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newsletter
print edition
subscriptions

news
features
columns
letters
views
the arts
calendar
lifecycles
torah

supplements
classifieds
web links
candlelighting
personals

back issues
homepage



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A Kitchenette cooks up a new solo cabaret show

by dan pine
staff writer

Many cabaret singers cite artists like Judy Garland and Ella Fitzgerald as influences. Lua Hadar loves both, but she adds another to her personal pantheon: Lili von Shtupp, the Marlene Dietrich send-up from "Blazing Saddles."

Hadar sings the von Shtupp classic "I'm Tired" in her new solo cabaret show "It's About Time Already," which premieres at the Purple Onion in San Francisco on Friday, Oct. 7. She will have two other performances later this month and next month in Napa and Larkspur.

Von Shtupp was played by the late Madeline Kahn in the classic 1974 Mel Brooks film, and Hadar hopes to generate the same kind of comic energy in her show that Kahn did. After all, she performs the tune with a troop of dancing Chassids, in a kind of "Fiddler"-meets-Madonna moment.

Fans of Hadar's cabaret trio The Kitchenettes already know about her sense of humor. But the new show isn't all about laughs. In fact, the show (and an accompanying CD of the same name) was born out of personal tragedy.

Hadar's mother died last year, leaving the singer as the last living member of her original nuclear family. The resulting grief, and the growing consciousness of mortality, spurred her to create the CD and solo show.

"[The show and CD are] about my coming of age emotionally in the middle third of life," she says. "It's not just about time for a relationship, but time for me, time for all of us. No more alibis. Let's go before we stumble past our prime."

The time theme pops up frequently in the show, with songs like Frank Wildhorn's "It's Time," "Let's Face the Music and Dance," "Some Other Time" from Leonard Bernstein's "On the Town," and "It's Time for Roses."

Some are standards like Henry Mancini's "Two for the Road." Others are newly written like "Your Face Flew By The Window," composed by Hadar's producer Candace Forest. She even sings a song called "Too Old to Ingenue," a paen to growing old gracefully but not too gracefully, written by j.'s managing editor, Woody Weingarten, and his wife, Nancy Fox.

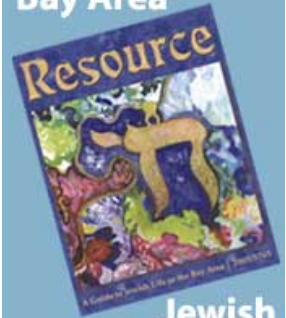
After several happy years with her trio The Kitchenettes, why go solo now? Hadar says she and her main Kitchenette partner Linda Kosut agreed now was a good time for both to explore solo performance. For Hadar, it was about keeping a promise to herself.

"One of the last things [my mother] said to me was, 'I want you to fulfill your dreams.' So with money from my father's annuity as a music teacher in the New York public schools, I produced the CD."

Joining her on the CD and the live show is the Jason Martineau Trio, a jazz ensemble that underscores Hadar's soulful soprano voice. Being on stage without her Kitchenette colleagues took some getting used to. "You do get this feeling of 'Where is everybody?'" she says. "But I'm enjoying the interaction with the band."

She also loves giving her audience a great show. Music came naturally to the New

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York native. Hadar's father was a musician and music teacher, while her mother was "a great dinner table comedian."

"My family was a family of contradictions," she adds. "My grandmother was a Jewish Christian Scientist nurse. My father used to do yoga and meditation. He was a Rosicrucian and Jewish. I came up in this mixed spiritual tradition."

Hadar studied theater and music back east before moving to the Bay Area in the 1990s. Living in an artist colony in Potrero Hill, she is a leading figure in Bay Area cabaret. She and friend Kosut formed the Kitchenettes a few years back, becoming favorites on the local scene. She also performed at numerous European festivals over the past few years.

Though she admits her new solo show is very personal, she is confident audiences can relate, especially if they are members of the select baby boomer generation.

Says Hadar: "Each friend I see has lost a parent, is dealing with health issues and realizing their own mortality. Every person in the middle part of their lives starts to realize 'I don't have forever to fulfill the wishes I have. I'd better get on it.' I think that's where my audience is."

Lua Hadar's "**It's About Time Already**" plays 8 p.m. Friday, Oct. 7, at the Purple Onion, 140 Columbus Ave., S.F. Tickets: \$20. Information: (415) 520-9933 or <http://www.luahadar.com/>.