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## Come to the Cabaret, old chum

By Karen Mamone

Music and politics collide from time to time. In America, during the Depression era and beyond, the protest song gave voice to those on the picket line and in the bread line.

In Europe, cabarets provided not only a venue to avoid the more restrictive conventions of the day, but also a place where cabaret artists were free to deal with social themes and political developments of the time.

German cabaret began to blossom in the early 20th century, bringing forth all kinds of new artists, who delighted in being both sexually daring and politically acerbic. Prodding the process were the original voices of Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill, as well as many others less well-known to contemporary audiences.

But when the Nazi party came to power in 1933, it immediately began to repress this form of intellectual criticism. Cabaret in Germany was hit badly, and most of its artists either fled the country or were persecuted.

Drawing upon that rich musical and intellectual tradition, Florida Studio Theatre brings its "European Cabaret" to the stage through March 22, with its usual formula of four affable performers in the intimate setting of the Goldstein Cabaret.

Stephen Hope ("The Exonerated," "The Flip Side") and Forrest Richards (Sally Adams in Golden Apple's "Call Me Madam"), who are perhaps the two strongest performers in the quartet, are well known to FST and local

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Tara Bruno and Stephen Hope perform a number from "European Cabaret."

### WHEN YOU GO

\* "European Cabaret," a musical review at FST's Goldstein Cabaret, though March 22. \* Tickets range from \$19 for previews to \$26-\$29 for regular performances. \* Call the box office at 366-9000, or visit 1241 N. Palm Ave.

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audiences. They receive capable support from newcomer Tara Bruno and Alan Gillespie, who appeared in touring companies of "Showboat" and "Miss Saigon" at the Van Wezel.

Director Dennis Courtney has brought several very successful productions to the FST stages, including "Hedwig and the Angry Inch," "It Ain't Nothing But The Blues," and "The All-Night Strut."

The show's developers -- artistic director Richard Hopkins, Rebecca Langford and Jim Prosser -- have taken more of an entertainment approach to the material (and why shouldn't they?) than a historical one.

Strictly speaking, perhaps, songs such as "Thank Heaven for Little Girls" or Charles Aznavour's "She" aren't exactly part of this metier, but familiarity and crowd appeal do add to the audience's enjoyment.

Each performer gets a chance to shine in one or more solo numbers, and among the musical high points are Hope's poignant "It's DeLovely," Richards' "La Vie En Rose" and Bruno's "Saga of Jenny."

And while some of the more blatantly political numbers -- "It's All a Swindle," "I Am a Vamp," "A Little Attila" -- may be new to most, they provide a fascinating insight into this influential movement.

Pianist/arranger Prosser, as usual, adds his reliable professionalism to the show.

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