



TUESDAY, MAY 22, 2018

MICHAEL GILTZ AT WORK

THEATER: BROADWAY BY THE YEAR -- 1956 AND 1975

BROADWAY BY THE YEAR 1956 AND 1975 ** 1/2 out of ****
TOWN HALL

The winter-spring series "Broadway By The Year" has been going on for almost twenty years. But somehow it still feels like the best-kept secret in theater. Sure it has full houses and subscribers who've held onto their seats for years and greet each other by name. Yes, [creator Scott Siegel](#) has spun this franchise into an ever-growing number of showcases for Broadway and cabaret stars and rising talent both at Town Hall and 54 Below and beyond. Nonetheless, go to BBTY and you'll feel like you've slipped backstage or finally received your theater-insider badge.

This season, Siegel is focusing on one year for each act of the night. On Monday, it was 1956 and 1975, two primo years for musical theater being the last gasp of a golden age and the start of a new flowering. I'm about to tell you what you missed but don't despair: the next [Broadway By The Year takes place on June 18](#) and covers 1988 and the head-spinningly recent season of 2017.

For 1956, the show drew upon *Bells Are Ringing*, *Candide*, *Mr. Wonderful* (the Sammy Davis Jr. showcase), *The Most Happy Fella* and the peerless *My Fair Lady*. And 1975? That season offered shows celebrating Tom Chapin (!), Bessie Smith and Rodgers and Hart. Happily it also included the surprisingly successful *Shenandoah* (I did NOT know that ran more than 1000 performances), *The Wiz* and two genuine landmarks: Kander & Ebb's *Chicago* and *A Chorus Line*.

You come to BBTY to hear covers of classic songs you know well and some rarer songs you're not familiar with, all of them performed by big stars and rising talent. It's a rare night when you don't walk away



Michael Giltz is a freelance writer based in NYC and can be reached at mgiltz@pipeline.com

FAVORITE LINKS

[Americablog](#)

[Five O'Clock Lightning baseball blog](#)

[Deep Pop -- Lori Lakin's Blog](#)

[The Back Page -- Jason Page on ESPN Radio](#)

[Cine-Blog -- George Robinson's Blog](#)

[Documents On Art & Cinema - Daryl Chin's Blog](#)

[Brucie G's Wondrous Blog Of Adventure and Mystery -- Bruce Greenspan's Blog](#)

BLOG ARCHIVE

► [2019](#) (7)

▼ [2018](#) (34)

► [December](#) (7)

wanting to hear a "new" song again and write down the name of a performer to keep your eye on. Tonight was no exception, but it was especially good at pointing out new artists ready for their close-up.

It wasn't always as kind to veterans. Lance Roberts is on Broadway right now in the acclaimed revival of *My Fair Lady*. While he got by on "Too Close For Comfort," Roberts was at sea on the infectious "Gimme A Pigfoot (And A Bottle Of Beer)." It was perhaps the wrong song for the wrong crowd on the wrong evening and when he gamely pointed the mike at the audience for them to sing ("Gimme a pigfoot!") they had blank looks and no idea what to say. He deserved props for selling it anyway as a grand old time. So did Cheryl Freeman on "Home" from *The Wiz*. That's a song that should bring down the house (any house) but it was an off night for Freeman. However, she delivered a master class in staying in character *after* the song was over, looking genuinely moved by the tune and the moment even as you knew she was thinking, "Damn! That didn't happen." And [Luke Grooms](#) killed it Off Broadway recently in the revival of *Jerry Springer: The Opera*. But other than singing sans microphone (a BBTY tradition for at least one song), Grooms brought little to "My Heart Is So Full Of You." And "Johnny One Note" was more of a vocal workout than a treat.

Now onto the good news. [Douglas Ladnier](#) is a cabaret star and Broadway veteran (from *Jeckyl and Hyde* among others). His best moment was early on with "Just In Time." But while no one should be asked to sing "Cat's In The Cradle," that slice of bathos simply cannot be sung with too much intensity and was perfect for him. The audience loved it, even as I wondered how Tom Chapin got on Broadway with his own show in the first place. ([Ladnier has a new album out now called *Heart And Soul*](#) showing him equally unafraid of other Seventies hits like "Sometimes When We Touch" and "You Are So Beautiful" alongside classic theater tunes.)

