

Finally, some really polished Jo'burg cabaret

Weekly Mail 5 Feb 1988
CABARET: Van Berlyn tot
Bapsfontein
No 58, Hillbrow

THIS exquisitely polished cabaret gives a new meaning to this form of entertainment in South Africa. It is true cabaret and mocks the all too loose use of the word locally.

Selecting from the work of top German, Dutch and Afrikaans song-writers Stephan Boucher compiled a rich and brilliant programme which presents an adventurous and refreshing alternative to the over exposed and much abused songs in the French cabaret tradition. Eat your heart out Taubie Kushlick

Van Berlyn tot Bapsfontein is a highly entertaining way of expanding the horizons of those who have been led to believe that Jacques Brel is the be all and end all of European cabaret.

The songs of masters like Bertolt Brecht, Kurt Weill, Hanns Eisler, Ramses Shaffy, Herman van Veen and Robert Long (love ballads to protest songs) are particularly well suited to Laurika Rauch's deep and dark voice. She is a consummate artist who has once again found her *métier*.

Rauch understands perfectly the art of "acting" with the voice. Unlike Jannie du Toit she does not hesitate to produce an ugly sound in putting across a certain emotion. The voice beautiful has no place in cabaret if its primary concern is that voice. This is perhaps the reason actors are better at cabaret than singers.

Rauch is, however, a fine actress and singer with an astounding range. Her voice is as suited to the sweet lyricism of *Niks hang so rooi soos wingerdblaar* by Hexrivier (Laurika Rauch/Boerneef) as it is the irony of *Die lewe is 'n grenshotel* (Jannie Hofmeyr/Hennie Aucamp) and Aucamp's translation of *Das Lied von der Moldau* (Bertold Brecht/Hanns Eisler).

Her artistry disproves that Afrikaans is not a singing language.

Although Du Toit copes well with Boucher's Afrikaans translation of Shaffy's *Wij zullen doorgaan* (We'll get through) it is clear that he is more at ease with the sweet tunefulness of songs like Coenie de Villiers' *Karoonag*. (By the way, Boucher's translation of *Wij zullen doorgaan* is excellent but is not quite as moving as it is in Dutch.)

Boucher courted danger in using only two singers in this two hour show. His gamble paid off. He varies the singers and material in such a way that the audience is kept on their toes. They are no sooner lulled by a lyrical or romantic song when they are punched in the guts by protest or bitter irony.

The construction and progression are brilliant. Some songs have an extra edge because of what precedes or follows them. Few directors have the deftness to move from the sublime to the ridiculous without stumbling. Boucher is one of these.

One accepts the heartbreak kitsch of the Family Briel together with the complex harmonies and lyrics of illustrious song writers like Brecht and Van Veen without turning a hair. Quite a feat.

The band is superb and handle the frequently difficult orchestration with finesse. And the sound is good — it's wonderful that one can for once be at peace with the decibels.

Frans le Roux