

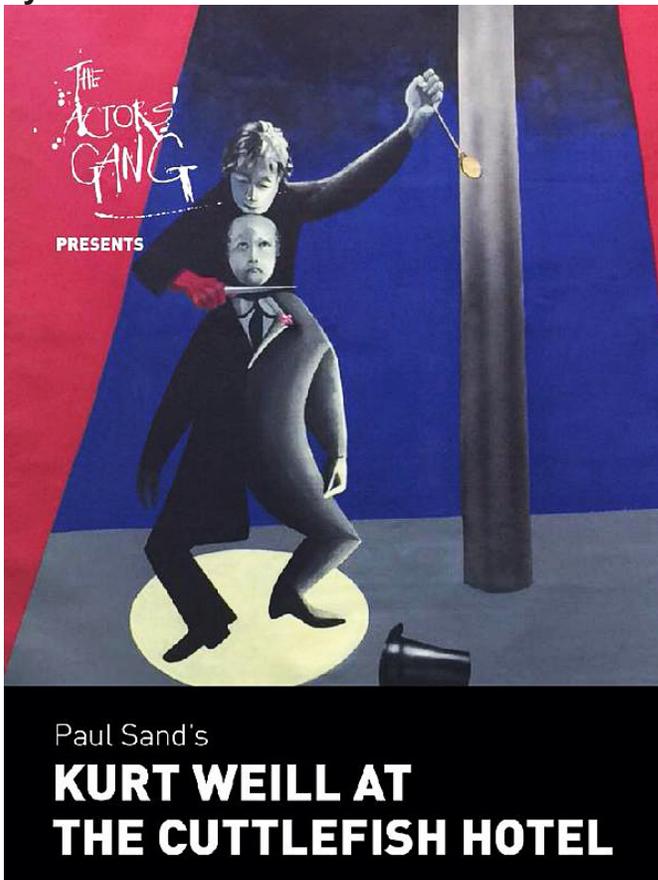


Los Angeles

BWW Reviews: Stunning Voices Astound in KURT WEILL at the Cuttlefish Hotel

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by Gil Kaan



Kurt Weill at the Cuttlefish Hotel/music by Kurt Weill/lyrics by Bertolt Brecht/created & directed by Paul Sand/The Actors' Gang/thru July 11, 2015

Paul Sand's *Kurt Weill at the Cuttlefish Hotel* wows and astonishes with musical performances from two incredibly talented women Shay Astar and Kolean Ung. Sands has chosen various Kurt Weill/Bertolt Brecht

compositions from their various hit shows (*The Threepenny Opera*, *Happy End*, *Mahagonny*) and strung them together for a wonderful musical showcase of these two exceptionally expressive, richly voiced actress/singers extraordinaire. Providing able support, Sands and Sol Mason each have their individual moments to shine onstage. Sands in his powerful "In Which He Begs All Men for Forgiveness" and Mason in his organ grinding trio with Astar and Ung in "Solomon Song."

Musical director **Michael Roth** (on piano) leads his never overpowering, always complementing quintet; with Tamoubra Baptiste on violin, Hope Easton on cello, Laura Vall on keyboards and **Amy White** on harmonium, with the latter three on vocal harmonies.

But it's the two women's time to dominate in this staging as Sand directs the most striking, still, no-frills performances from his leading ladies. On Actors' Gang expansive, bare stage with just a couple of wooden chairs, a newspaper, a bowler hat and an apron; Sands wearing a single bloody red glove transports the audience to a time sans the hustle and bustle of the city's, any city's, white noise of commotion.

Astar's rendition of "Surabaya Johnny" certainly matches Patti LuPone's, with just the perfect amount of background vocal harmonies and the just right touch of solo instrumentations of the talented string musicians. Just beautiful! Astar NAILS "The Ballad of Mack the Knife" with her gorgeous vocals, precision diction, her distinctive phrasing and the most minimal of movements. Yeahhh!!! Can someone please cast her in all the **Patti LuPone**-type roles???

Ung's soaring soprano and her exacting phrasing in her story-telling of "Pirate Jenny" simply mesmerizes! The many, multiple notes her vocal cords make with the simple line "the ship with eight sails" astound! And Ung could sure teach budding ingénues how to deliver a song that's sensuous, instead of overtly sexual, as she seductively demonstrates in "Barbara Song." (The heavy breathing wasn't from Ung, but from the audience!)

All four joined together to inventively perform "Alabama Song (Whiskey Bar)," the Weill/Brecht ditty included as the preceding track before "Light My Fire" on The Doors' 1966 debut album.

Any vehicle that evokes wonderful memories of **Patti LuPone and Jim Morrison** makes for a magical evening. And all this wonderfulness in just little over an hour! (Sigh!)

www.theactorsgang.com