Ladnier had three numbers on the show, which is one of the best parts of BBTY. If someone doesn't wow you right away, chances are you'll get to revise your opinion before the night is over. That was certainly the case for Maxine Linehan, who had the unenviable task of tackling "I Could Have Danced All Night" from *My Fair Lady*. After a too-serious "It's All Right With Me" I appreciated Linehan's voice but wasn't sure about her interpretations. That changed mightily when she tackled a song from the little known hit *Shenandoah*. Linehan was singing "The Only Home I Know," a wistful ballad performed by a soldier heading back to his small town after the horrors of the Civil War. A spare, lovely arrangement courtesy of musical director and pianist Ross Patterson allowed Linehan to sit on a stool and deliver the song with unadorned sweetness. You immediately wanted to hear more from *Shenandoah* and Linehan, a sure sign of success.

And the success of Siegel's showcase [Broadway's Rising Stars](#) is how much of the talent that makes it to that annual event keeps popping

► [November](#) (4)

► [October](#) (6)

► [September](#) (1)

▼ [May](#) (5)

THEATER: BROADWAY BY
THE YEAR -- 1956 AND 1975

THEATER: "MY FAIR LADY"
SAYS #METOO!

THEATER: TENNESSEE
WILLIAMS ON SIMMER
WITH "SUMMER...

THEATER: "TRAVESTIES" IS
NOT

THEATER: 'SAINT JOAN'
LACKS FIRE

► [April](#) (6)

► [March](#) (4)

► [February](#) (1)

► [2017](#) (6)

► [2016](#) (2)

► [2015](#) (14)

► [2014](#) (2)

► [2013](#) (5)

► [2012](#) (18)

► [2011](#) (15)

► [2010](#) (10)

► [2009](#) (43)

► [2008](#) (86)

► [2007](#) (781)

► [2006](#) (2412)

► [2005](#) (5)

up all over the theater landscape. Every year Siegel selects the cream of the crop from arts schools all over the country and puts them in Broadway's Rising Stars. This year's show takes place on [Monday July 16 at Town Hall](#). If you'd gone in the past, you would have been among the first to see [Joshua Israel](#) and Oakley Boycott. (Note: that's her real name and any suggestion otherwise may lead to legal proceedings.)

Every Broadway By The Year includes some dancing and Israel was on tap Monday. He started off act two in jaunty style with "I Can Do That" from *A Chorus Line*. "All I Care About" from *Chicago* was more of the same and they both would have shone better in separate acts. (Is it Siegel's fault they both came out in 1975?) Israel dances with a chip on his shoulder -- that cocky Gene Kelly attitude of yeah, I'm dancing here, you gotta problem with that? Maybe I'm just a Fred Astaire guy myself, but Israel should balance his attitude with a little more joy or less self-awareness or something.

Three time Tony nominee Carolee Carmello had the right sort of attitude: the pleasure of a star who knows what they're doing and loves it. With shows like *Falsettos*, *Urinetown* and *Parade* on her résumé, it's a well-earned confidence. Carmello first appeared in Act One, delivering the comic gem "I'm Going Back" from *Bells Are Ringing* with aplomb. It was almost a one-two punch since she returned early in Act Two with "Nothing" from *A Chorus Line*, underlining that song's irony with bittersweet ease. And she ended the night with the *Chorus Line* chestnut "What I Did For Love," joined by the entire cast. Simply making it sound fresh is a hard task but she pulled it off. The recent musical *Tuck Everlasting* wasn't nearly a good enough showcase for Carmello and this night reminded you she's a singular talent that deserves a better one, soon.

And that leaves two newcomers that wowed. Carmello sang a key number from *Bells Are Ringing* and killed it. That makes it all the more impressive that I kept wondering what [Oakley Boycott](#) would have done with the song. Why? Because she'd been onstage just a few minutes earlier delivering a knockout performance of another comic gem from *Bells Are Ringing*, "Is It A Crime?" Boycott is a statuesque beauty, sporting red hair (at least tonight). (She's also an alumnus of [Broadway's Rising Stars](#), just like Israel.) But two seconds after she began you knew you were in Carol Burnett territory: a terrific voice and talent that is unashamedly ready to make a fool of herself for a laugh or a song that calls for it. That was certainly the case with "Is It A Crime?", with Boycott bringing alive her message center operator with ease, elbows akimbo as she kvetched with the audience, did splits, tottered this way and that and generally had a blast. You immediately want to see a full-blown revival of that show with [Boycott](#) as the lead. I spent the rest of the night (especially the second act) waiting for her to return on another number but this was her big moment. She made the most of it.

