



McCorquodale Brings Musical Magic to Midtown!

by Andrew Martin, NiteLife Exchange, April 2015, NYC

New York has never suffered a dearth of great female singer-pianists in the cabaret arena. Barbara Carroll is a prime example, as was Sharon Douglas whence she took up residence upon our fair shores. Jo Thompson and Phoebe Legere are others, and of course in the piano bar sphere there were such powerhouses as Marie Blake and Mable Godwin, not to mention such ladies of today as Tracy Stark and Clare Cooper. Canada's Robyn McCorquodale might not be categorized completely as their heiress apparent, but her show "Diary of a Piano Girl," which plays its final New York area performance, at least for now, at the Laurie Beechman Theater (407 West 42nd Street at the West Bank Cafe) is at once a breathtaking experience of songwriting and multimedia, and should absolutely place the lady in contention for copious awards over the coming season. This isn't merely for the most part a must-see, it's a do-not-miss.

Accompanied by a stellar trio of guys, namely Peter Calo on guitar and Ritt Henn on bass (both of whom also provide wondrous backup vocals on several tunes) and Chris Marshak on percussion, McCorquodale lets us experience her own amazing journey as a performer on all seven continents, including Antarctica. And she emerges herein as not only a riveting songstress who is more than capable at the ivories, but as a songwriter bar none. She is not merely a businesswoman when it comes to the art of selling a song, but her patter in between numbers is simply a delight. As a caveat, she may not have to rely on so much spoken material in between her compositions, and could certainly use the help of a director to provide a third eye and guide things into a more fluid motion. This is really the only quibble, other than that her lower notes seem to possess a certain conservancy. And it's easy to see why; by the time she's hitting her upper register, she's completely knocking it out of the park. Ergo, it's easy to see that she's saving it up for home run after home run.

Her best songs, both musically and lyrically, include "I Still Got the Dream," "Something's Calling Me," "Shining Star" (which was a featured selection during the Olympic Games), "Kotor, Montenegro," "Garden of Angels" (a tribute to the victims of the Sandy Hook school shooting) and "Connected," which comes with an extremely poignant story of total coincidence when she first got to New York and ran into a fellow performer from a cruise ship, then-gay but now a straight husband-and-father, and that just twenty minutes earlier he'd run into another fellow castmate, a woman who was now dating Billy Joel. In addition, the show is laden with videos filmed and edited by McCorquodale herself, which are hugely impressive and picturesque to the highest degree. It all combines into a product that, as an understatement, couldn't be more sensational.