

AISLE SAY Florida

THE ALL NIGHT STRUT!

Conceived by Fran Charas, Original Director & Choreographer
Directed & Choreographed by Dennis Courtney
Florida Studio Theatre/ Keating Mainstage; Through July 1, '07
1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota, (941) 366-9000
www.fst2000.org

Reviewed by Marie J. Kilker

It's as if a typical FST. Cabaret Club review got more elaborate, then transferred to its Mainstage. The formula of four singers and a pianist performing a scriptless revue of songs in medleys or otherwise given some principle of organization is that familiar! But *The All Night Strut!* existed before FST's cabaret venue and has been staged previously by FST and elsewhere in the area. Its current version clarifies reasons for its popularity. And it doesn't hurt that, considering the predominance of seniors in Manasota, all but one of the numbers is from the 1930s and 1940s. "**Fascinating Rhythm**," the exception, may be from the '20s, but it does characterize the beat of the show.

Each performer has a distinctive tone and style but all harmonize beautifully. They come on with streamliner "**Chattanooga Choo-Choo**" and end swinging "It Don't Mean a Thing." When they pair off, baritone **Jim Weaver**. joins with sleek black alto **Sophia Hinshelwood**., tenor **Joel Newsome**. with pompadored blond soprano **Jennifer John**s. But each gets to center songs as well, like Weaver acting out with pathos most of "**Brother Can You Spare a Dime?**" and Newsome recalling, so sweetly, "**A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square**." . Harlem 1939 favorite "**Gimme a Pigfoot and a Bottle of Beer**" gives **Hinshelwood**. a chance to belt, as does Johns with a lead-in to "**I'll Be Seeing You**." That's the end of the review's stirring **World War II Medley**, with vigorous miming to "**Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition**" and all four, in army hats, seeming to be "**Comin' In on a Wing and a Prayer**" to their airfield.

There's dancing from time to time (captained by Jennifer Johns). "**In the Mood**" brings on jitterbug. "**Beat Me, Daddy, Eight to the Bar**" . requires boogie and even draws pianist **Jim Prosser**. to stand at his piano and participate from his rear platform. From the humorous "**A Fine Romance**" to the sentimental "**As Time Goes By**," the four performers exude charm. They make pretty pictures-first in black pinstripes for the men, in white peplum jackets and slit A-line skirts with black trim on the ladies. **Marcella Beckwith**. designed these as well as tailed tuxes and stunning gowns for the show's second half: one couple's in black, the other's in white. Beckwith's simple set of two platforms under arches with occasional rear projections expands on her typical cabaret designs. Varied lighting enhances, as designed by **Bruce Price**. and **Colleen Jennings**..

Despite its name, *The All Night Strut!* lasts 1 hr., 35 mins. It opens FST's Summerfest 2007, under artistic director **Richard Hopkins**.

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