



BREL PAL: Laurika Rauch as seen by The Argus artist Colin Daniel. She is performing her new show, *Laurika Rauch Sings Brel*, at the Theatre on the Bay until Saturday.

Laurika sings Brel very well

LEN ASHTON
reviews

Laurika Rauch Sings Brel

Accompanist: David Taljaard

Venue: Theatre on the Bay (until Saturday)

NOW let's not get soppy about Laurika Rauch. On the other hand, why not? As a fan from way back, it's easy to get dewy-eyed about her particular brand of nostalgia.

But can she do Brel?

Answer: Yes, and very well too.

Not that the show is devoted entirely to the works of that world-weary Belgian. A shortish first half allows her to satisfy her traditional following with such familiar delights as *Stuur Groete*

aan *Mannetjies Roux* and *Kinders van die Wind*. The rousing rendition of husband Christopher Torr's new song *Hot Gates* is impressive — and that melancholy litany of place names evocative of strife is likely to have international potential.

After the interval she sails into Brel, and you realise her affinity for the material is both musical and emotional. The *ver, verlate vlaktes* and *Mijn Vlakke Land* clearly evoke similar responses, from similar cultural contexts. Often melancholy, yes, but powerful and lusty despite the wry observations of human inadequacies.

One reservation: for some curious reason, *The Desperate Ones* seems to have evolved an extra syllable, as in

desPERate, instead of the smoother des-prate.

The only other niggle about the evening's proceedings involves first impressions — a plastic backdrop needs some kind of lighting from the outset. It blooms later with all sorts of effects, but initially presents a bleak aspect.

To an extent, Rauch was preaching to the converted on opening night. The audience (it's refreshing to hear so much Afrikaans in that neck of the woods) was appreciative and knowledgeable. Rauch's talents and appeal deserve wider attention.

Romantics of all ages should seize the opportunity of hearing her during this abruptly short run (the show closes on Saturday).