



'Pieces of My Heart' features cabaret style evening

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Displaying a style of New York cabaret and night club style, not found in the KC Market, songstress Judy Simmons takes her audience on a journey of her life in a musical montage of mostly Broadway songs with a flash and verve not seen in the metro.

"Music has always defined my life. And I have fallen in love with so many wonderful songs," Judy said.

Simmons, a staple in local theatres collaborates with her extraordinary musical director, Jeff Halpern to craft an hour-long cavalcade of musical numbers—all tailor made (or Halpern-made) to highlight Judy's career and superb talent.

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“Join in the fun of a delightful summer celebration of music and lyrics filled with humor, joy, and sorrow – a very special musical journey with local favorite Judy Simmons and accompanist Jeff Halpern. Judy has appeared in shows at Starlight, KCREP, Quality Hill, The Chestnut, MTH, Spinning Tree, and Coterie. She enjoyed a long career performing in Washington, DC Theatres and Cabarets before KC” (KC Fringe)

Judy starts off with the heartfelt “As if We Never Said Goodbye,” from Andrew Lloyd Weber’s “Sunset Boulevard,” She then laces her performance with some lesser-known songs, mostly from Broadway musicals. But, many will recognize the music if they do not remember the show or the performer who introduced the work. Near the front part of the show, Judy sings “I Can Cook, Too” from the mostly forgotten “On the Town,” composed by the incomparable Irving Berlin.

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A diverse group of noted American songwriters had music selected for Judy's hour-long cabaret. "Bill" by Jerome Kern; "Frank Mills" from "Hair" by Galt MacDermott, James Rado, and Gerome Ragni; "Stars and the Moon," by Jason Robert Brown; "Never Never-Land" from "Peter Pan" by Jule Styne; "I Remember It Well," from Lerner and Lowe's "Gigi"; "Broadway Baby" by Stephen Sondheim from "Follies."

Those are some of the numbers in Judy's show. Probably most notable is a medley of mixed songs carefully-crafted by Jeff Halpern that selected some well-known songs from several Broadway shows and mixed them into a piece "Too Many Ladies" that features pieces



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from "Oklahoma," "Mame," "On a Clear Day," and more. The medley was a show-stopper.

The phenomenal part of Judy's Fringe show is how she performs her songs instead of just singing them. She reminds of the great belters from a Broadway stage. Each song, each lyric has a story to tell. Her delivery really tells the story. When she sings "Never Never-Land" the audience is transported to the memory of Mary Martin's performance as Peter Pan. When she sings "What Did I Have," the pain of the song and the hope of forward movement comes through.

Combined with Judy's performance selections, the musical direction and accompaniment of Jeff Halpern cannot be ignored. Halpern arranged all the music to fit and accentuate Judy's vocal performance. He wrote special bridges between pieces, added special lyrics, and played in a style that viewers will not see in any

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local shows. His arrangements are reminiscent of the kind of work one would see in a nightclub where the performer and arranger are a carefully matched team. He has a style of tickling the keys not seen by KC Metro audiences. He is a force for sure.

The final song and the title for Judy's show, "Pieces of My Heart" is a new Halpern song that wraps the piece and concept of the show to give a final finish, polish, and top coat. The song epitomizes the collaboration and the content of Judy's piece.

Judy's show, "Pieces of My Heart" continues at The Buffalo Room, in back of Westport Flea Market. Table service and bar are available, so plan to attend grab lunch/dinner/snack and a



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drink and enjoy. The show is well worth the viewing.

Tags: "Pieces of My Heart" review, KC Fringe Festival, Kansas City Theatre, Kansas City Performing Arts, Kansas City Arts & Entertainment, The Buffalo Room