

Whistling Away The Dark - Through Songs of Julie Andrews

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It takes a lot of chutzpah for an American soprano to perform a cabaret about the life and work of Julie Andrews in the UK. The great singer holds such a fond place in our national psyche that it seems odd to think that much of the work that made Andrews a global sensation took place in America. Yet even before *Mary Poppins*, a 13-year-old Andrews was performing operettas at the personal request of the royal household, and it is facts like this that singer Shana Farr is keen to share with us.



Shana Farr Photo: Marcos Bevilacqua

Obviously a huge fan, Farr is a highly accomplished singer herself and uses a back catalogue of Andrews' numbers to create an informative and entertaining evening of cabaret. Farr, accompanied by Nathan Martin on the piano, is keen to remind us of the scope of Andrews' career and illustrates its breadth by performing numbers written for her by Rodgers and Hammerstein, Lerner and Lowe, Henry Mancini, Noel Coward and both the Gershwin and the Sherman brothers.

Thankfully, Farr, wearing a simple black satin dress and blonde hair worn up in a tight chignon, possesses a voice worthy to tackle Andrews' vocal and emotional range. There are fairly obvious moments, such as *Spoonful Of Sugar*, juxtaposed neatly with the gorgeous lullaby *Stay Awake* plus *I Have Confidence* and *I Could Have Danced All Night*. Occasionally the facts and figures become a little over-powering as Farr seems determined to justify Andrews' place in the musical hall of fame, when in fact she is playing to a genuinely partisan audience anyway.

Je Suis Titania is a lightweight aria challenging enough for any soprano but Farr brings it to life making note that this was the song that brought Andrews to national attention as a child star in 1948. Indeed *Star*, the movie about the life of Gertrude Lawrence in which Andrews played the lead, prompted the highlight for the evening, with Farr delivering a gorgeous rendition of Coward's classic *Some Day I'll Find You*.