

# Cabaret

14-16th November 2002  
at Faringdon Community College  
Directors: Allyn Richardson & Denis Peach

## COME TO THE CABARET!

**The Dramatic Society cast take a bow at the close of the first night of their autumn production at the Community College**

NINETEEN-THIRTIES Berlin, the sophisticated and decadent background to the rise of Hitler, when apathy and fatalism led to the enslavement of a whole continent and the extermination of millions. For a couple of magical hours, the Faringdon Dramatic Society transported us, with their autumn production of Cabaret, to the dying days of the Weimar Republic and the glitzy world of Sally Bowles and the Kit Kat Club - "where life is beautiful... where the girls are beautiful... where even the audience is beautiful..." but where, too, in the background, the tramp of the jackboot and the shattering of glass grows daily louder.

Dominic Bullock, as Master of Ceremonies, pointed up this paradox from his first appearance - a sinister, cadaverous figure frolicking gaily with the Kit Kat girls ("every one a virgin!") and conveying superbly the chilling menace lurking always behind the froth and frivolity of the night club ambience. His "If You Could See Her as I Do" in Act Two was particularly effective, contrasting the pure vaudeville of the "gorilla lady" routine with the sledgehammer shock of its racist climax, enthusiastically applauded by the ringside table of Nazi thugs.

Amanda Linstead was a delightful Sally Bowles. Brittle yet vulnerable, worldly-wise but somehow touchingly naive, she sums up the indifference and

hedonism of thirties Berlin when she asks Clifford (Gary Bates): "Politics - what's that got to do with us?"...and Clifford - earnest, aware, apprehensive, all the things that Sally can never be - ultimately has no alternative but resignation and withdrawal.

If Sally and Clifford touched the audience with the pathos of a young dream that could never be, there was even more poignancy in the doomed relationship of landlady Fraulein Schneider (Jeni Summerfield) and the gently optimistic Herr Schultz (Cleve Forty), both stretching out vainly for mutual comfort in middle age. "What Would You Do?" Fraulein Schneider asks the audience when faced with the stark choice between a safe but solitary existence and the dire consequences of marrying a Jewish shopkeeper.

The production suffered a little from a lack of continuity in some of the scene changes and the physical setting was perhaps rather impersonal for a piece that relies very much on an ambience of intimacy. It would be interesting to see what this cast could make of it in the context of a small, dedicated theatre.

Sharon Gerry, Joan Lee, Lynda Bates and Jeni Summerfield produced some stunning costumes and Debra Warner's talented orchestra provided excellent backing to the show's wonderful range of numbers.

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