



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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LILI LA SCALA – SIREN

Lee Martin for Gag Reflex

The Garden of Unearthly Delights – Idolize Spiegelent
Until 16 Mar 2014

Review by Anthony Vawser

Sometimes one encounters a performer of such innate talent that it can be tempting to utilize the phrase “born to do what they do”. Lili La Scala doesn’t revolutionise the concept of cabaret; she simply is cabaret excellence at something close to its simplest, loveliest and purest expression. Her show is indeed an oasis in the Garden.

Such is her vocal gift that you suspect she could easily fill the venue with a rich and pleasing sound even without the use of a hand-held microphone. As it is, you won’t miss one note or one nuance, to the point where some may even feel overwhelmed by the sonic power.

Sensibly, La Scala varies the style of her repertoire over the course of the one-hour show. She offers anecdotes and introductions that are mostly born of wistful regret, but she always has a delightfully self-deprecating sense of humour to lighten the mood with (the “bigamy” gag is a slyly funny one indeed!)

Her manner and characterisation (for one can never be sure how much of this performance is ‘her real self’) is knowingly theatrical, perhaps even affected, but it never feels unnatural or overstated. The delicate mixture of modesty and confidence is a winning one.

“Song for the Seals” is certainly a highlight, as the wordless refrain becomes something like musical poetry. La Scala showcases the songwriting of the singular Tom Waits with a track that even this enthused fan was unfamiliar with (but very pleased by). She manages to make her use of a humbly tatty deck chair (substituting for a chaise) into something both elegant and funny.

Nick Cave’s “Ship Song” is the spine-tingling, soul-stirring, heart-rending apex of the evening – and it surely will be, regardless of what other performers you may have witnessed in the Garden that same night.

A couple of song selections seem overly brief and/or not quite worthy of her talent, but that slight sense of missed opportunity only endeared La Scala even more to this reviewer, seeming like a woman with human flaws that we can all relate to, rather than someone simply playing at the role of a perfect untouchable diva.

There is no need to resist – indeed, no use resisting – the call of this “Siren”. Get along to see (and hear) Lili La Scala. Thank me later.

Rating: 4.5 stars (out of 5).