

Great Barrington Public Theater, Great Barrington, MA  
*Night at the Speakeasy*, by Janelle Farias Sando, Wendy Welch,  
Hudson Orfe, Katherine Humes. Directed by Wendy Welch.  
Reviewed by J. Peter Bergman.

**“Hit Me With a Hot Note and Watch Me Bounce”**

So you do *that* and Janelle Farias Sando bounces right back. Alone on stage with her excellent accompanist Hudson Orfe at the piano, stage left, she performs seventeen songs (Orfe does one as well) while transporting us back to the roaring twenties, the world of speakeasies and prohibition. In her show, however, nothing at all is prohibited including more contemporary songs that sing of attitudes and the complicity of sex that pervaded such places in their day. She adds Sondheim and Maury Yeston and others to her repertoire of naughty songs and sensual atmosphere. It’s an outrageous evening of both innuendo and direct, honest expression that is rare, even in the theatre of the moment.



Janelle Farias Sando; Photo: Katherine Humes

Midway through the first act she sings “Who wants to help me **Burn My Candle** at both ends,” evoking the spirit of 1920s sex goddess Edna St. Vincent Millay in a 1956 song by Ross Parker written to introduce a 19 year old Shirley Bassey to the public. She also includes “Phone Call From the Vatican from Maury Yeston’s 1982 Broadway musical “Nine” and Stephen Sondheim’s “Sooner or Later” from the 1990 film, “Dick Tracy.”

Ms. Sando’s show is all over the map, yet she upholds that special sense of speakeasy cabaret performances of the prohibition era. To do that takes talent and talent she has. She sings well, performing in the converted stage space that requires a password to enter. The bar was open. Many women dressed in 1920's style dresses, men in jackets. The atmosphere of the 1920s

filled the 2024 stage of the McConnell Theater at Simon's Rock College.

On a beautiful set designed by Juliana von Haubrich and lit by Matthew Adelson, Director Wendy Welch delivers a dandy musical event. We are entertained and we learn a lot about our country and its history. Sando and Welch present a picture in song of what our lives were like a century ago. "Yes, We Have No Bananas" Orfe reminds us during a costume change and yes, indeed, we have nothing like a banana unless you bring one along with you. I would be tempted to do just that if I saw the show again.

This event is pure fun and well worth your time and money. Don't hesitate. Charleston alone or bunny-hug together to Great Barrington while you can. Jump backwards to the complex rhythms of songs you'll adore. Get in the spirit!

+ 07/28/2024 +

**Night at the Speakeasy** plays at the McConnell Theatre on the campus of Simon's Rock College in Great Barrington through August 11. For information and tickets go to [www.greatbarringtonpublictheater.org](http://www.greatbarringtonpublictheater.org) or call 413-372-1980.