

Lua Hadar – cabaret at The Purple Onion

October 17, 2005



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Live entertainment has lots of competition in this digital age. DVD's, video games and high-definition television with plasma screens certainly encourage people to stay home.

Yet in the San Francisco Bay Area cabaret-style shows are thriving thanks, in part, to dedicated performers like Lua Hadar.

Singing from the view of the "Middle Third" of life, as she calls it, is perhaps a unique perspective for chanteuse Hadar.

She charmed the audience to laughter and cheers singing about life at her one-woman show in the city last month. The show entitled "It's About Time, Already!" will be appearing at the Larkspur Café Theater on November 4.

"Middle Third is anywhere in life from age 30 to 60," she said. Holding up a photo of herself at age 22 she explained, "in your twenties you get type cast; I was the ingénue." The audience laughed with her at the 1980's hairstyle in the photo. Relaxed by her informal style, the audience was eager to hear more. Hadar then proclaimed in one of her songs, I am "too old to ingénue" (Fox & Weingarten).

Elegant as well as sensual in a classic evening gown, Hadar demonstrated she was far from those naïve days. Her selection of songs and banter warmed the audience with an intimate view of her life.

She talked about growing up in New York and how close she was to her family. Music always a part of her life, her father played in a band and her mother used to sing to her before going off to sleep. One of Hadar's favorite songs to hear her mother sing was "Dancing in the Dark" by Arthur Schwartz and Howard Dietz. Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire, who danced to its memorable melody, swaying across the silver screen decades ago, made the song famous.

The way Hadar describes her life with humor and deep reflection is the type of intimacy that an audience seems to be craving. This is something that staying at home with the HD plasma screen television cannot do. Cabaret as a genre is just such a place where a singer can reveal her soul. And where an audience can enjoy truly live and genuinely heartfelt entertainment.

Fellow singer and performer Carol Luckenback, who stopped by The Purple Onion to see Hadar, explained, "I think it is the singer and the song. The two mesh together to say something to the audience," she said.

People who attend cabaret-style performances are usually an audience that appreciates the close and revealing aspect of a song and the singer who sings it. Laughs, a round of cheers and perhaps at one point with one song, a tear, all are part of the ambiance of cabaret style.

"Cabaret is an extension of all the stuff that people go thru, all their experiences in life," said local dancer and cabaret enthusiast Rachelle Reyes.

According to writer John Kenrick's overview of the history of cabaret, its European roots, beginning in 1881, were simply an opportunity for "performers (poets, singers and composers) to share ideas and test new material." Café owners saw an opportunity to attract customers with a few songs for the price of a couple of drinks. Maybe this is where the "two-drink minimum" tradition comes in?

"Cabarets brought a new intimacy and informal spirit to public performances," writes Kenrick. From 1900, as

cabarets multiplied, the basic format of cabaret continued throughout the decades as its popularity grew, extending beyond European culture into the mainstream of America. It was in places like Paris and Berlin that cabaret became legendary and this is the image that many people have in mind, as expressed in the movie musical “Cabaret,” starring Liza Minnelli and Joel Gray.

But cabaret is really any live performance in an intimate setting that allows audiences to feel the music and allow it to reach them. Hadar and many others in the close-knit cabaret scene hope audiences will continue to gather and enjoy the music and song.

Lua Hadar will be appearing on Fri. Nov. 4 at the Larkspur Cafe Theater for more information visit: www.larkspurcafetheater.com or call 415-924-6107.