

Tomorrow is Up for Grabs, Again: “Cabaret” at the Woodstock Playhouse

The Production Prepares for its Final Weekend, August 12-14

By [Mary Angeles Armstrong](#)



Leslie Dawson

As if we were all stuck in an eerie time loop, the 2022 company at the [Woodstock Playhouse](#) has staged an exuberant, nuanced and even defiant new production of Kander and Ebb’s classic 1960’s musical, set in a Weimar-era Germany that feels suddenly contemporary. Directed and choreographed by Chaz Walcott, the show rises to the production’s high expectations and is full of jubilant music and provocative dancing, but benefits from the underlying sense of urgency and even a tinge of outrage.

The setting of the Woodstock Playhouse lends itself well to the intimate feeling of a slightly shoddy 1930s Berlin nightclub. Tassy Kirbas blazes as the brassy, off-kilter Sally Bowles belting out her famous numbers and capturing both the character’s vivaciousness and self-destructive nature. Erik Daughterman is equally good in the iconic role of the emcee, channeling both Shakespeare’s Puck and Wilder’s Stage Manager into another brazen, provocative character who never loses his underlying humanity.

Veering between joyful hedonism and tragedies both personal and epic, the show's themes of sexual identity, fascism, and even abortion feel prophetic rather than settled. I brought my 14-year-old with some trepidation—and a plan to discuss the show's bawdier aspects afterwards—but the cross-generational debate that followed was unexpected. I'd always understood the title character of Clifford Bradshaw (skillfully embodied by Caleb Miofsky) as a gay man who must adhere to heterosexual convention, leading to his relationship with Sally Bowles. However, my 14-year-old insisted that Bradshaw fell somewhere else on the LGBTQIA+ spectrum and that I should be more open-minded.

Within my own bourgeois worry lies the crux of the show: Walcott and his ensemble cast seduce their audience to cross lines of decency, then deftly move those lines. The show's real indecency is made plain by the second act and, of course, it has nothing to do with sexuality or dance moves.



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The production cunningly illustrates how the cabaret, a place where the audience once participated in and celebrated freedom, can quickly become just another place for the onlooker to bury their head in the sand. It begs a bigger question, and I wonder if the truth-to-power message that the young cast—most straight from college and hailing from all over America—is sending is not just to the current political moment, but also to me. When does my own open-minded participation in a slightly suggestive (although gorgeously entertaining) musical in my idyllic village on a beautiful summer night become just another way for me to stick my own head in the sand and ignore the privilege of having that same discussion afterwards?

The cast nails the ending, and, even though I've seen the play multiple times before, I was still floored. However Bradshaw ultimately identifies, it is certainly not as a fascist. He realizes the danger the Nazis present and flees. Bowles makes a different choice, and Kirbas plays the titular song as a revelation. The cast comes out for one solemn bow, and then they just go.



David McIntyre

The Woodstock Playhouse

After such an ebullient show their quiet ending stuns, but the message is clear: If they can so quickly go—if Herr Schultz the German-Jewish fruit seller, our queer emcee, and the ambiguous Bradshaw all can go, well then, we could just as easily go too.

“Cabaret” playing for one final weekend, August 12-14, at the Woodstock Playhouse.

Location Details

Woodstock Playhouse

103 Mill Hill Road, Woodstock
845-679-6900

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About The Author



Mary Angeles Armstrong



Mary writes about home design, real estate, sustainability, and health. Upstate, she's lived in Swiss style chalets, a 1970's hand-built home, a converted barn, and a two hundred year old home full of art. Now she lives with her son in a stone cottage outside Woodstock.