

Shana Farr

Whistling Away the Dark Through the Songs of Julie Andrews

Metropolitan Room
New York, NY



Shana Farr delivers a splendid evening of music in her new show, *Whistling Away the Dark Through Songs of Julie Andrews*. Not that this is much of a stretch for the talented Farr. Both are lovely, likeable sopranos. Like Andrews, Farr reflects an upbeat sunny outlook and it's fitting to call her show "Whistling Away the Dark" (Johnny Mercer and Henry Mancini for *Darling Lili*), a song of optimism and forging ahead through hard times.

This type of show could be risky since the similarity of their voices occasionally works to obscure Shana Farr, the star of *this* show, but is that even a complaint when the result is such lovely music? Fortunately, Farr focused her patter and music on show tunes from the Andrews repertoire and she delivered them with polished elegance. Not dwelling on Andrews' hard times, Farr evokes the film star's bright intelligence and the crystal-clear coloratura talent, apparent even at the age of 13, when Andrews performed "Je suis Titania" (Ambroise Thomas) before the Queen of England. Here Farr is able to display her own impressive soprano chops.

Eric Michael Gillett directed the show as a flow of moods, including the sweet nostalgic "Jimmy" (Jay Thompson from the film *Thoroughly Modern Millie*) and a dreamy "In My Own Little Corner" (Rodgers and Hammerstein from *Cinderella*). Farr found the humor in "Star!" (Jimmy Van Heusen/Sammy Cahn) and gave Richard Rodgers's "I Have Confidence" (*The Sound of Music*) just the right punch of pluck. Musical Director and arranger/pianist Fred Barton added updated and amusing lyrics in "You're So London" (Mike Nichols and Ken Welch), for the Carnegie Hall concert starring Andrews and Carol Burnett. Many of the songs are more obscure, like Arthur Schwartz and Maxwell Anderson's "Once Upon a Long Ago" from *High Tor*, but wonderful to hear. After George and Ira Gershwin's "Someone to Watch Over Me," Farr delivered an exquisite Noël Coward's "Someday I'll Find You" (both songs heard in *Star!*) with cellist Adam Fisher's tender support. The empathy between the two songs is evident, both longing for lost love.

The show opened with a medley and closed with "Living in the Shadows" (Frank Wildhorn/Leslie Bricusse) from Broadway's *Victor/Victoria*, reflecting the need to step out of the darkness and discover life.

With all the elements of a charismatic subject, a beautiful voice, well-crafted direction, fine songs, creative arrangements and impeccable back-up, Shana Farr delivered an admirable salute to a performer she obviously admires.

Shana returns to the Metropolitan Room August 15 at 9:30 and August 17 at 7:00.

Elizabeth Ahlfors

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