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Cabaret series takes over Society Hill

by Larry Nichols

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NATHAN OHM

Quince Productions has been reliable for presenting a steady string of quality dance productions and LGBT plays, but this summer it's changing things up a bit by organizing a weekend overflowing with cabaret performances.

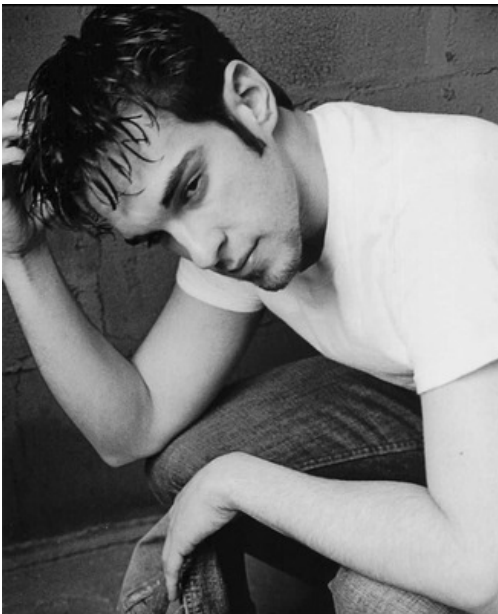
The "Full House" series features a varied roster of local and regional cabaret performers like Melissa Kolzynski, Karen Gross and Maggie Laird through June 28 at the Red Room at Society Hill Playhouse.

Out performer Peter Andrew Danzig, 25, is no stranger to the arts scene in Philadelphia, as he recently performed in Quince's production of "Show/Tell" and as part of the Kimmel Center's "Celebrating Sondheim" tribute show.

His cabaret piece, "Welcome to the Red Room," will close out the "Full House" alongside Aimee Robidoux and her show, "Vision of Love," at 6 p.m. June 28.

Danzig said the title of his show is inspired more by the venue than anything else.

"I looked at the space and it's a first-time event for everybody who I know that's coming," he said. "A lot of my friends and family who are going to be attending have never seen the Red Room at Society Hill Playhouse. I think it's a really good way to welcome them to that space. I wanted to go simple and welcome people. With the music that I'm performing and the stories I'm trying to tell, I don't think it needed a specific title. I think the audience will get it."



PETER ANDREW DANZIG

Danzig said that his and Robidoux's shows are thematically and tonally different, but will certainly complement each other.

"My performance opens with a solemn look at the world as it is now in relationships and things of that nature," he said. "As a homosexual man, I wanted to pursue some of the thoughts on relationships and love and the state of affairs that we are in today. A lot of my music is based on equality and finding a place in the world. Hers is a little more light and I feel that she is going to be performing more upbeat pop songs that people are more familiar with. It'll kind of be nice and balanced."

Danzig added he is more concerned about finding the right songs to convey his message than about putting songs in his show that are surefire crowd pleasers.

"I picked music that I thought was related to things that are prevalent now," he said. "That was the hardest part, because there is something to be said about selecting music that everybody knows. It usually guarantees a successful performance because everybody can relate. For me, it was important that I pick music that was cognizant of my beliefs, and also I thought that it would be great to take some obscure music that people don't necessarily know because I can put my own touches on it and accent the work the way I see it."

Another out performer taking part in "Full House" is recent New York City transplant Nathan Ohm, who performs his "Travel and Home: Songs for the Journey" show at 7:30 p.m. June 26. Ohm said the show combines his Broadway influences, humor and his newfound appreciation for jazz.

"I started getting in touch with more of the jazz standards in the last three years: Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald, Cole Porter, etc.," he said about inspirations for his performance. "People that know me know that I like to travel a fair amount and I've recently moved to New York. So there will be a little bit of comparing Philly and New York. I'll have a blend of humor and then just real-life stories, which can be humorous."

The 36-year-old performer had spent nine years living in Philadelphia before relocating to New York to focus on acting.

"I'm expanding my life," he said about the move. "In the last three years, I have focused on getting a presence in theater. In the last two years, I've done six shows in the Philadelphia area and I wanted to come to New York to take advantage of some of the classes that are up here, as well as do some more auditions in New York for Broadway tours."

Both Danzig and Ohm agree that presenting several different performers under the banner of a single event should make a splash bigger than any of the individual cabaret acts.

"I feel that all of us are very different kind of performers bringing all kinds of different musicality and backgrounds," Danzig said. "I think what's exciting about this cabaret series versus what people are used to is that there's an array of

different performers and everybody here is versatile. So in any given concert, people are going to be exposed to music that they like and they know but, also in the course of seeing the series, [audiences] will hopefully go and see other performers and expose themselves to something completely different.”

“The way that it’s being marketed and produced, it puts a fresh image on cabaret,” Ohm added. “Philly is big in the jazz scene and there aren’t a lot of known cabaret performances to go to. So it will certainly give cabaret a fresh start in Philly.”

“Full House” runs through June 28 at the Red Room at Society Hill Playhouse, 507 S. Eighth St. For more information or tickets, visit www.quinceproductions.com.

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