

Slick trio take audience on nostalgic trip through song

DIANE DE BEER

IT'S THE perfect warmer for the sudden onset of autumn chills.

And if Linder started off slowly in her first solo number, *Play it Again Sam*, with husband Sam Sklair (clarinetist), it was opening night excitement perhaps, but she quickly brushed that off and hotted up for the occasion with some stunning songs that suit her range and repertoire and halfway through she merrily skipped through a skit of Jewish jokes, showing her skills as comedienne.

But she also leans smartly on her two boys, Smith and De Pinna, who play on their strengths as they belt out their song choices. Some are familiar, others recognisable, but not that much which makes this such a warm, nostalgic night as well as a discovery of some from way back then which aren't performed as often as others. It is that kind of music, from the American Songbook, they point out, and if you're from that era or if your parents were, you will reflect back, remember those songs and most likely have witnessed them performed in a show in the past.

We're talking His Majesty's and Joan Brickhill, an era that not many in their 40s and younger will recall, but those who are in or can visualise their twilight years, will be tapping their feet and clicking their fingers with the lush big band sounds.

Backtrax isn't anyone's accompaniment of choice, but especially in this instance when they needed that enormous musical backing to make it work, canned music was it. Fortunately, with all these musical souls involved, it is the best. If you close your eyes, you can almost see the orchestra swaying along in the background. It's smartly done with very specific musical orchestrations.

As are the individual numbers, the choreography, the coming together, where they're seated and how they stand – these three veterans pull it off with charm as they embrace their audience, rely on their onstage fellowship which is infectious and gather the oldies around to add some sparkle and joy to the soundtrack of their lives.

THREE'S A SHOW

ENSEMBLE: Annabel Linder, Keith Smith, Michael de Pinna with guest artist Sam Sklair
VENUE: Sandton's Theatre on the Square
UNTIL: May 28
RATING: ★★★★★

It's names like Johnny Mercer, Irving Berlin, Gershwin, Rogers and Hammerstein, Kander and Ebb, but also some that don't ring those memory bells. It's a grand mix of the much-loved and the less familiar, yet no less beautiful, which adds something new to the old and blue even if that's why you are there.

It is the smartness with which they've packaged this, the way all of them get to showcase their strengths and then the coming together that works like a charm. It's a night to remember, but also to forget for 90 minutes that it's cold out there. It is going to hit that niche market, but that's the thing about our theatre landscape; it's as wide and varied as the many cultures it can embrace, so if you look around, there will be something for everyone. And if you really want to immerse yourself in this land of ours, you will do them all, disregarding genre, gender, age or anything else.

This is all about three old friends coming together to recall distant memories and make new ones – for themselves and their audience.



Keith Smith, left, Annabel Linder and Michael de Pinna in *Three's a Show*. Inset: Sam Sklair.
 PICTURE: PHILIP KUHN