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FOR MEN OF ALL AGES

taught by a professional music educator from the Harbormen Chorus, Stony Brook.

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THEATER



Photo by Samantha Cuomo

From left, Franklyn P. Butler, Phyllis March, Brian Gill, Robbie Torres, Katie Ferretti, Edward Breese and Jess Ader-Ferretti star in 'Cabaret.'

'Cabaret' still excites and haunts 50 years after Broadway debut

BY MELISSA ARNOLD

The Smithtown Performing Arts Center took its audience on an emotional roller coaster ride Saturday night during its gripping opening performance of "Cabaret."

Ronald R. Green III serves as both director and costume designer for the show, which is set in early 1930s Germany, just prior to World War II. Written by Joe Masteroff, "Cabaret" is based on a play by John Van Druten and stories by Christopher Isherwood, with music by John Kander and lyrics by Frank Ebb. It is among the most enduring musicals on Broadway, with its first show in November 1966 leading to multiple revivals here and abroad.

"Cabaret" follows wandering novelist Cliff Bradshaw as he travels to Berlin in search of his next great idea. And boy, does he find it! He is quickly drawn into the raunchy, circus-like Kit Kat Klub and becomes entangled with its regulars, particularly the seductive performer Sally Bowles.

Sally Bowles is a woman who knows how to get what she wants, and she quickly wriggles her way into Cliff's life, first by moving in with him and then by slowly winning his heart. And they're not the only ones falling in love. Cliff's landlady, Fraulein Schneider, is charmed by the perfect gentleman, widower Herr Schultz.

Unfortunately, what begins as a shockingly funny love story grows dark as Adolf Hitler and the Nazis gain momentum in Germany. The characters eventually find themselves torn apart by politics, and the show's ending is so gut-wrenching that you can almost feel the air leave the theater.

Sally and Cliff are played by Katie Ferretti and Brian Gill, who are both newcomers to the SCPA stage. Ferretti's portrayal of Sally is full of moxie, and Gill's effort is totally believable as Cliff falls helplessly in love.

The audience is directly addressed throughout the show by a flamboyant and hypnotizing emcee played by Robbie Torres. If "Cabaret" is a circus,

then Torres is its wild ringleader. As crude as his character can be, he'll capture your heart and hold on long after the show ends. Be warned, the emcee quickly transitions between several languages, and his thick accent may be hard to understand for some.

Worth particular mention in the talented supporting cast are Fraulein Schneider and Herr Schultz, who are portrayed with great tenderness by Phyllis March and Edward Breese. The duets featuring the couple, "Married" and "It Couldn't Please Me More," are the sweetest of them all.

Choreographer Danielle Coutieri ensured that the many dance numbers in "Cabaret" were full of all the shock value and sex appeal audiences would expect from a questionable nightclub. The kickline at the beginning of the second act was particularly fun to watch.

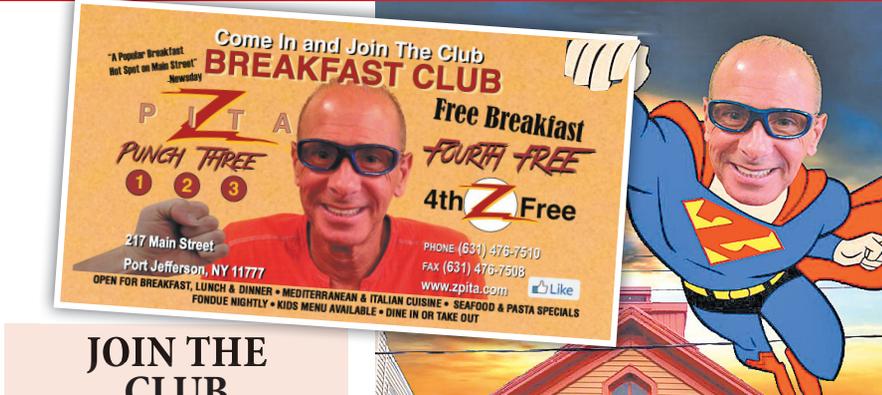
The orchestra is located on the set's upper level for this show, where they are regularly visible to the audience and even become a part of the story as the Kit Kat Klub's house band. Led by music director Melissa Coyle, the music is more than just a sound track — they are a driving force for the club and show as a whole. They play powerfully, at times almost overwhelmingly so.

While this is not a show for children, adults are bound to be thoroughly entertained and delighted by "Cabaret." Just be prepared to leave the theater in stunned silence. This classic will strike you in the heart.

Smithtown Performing Arts Center, 2 East Main St., Smithtown, will present "Cabaret" through May 22. **Show includes strong language, intense sexuality and brief violence, alcohol and drug use.** Running time is approximately 2.5 hours with one 15-minute intermission.

The season continues with "Hairspray the Broadway Musical" from July 9 to Aug. 28, "Rent" from Sept. 10 to Oct. 2 and "Urinetown the Musical" from Oct. 15 to Nov. 6. All tickets are \$35 and may be purchased by calling 631-724-3700 or visiting www.smithtownpac.org.

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