I felt the same about [Kyle Selig](#). Can you "discover" someone you've

already seen perform on Broadway? Yes, you can! I saw Selig in the new musical *Mean Girls*. He plays the minor role of boyfriend-to-be to the heroine (hey, it's her show) and I was smart enough to say [Selig made "something out of the nothing role of boyfriend-to-be Aaron."](#) Now I see he's been bouncing around, doing out of town tryouts of the potential Broadway musical *October Sky* among other projects. All I know is that he may be on Broadway in a Tony-nominated musical, but he got a much better showcase in two songs on Broadway By The Year. Up first was the show opener "On The Street Where You Live" from *My Fair Lady*. His take on it is far superior to the one in the current Broadway show. Too often, that song is delivered at full blast, an almost over-the-top bit of bombast. Without changing the song too much, Selig gave it a gentler, more vulnerable and thus more touching rendition. I enjoyed it almost as much as I enjoyed hearing the little old lady lean over to her husband when Selig walked out onstage. "Cute!" she whispered appreciatively. Yes, he's a handsome devil but good looks are a dime a dozen in the entertainment world. Selig has talent and he proved it. Selig followed up his first song with the wistful tune "It Must Be So" from *Candide*. He was, if anything, even better on one of the best songs from that terrific score. The combination of its relative unfamiliarity and a quiet nature left the audience hushed rather than bursting out with the applause it deserved. Not to fear; it won't be the last time he's onstage doing great work.

So terrific work from Selig and Boycott, a memorable song from Linehan, the pro work of Carmello and you've got more than enough to stamp it another successful evening. And with Siegel, you don't need to wait long: his next production is [54 Sings Broadway's Greatest Hits](#) at [Feinstein's 54 Below](#) this Friday, May 25.

THEATER OF 2018

Homelife/The Zoo Story (at Signature) *** out of ****

[Escape To Margaritaville](#) **

[Broadway By The Year: 1947 and 1966](#) ***

[Lobby Hero](#) ***

[Frozen](#) **

[Rocktopia](#) *

[Angels in America](#) ** 1/2

[Mean Girls](#) ** 1/2

[The Sting](#) **

[Mlima's Tale](#) ** 1/2

[Children Of A Lesser God](#) ** 1/2

[Sancho: An Act Of Remembrance](#) ** 1/2

[The Metromaniacs](#) ***

[Summer: The Donna Summer Musical](#) *

[The Seafarer](#) **

[Henry V](#) (Public Mobile Unit w Zenzi Williams) * 1/2

[Saint Joan](#) **

[Travesties](#) *** 1/2

[Summer and Smoke](#) ** 1/2

[My Fair Lady](#) ** 1/2

[Broadway By The Year: 1956 and 1975](#) ** 1/2

Thanks for reading. Michael Giltz is the creator of [BookFilter](#), a book lover's to [BookFilter](#)! Need a smart and easy gift? [Head to BookFilter](#)! Wondering w categories, like cookbooks and mystery and more? [Head to BookFilter](#)! It's a you do in a physical bookstore, provides comprehensive info on new releases e personal recommendations every step of the way. It's like a fall book preview category. He's also the cohost of [Showbiz Sandbox](#), a weekly pop culture podc of the day with top journalists and opinion makers as guests. It's available for Download his podcast of celebrity interviews and his radio show, also called i

Note: Michael Giltz is provided with free tickets to shows with the understand are in New York City unless otherwise indicated.

POSTED BY [MICHAEL GILTZ](#) AT 6:24 PM 

NO COMMENTS:

[Post a Comment](#)

[Newer Post](#)

[Home](#)

[Older Post](#)

Subscribe to: [Post Comments \(Atom\)](#)