

The Cabaret Chronicles: Ann Hampton Callaway

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Happy Sunday, everyone! I'm just winding down from a great week of live music, and am looking forward to beginning another one! I kicked off last week with my own show, *Jenna Esposito Sings Connie Francis*, which was performed at The Metropolitan Room last Sunday, in honor of Valentine's Day. My band and I had a terrific time, and there were lots of happy couples in the audience, so our mission was accomplished!



On Tuesday evening, it was off to *Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola*, which is part of Jazz at Lincoln Center, to hear *Ann Hampton Callaway* in *Ann Hampton Callaway Swings the Great American Songbook*. Joined by the stellar trio of Ted Rosenthal on piano, Peter Washington on bass, and Willie Jones III on drums, Ms. Callaway not only swung the Great American Songbook, but brought her incomparable vocals, sparkling wit, easy humor, and unique interpretations to each and every number she performed. The song selection was superb; the material varied from well-loved standards such as

"I'm Beginning To See the Light" and "That Old Black Magic" to lesser-performed gems like Johnny Mandel and Paul Francis Webster's hauntingly beautiful "A Time For Love." For all of the "single and bitter" people in the room, she offered up a touching "You Don't Know What Love Is," which she followed up with a swinging "Just One of Those Things." In addition to her lush vocals and impressive scat solos, Ms. Callaway also showed off some other talents - improvised vocal solos that mimicked both a trumpet and a saxophone (not at the same time!). Now, I've heard many people perform "vocal trumpet" solos, and Ms. Callaway does it better than most, but the "vocal sax" solo had me floored! Though there are many things to love, to me, one of the best things about seeing Ms. Callaway live is the fun she has playing with her audience. Some of her off-the-cuff comments and interjections had me laughing so hard that my cheeks hurt! The rapport she builds with her audience by the end of a show is nothing short of remarkable, and when the lights come up, there is rarely a face without a smile. Adding to the magic of this particular night was the club itself, which is a gorgeous room on the fifth floor of the Time Warner Center at Columbus Circle. It is one of my favorite rooms in the city in which to see a show, because behind the stage is a wall of floor-to-ceiling windows which afford the audience a magnificent view of Central Park. This past Tuesday, it was all the more enchanting due to the freshly-fallen snow covering the park - it looked like something out of a fairy tale, not the gritty NYC I'm used to. Combined with the wonderful music emanating from the stage, it truly made for one of my favorite nights in recent memory.

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