

Mac-Haydn Theatre, Chatham, NY

Still Within the Sound of My Voice, the songs of Linda Ronstadt.

Reviewed by J. Peter Bergman.

“Poor Wand’ring One”

She looks nothing like Linda Ronstadt. She sounds nothing like Linda Ronstadt. She is a theatrical, Broadway baby who likens her personal story to that of Linda Ronstadt and she loves the songs made famous by the pop star. When she comes together with the Ronstadt album of hits she makes theater magic with them and you pretty quickly forget that you’re not in the presence of Linda Ronstadt. For her only solo performance at the Mac-Haydn Theatre on the night of September 13, she closed the Mac-Haydn’s 2023 season with a spectacular performance of this precious collection of tunes, aided by Eric Shorey, Madison Stratton and two superb musicians, Matt Castle at the piano and Steve Siktberg on the guitar.

Land treated us to most of the Ronstadt stylings, from her 1970 hit “Heat Wave” to her mid-career venture into the Great American Song Book, with a German hit, “Falling in Love Again,” and her Spanish/Mexican hit “Frenesi,” to “Blue Bayou” and the sing-along pop song “Desperado.”

The one point in Ronstadt’s career not truly exposed is her Broadway hit, and movie hit as well, the role of Mabel in “The Pirates of Penzance.” She talks about it but doesn’t sing any of it. And yet, as you explore the life of



Madison Stratton, Elizabeth Ward Land; Photo: Ann Kielbasa

Linda Ronstadt the songs in that Gilbert and Sullivan operetta hit home. Retired from singing due to her Parkinson’s Disease, Ronstadt’s Mabel is touted as a “poor wand’ring one” and in spite of her vast successes Ronstadt evolved into a woman with much less to look forward to than to look

back upon.

I remember the joy of seeing and hearing Ronstadt in this role opposite Rex Smith, Kevin Kline, George Rose and Estelle Parsons (who was replaced in the film version by Angela Lansbury). Ronstadt was surprisingly good in the role, one later assumed by Elizabeth Ward Land.

Land talks in the show about the many similarities she shares with Ronstadt and it is no wonder she has recorded the music of this show and performs it wherever she can. She has created an identity here and she plays it for all it is worth. For this performance she was assisted by Madison Stratton who took on some of the solo singing and also sang backup with the theater's music director, Eric Shorey. Both performers add a great deal to the evening and the show is definitely better with the trio than it would have been as a total solo performance.

The show was a fitting closer for the Mac's season, a crowd-pleaser and a musical entity all its own. Well lit by Eoghan Hartley and physically choreographed by Land herself, the hour and forty minutes presentation seemed to fly by. This tribute to a remarkable talent presented by contemporary talents, including the two fine musicians, was a delectable and a smartly stage-worthy event.

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