama in her rousing new show, Joan Jaffe Sings Funny..., holding a paper coffee cup, singing Kander & Ebb's "Coffee in a Cardboard Cup" and greeting individual familiar faces in the audience. Clad in sparkling silver slacks and a shimmering blue top, Jaffe belted out the song from 70 Girls 70 with continuous vigor and vim. The act is specifically geared to "funny" songs and patter and included four Francesca Blumenthal treasures, a song by Alan Arkin, and other rarities.

The first stand up comic part were riddles based on how cold it was outside, encouraging the audience to chant back "How cold is it?" and coming back with super sharp lines that "it was so cold that" Governor Palin and Bill Clinton, among others, had activities that defined how cold it was, as well as the one-liner "so cold the squirrels in Central Park have frozen nuts!" Introducing her husband, Hal Blankenship, who also directed the show, she related that he grew up in a small Virginia community and was a fan of country western music. As a tribute to him, but utilizing her own urban Jewish roots, Jaffe sang Willie Nelson's "Crazy," with special lyrics substituting "Meshuggah" for "crazy" and detailing uproarious activities that made her "meshuggah."

As the first of her "stool" songs (the ballads), Jaffe sang a moving "You Go To My Head," (Gillespie-Coots) turning the song into a three act play which showcased Jaffe's great acting talent. After a first chorus, she gave the stage over to her music director, Jerry Scott, whose interlude on the piano was a class act. Coming back to the melody, Jaffe sang the last chorus so purely that the last note made you gasp at its beauty!

Reverting back to the fun part of the act, Jaffe sang Alan Arkin's crazy "I Like You," and a "food" song "Bagels & Lox (with an onion on the side)." The first of four humorous Francesca Blumenthal songs was "Little Luncheonette," a song about searching for an all-night luncheonette in the city, lusting for the chrome counter, patent leather seats, the insolent waitress in a hairnet, and the type of food served at those all night diners ("tuna patty melt").

The lights dimmed on Jaffe as multiple award winner Scott played a concerto version of "Malaguena" so brilliantly that it stopped the show! Then Jaffe sang a humorous song about having to go backstage after seeing a friend's dreadful performance in a play, "You Were So" by Peggy Simon Traktman, with a funny recurring lyric that sometimes went "you were so---interesting" and chattered about the props, costumes, wigs, everything but the acting performance. This was followed by a mimed bit for which she needed both hands. It was about three entertainers auditioning to perform for a hearing impaired and mute audience. One candidate was from Connecticut, one candidate was from New York, and one was from New Jersey. Demonstrating and translating their signing techniques, the results built up to a side-splittingly funny finish!

Calling Blankenship up to the stage, Jaffe and Blankenship did their clever and wonderful synchronized strutting song and dance to Johnny Mercer's "Two of a Kind" that was in the Laura Linney-Philip Seymour Hoffman movie "The Savages" last year. Their impeccable timing and interplay were a master class of performance art. They announced that one of the film's DVD special features is their complete performance without cutaways!

For her second "stool" song, Jaffe recalled her first Equity job at the music tent in Wallingford, Connecticut where the young assistant musical director was Joe Raposo! Expressively, she sang "Being Green."

Discussing how much she and Blankenship loved traveling, Jaffe sang another witty Blumenthal song, "On the Streets of Patee," all about how public the lovemaking is all over the city of Paris, including in the restrooms, at all the historic sites, and even in the churches! She followed it with "Acapulco" (Blumenthal & Addy Fieger) about traveling with a older church group on a tour and the hunky Latin guide alone with her on top of the pyramid and what she brought home from Mexico (hint: it wasn't anything she shopped for!)

Jaffe's last "stool" song was Arlen and Capote's "Don't Like Goodbyes" from House of Flowers, which she made her own singing it so sweetly and tenderly.

The finale was another hysterically funny Blumenthal song entitled "Queens," about that God forsaken suburb of Manhattan, "somewhere between Yonkers and Siberia!" It was a hoot and the audience gave Jaffe a standing ovation! Anyone who wants to see what a class cabaret act can be should not miss Joan Jaffe Sings Funny...

Joan Jaffe Sings Funny.... repeats Tuesday, February 2nd at 7 PM at Don't Tell Mama.

Joe Regan, Jr. -Cabaret Scenes

read the complete reviews - JOAN JAFFE SINGS FUNNY...

Joan Jaffe is FUNNY! Often irreverent but always tasteful, she is at her best in this new show. The Triad is a good setting for her. It has a proscenium stage with plenty of room for her to move, a grand piano and good light and sound.

When Joan appeared on the stage, the fun began. She was at the top of her form with a collection of songs by several of the contemporary writers of hilarious special material, notably Francesca Blumenthal, one of the cleverest. Joan varied the set nicely with some ballads that showed her sensitive side, and generously gave Jerry Scott, her accomplished Musical Director, a solo spot in the middle of the evening. The show was stunningly directed by her husband, the late actor/director Hal Blankenship.

Watch for upcoming Joan Jaffe performances. We need her to brighten up our nights.

NiteLifeExchange.com - Jan Wallman Reviews

*Joan Jaffe
Sings Funny...*