

Jewish icons take a long stroll down Memory Lane

Show: Three's A Show

Cast: Annabel Linder, Michael de Pinna, Keith Smith and Sam Sklair

Director: All the performers, plus Cary Cunningham, collaborated

Venue: Auto & General Theatre on the Square, Nelson Mandela Square, until May 28

REVIEWED BY PETER FELDMAN

Four shining lights on the South African entertainment scene combine their skills to deliver a show that's pure nostalgia and a joy to behold. It's simply staged and beautifully executed.

Annabel Linder, Michael de Pinna and musician Sam Sklair are three local Jewish musical icons. Together with Keith Smith, they demonstrate a style and versatility that would put younger performers to shame.

"Three's a Show" is a treasure trove of memory-makers from the American songbook. The opening number, "There's No Business Like Show Business", sets the tone and each performer handles in superb fashion songs that suit their voices.

The stylish, diminutive Annabel not only brings a slice of comedy to the proceedings, but performs such gems as "Second Hand Rose", "Is That All There Is" and "Play It Again Sam", with clarinet flourishes from husband, Sam Sklair.

The imposing Michael de Pinna raises the roof with the Elvis gem "If I Can Dream", the evergreen Johnny



Green jazz standard "Body and Soul" and then, linking with Keith, Van Morrison's "Moon Dance".

With snazzy dance steps and a polished style, Keith shows his vocal mettle with the "Razzle Dazzle", "Luck Be A Lady Tonight" and "Some Day You'll Want Me To Want You".

By blending the emotive songs "I Believe", and "You'll Never Walk Alone", Keith and the company bring the show to an emotional high and then Annabel and Sam add their special magic to "I've Got Rhythm".

Annabel, an astute comedienne with a sharp tongue and a quick wit, told me that the idea was to bring

three solo performers together to "pay tribute to the great composers whose works are still being recorded and sung to this day". They chose songs that they all loved, as well songs with a particular theme which, she described, as "great fun" >

Over the years, Annabel, the initial darling of cabaret, broke into serious theatre where she also left her mark. "I've done many cabarets for Our Parents Home and Sandringham Gardens. I have also donated to the Chevrah Kadisha and worked for nine months for ChaiFM."

Annabel has played many Jewish

roles on stage, such as Mrs Beckoff in Torch Song Trilogy, the title character in Rose and an old Jewish woman in Tale of the Allergist's Wife.

She received no fewer than 13 nominations for excellence in her craft, and was a winner in five. On TV she played a Jewish immigrant in "Heroes".

"I thank G-d for Jewish women because they've given me award-winning work. They're wondrous creatures!"

Husband Sam had just recorded a CD with Dan Selsick called Jewish Music - including klezmer - which is being sold worldwide.

Michael de Pinna comes from a theatrical background. His grandfather, Michael Dore, was a famous Russian violinist and one of the few Jews to be given the Freedom of Moscow because he played in the Russian Conservatoire. His mother Nadia, was one of Britain's top big band vocalists.

What makes their show different, he said, is "that we are three performers who have all known each other for decades; there is a lot of love that we all hold for each other and we have a working history.

"Also, we are all products of producers Brickhill-Burke and were taught by Joan and Louis who really were at the top of the South African theatrical scene for so many years and who engineered many successful careers."

Their song selection was governed by individual loves, likes, and choices. "Each of us is different, having our own vocal abilities and I, therefore, chose songs that I really love, which have meaning to me, and hopefully to the audience too."

Michael has entertained the Jewish community over many years and has held shows at his home to raise funds for charity. His career has included numerous Jewish roles such as Fagin in Oliver, Abe in Beau Jeste, Nate in This Old Man Came Rolling Home, and Walter in Twilight of the Golds, for which he was nominated for a Naledi Theatre Award.