

THEATER

Gay cabaret

Life may be a cabaret, old chum,
but sometimes life ain't pretty

BY FLORA SUSSELY



Mark Steering (left) and Kevin Coulson kick up their heels in *Three Men and a Boa*

Three Men and a Boa, which opens for a three-night run at Darcelle XV beginning Dec. 27, is a cabaret-ish, semidrag, pseudo-musical revue. Unfortunately, it does not measure up to creator Joe Anderson's hype.

Anderson—writer, producer, pianist and director—spoke to me before the show. Maybe I got my hopes up and expected his exuberance to spill onto the show itself. Sadly, the writing was maudlin, segues too strained and the casting suspect.

In its comedic moments the show succeeds somewhat, but it takes itself too seriously and showcases singers who can't sing in songs that require a powerful voice. In one embarrassing vignette after another, these poor guys are forced to say things like "Marilyn Monroe—all anyone cared about was her looks. It's a lot like being gay; people don't care about what you think, they just want to get in your pants." All this on a dark stage with a spotlight, candle in hand, followed by Elton John's "Candle in the Wind."

I don't know what to say except that I was sober on press night. Maybe in the company of a rowdy group of tipsy pals I would have enjoyed the camp. There were some very funny moments in the spoof of the opera *Carmen* and a couple of other equally ridiculous scenes, like "I Never Try Anything Twice" sung by Mark Steering.

The most professional talent on stage was Kevin Coulson, who sang with amazing self-assurance. His rendition of "With One Look," from Andrew Lloyd Weber's *Sunset Boulevard*, was lovely. He makes a very plausible Norma Desmond.

The performance was hampered by a squeaky piano pedal, which is in no way the fault of the performers. I do, however, wish that someone had identified the problem before we had to sit through highly distracting, high-pitched whining throughout the show.

There is no doubt that our town needs more live entertainment, more opportunity for performers, writers, composers, producers and directors to experiment and evolve. I know we all need to support artistic endeavors in order to ensure that growth happens. Without our support, club owners will not offer such entertainment.

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However, we need also to send the message that we are a discerning audience and that it is no longer enough to present something "gay" for its own sake. As gay playwright Terrence McNally says, queer art still needs to be good art. And, sadly, this was not.

I must report that at show's end, the audience did rise to its feet, screaming "Bravo!" So, maybe it's just me. Am I a snob? Or maybe the preview performance audience was filled with a less than impartial audience of friends and family. I just don't know.

If you're out and about on Dec. 27, 28 or 29, you may want to give *Three Men and a Boa* a shot. It's only a \$10 cover charge away, and this cabaret may well seem a bit more exciting with a regular rollicking Darcelle's audience, rather than the crowd at a boring Tuesday night preview.

■ **THREE MEN AND A BOA** runs Dec. 27 through 29 at 8:30 p.m. at Darcelle XV, 208 N.W. Third Ave. Admission is \$10.

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