

Review of "The Long and Short of It"
By Julie McHale

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For those of us who are or have been fans of Skylight Opera Theatre, we are thrilled and privileged to witness a retrospective look at its history via two tour guides with talent and great affection for this theatre that has survived for fifty years. Colin and Paula Cabot are gracing the stage in the Studio Theatre in the Broadway Theater Center for one more weekend, and if you enjoy a musical and nostalgic journey through a myriad of hits that were once performed by this theatrical company, you should come to witness "The Long and Short of It."

Colin does the honors at the piano and also makes transitions between medleys by sharing anecdotes from his experiences at Skylight in its early days in the playhouses on Jackson and later on Jefferson Street across from Cathedral Square. Collectively, he and his wife Paula have been involved with Skylight for forty of the fifty years of its existence.

Paula is the stunning and versatile vocalist who weaves her way through almost fifty numbers, including songs from the early musicals performed at Skylight, some of which she starred in, and then proceeds to take on the challenging and beautiful Sondheim compositions, tunes by Noel Coward and Harold Arlen, ending with a long rendering of romantic ballads from a myriad of representative song writers, such as Hart, Mercer, and Gershwin. She moves about the stage with verve and flexibility, leaping up on the grand piano, occasionally breaking into a dance routine, always holding our attention.

Some of her best renderings include "Bill" from Jerome Kern's "Showboat," "My Ship" from Gershwin's "Lady in the Dark" and "What Can You Lose" from Sondheim's "Dick Tracy." Her "One for My Baby," "The Man Who Got Away" and "Losing My Mind" were very mournful and moving. It's hard to pick and choose among so many memorable numbers.

Both performers are very much at ease on stage, though they have supposedly "retired" from it and now live on a beautiful farm in New Hampshire. They recently returned to town to help straighten out some snarls at the company they so love and are thrilled to be a part of the fiftieth year celebration. How fitting that the theater that is named after them is now a venue for their comeback.

Former performers from shows of the past share the spotlight at different performances. The night I attended Ray Jivoff, Chase Stoger, Jack Forbes Wilson, and Kay Steiffel made cameo appearances. But the show rightfully belongs to Colin and Paula Cabot, whose devotion to this theater company and whose talent which represents the quality to which it has always aspired, is showcased with fervor and delight. One could tell that they were having as much fun as we were.

Bill Theisen deserves the honors for his able direction of the show, which runs through January 10. Call 414-291-7800 to reserve seats. They're going fast as well they deserve to be.