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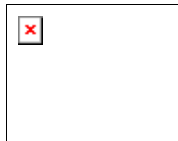
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Sarasota Herald-Tribune (FL)

FST Cabaret Club puts new spin on Gershwin

November 11, 2002

Section: FLORIDA WEST

Page: E4

JAY HANDELMAN jay.handelman@heraldtribune.com

The songs of George and Ira Gershwin can inspire feelings of romance and playfulness, sorrow and longing all in the turn of a lyric or musical phrase.

Although their songs are standards, they sound fresh in the often-vibrant arrangements that highlight the new revue "My One and Only Gershwin," which opens the Florida Studio Theatre Cabaret Club season. Those arrangements add lively touches to even the most familiar songs, with shifting rhythms and an occasional Latin beat adding to the inherent jazzy quality in George Gershwin's melodies.

As put together by director **Dennis Courtney** and musical director Michael Sebastian, the show has a free-flowing style that moves pleasantly through more than two dozen songs.

Singers Stephen Hope, Richie McCall, Laiona Michelle and Ellie Mooney keep up a high energy with help from accompanist Jim Prosser.

But the show revs higher whenever Michelle takes over. She has a wide-ranging voice that can be sweet or bluesy, shifting from the tenderness of "Summertime" to the playful comedy of "Treat Me Rough."

McCall is nearly as lively, with his light dancing to "Nice Work If You Can Get It," and a genial polish on "I've Got a Crush on You."

Hope and Mooney have fun but don't sound as strong, particularly with the production's reliance on reverberation in the sound system, which makes everything sound as if it's performed inside a cavern, rather than an intimate theater.

Hone is at his best rattling through "Tchaikovskv " the tongue-

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twisting list of Russian composers, written by Ira Gershwin with composer Kurt Weill. The song made a star of Danny Kaye in "Lady in the Dark." It's quickly followed by Mooney's lovely rendition of "The Saga of Jenny," introduced by Gertrude Lawrence in the same show.

The show ebbs and flows nicely, but it is Michelle who will keep the audience cheering when she puts her magic on a Gershwin melody.

THEATER REVIEW

My One and Only Gershwin

Directed and choreographed by **Dennis Courtney**. Reviewed Nov. 7. Through Jan. 12, 2003. Florida Studio Theatre Cabaret Club, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets are \$20-\$22. Call 366-9000.

Caption: PHOTO / LEBLANC STUDIOS
Stephen Hope, Richie McCall, Ellie Mooney and Laiona Michelle appear in the Florida Studio Theatre production of "My One and Only Gershwin."

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