

JEFF HARNAR

The New York Times

THE NEW YORK TIMES, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2006

Tapping the Tender Pulse Behind Coleman's Burlesque Brassiness

NEW YORK

NEW YORK MAGAZINE,
NOVEMBER 20, 2006



The Way They Were

This month, hit a high-end jazz or cabaret spot for an echo of music history.

1.

"GERSHWIN"

Wynton Marsalis's jazz orchestra (along with guest collaborators) salutes George Gershwin with a performance of *Rhapsody in Blue*, along with Nelson Riddle's big-band reimaginings of standards by George and Ira.

2.

ANDREA MARCOVICCI

Marcovicci, who's turned her beautifully swoopy soprano to good use on albums of Irving Berlin and Cole Porter tunes, digs deeper with a tribute to the eccentric cabaret singer Hildegarde.

3.

JEFF HARNAR

The Broadway-loving baritone has toured all over the country but only rarely in New York: here, he gives the cabaret treatment to the master songwriter and piano player Cy Coleman (*Sweet Charity*).

Jeff Harnar at Feinstein's with "The Rhythm of Life Quartet" featuring Jay Leonhart (bass).

Photography: Richard Termine for New York Times



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Some other Jeff Harnar Shows

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| 1. An American Songbook in London | 7. Vincente Minnelli's Hollywood |
| 2. A Collective Cy (Music of Cy Coleman) | 8. Gershwin's Hollywood |
| 3. Dancing in the Dark | 9. The Warner Brothers Songbook |
| 4. Sammy Cahn – All the Way | 10. Easy to Love –
The Words and Music of Cole Porter |
| 5. The 1959 Broadway Songbook | 11. Carried Away –
Jeff Harnar Sings Comden & Green |
| 6. Because of You – Fiftite's Gold | |

Reviews of Jeff's Recent Show at Feinstein's in New York

NEW YORK TIMES MUSIC REVIEW | JEFF HARNAR
Tapping the Tender Pulse Behind Coleman's Burlesque Brassiness

By [STEPHEN HOLDEN](#)

Published: November 7, 2006

Jazz songs with sequins: when we remember Cy Coleman, the creative locomotive who churned out music for Broadway till the day he died almost two years ago at 75, we tend to think of a brassy redhead with a bump-and-grind attitude mouthing off his syncopated show tunes at the top of her lungs. Skip to next paragraph

But if that burlesque show tradition ran deep in Mr. Coleman's work, there was more to his music than tarnished glitter and trampled sawdust. In a new cabaret show, "A Collective Cy," Jeff Harnar, the mild-mannered Broadway-style crooner who is appearing at Feinstein's at the Regency, runs through around 20 Coleman songs with lyrics by four of his collaborators: Dorothy Fields, Carolyn Leigh, Michael Stewart and David Zippel.

If Mr. Harnar is the furthest thing from the kind of hard-boiled Broadway baby who stands as the quintessential Coleman interpreter, his polite, gentle approach to the Coleman catalog casts familiar numbers like "Big Spender" and "Hey, Look Me Over" in an intriguingly softer light. His slow, pensive version of "Witchcraft" in particular is an X-ray version that examines the skin beneath the calluses of this brazen tease.

"Witchcraft" is one of the show's 10 songs with words by Ms. Leigh, the lyricist with whom Mr. Coleman refined his most sophisticated chemistry. Her bons mots, with their clever internal rhymes dripping with innuendo, yielded classics like "You Fascinate Me So," "The Best Is Yet to Come" and "When in Rome," in which lust became a verbal parlor game as tricky as the best of [Cole Porter](#). Mr. Harnar and a pop quartet give them their due in polished, somewhat muted performances.

The centerpiece of Mr. Harnar's show, a medley of "The Rules of the Road," "Come Summer" and "I'm Way Ahead," suggests that there is a wealth of largely unfamiliar Coleman that deserves to be re-examined.

Mr. Harnar spices the music with well-chosen anecdotes. Recalling his first exposure to Mr. Coleman's music, when his parents gave him the original cast album of "Sweet Charity," he observes that it might not have been "the most wholesome choice for a 7-year-old." Maybe not, but Mr. Harnar today is the picture of well-mannered respectfulness; he is wholesome to the nth degree.

Broadwayworld.com

Thursday, November 9, 2006; Posted: 9:10 AM - by [Jena Tesse Fox](#)

There's just something about [Cy Coleman](#)'s music. Maybe it's the jazz that permeates every note and syncopated beat. Maybe it's the pure emotion that effortlessly connects character to song. Whatever it is, it made Coleman one of the most beloved theatre composers of the second half of the 20th century, and his unexpected 2004 death left a gaping hole in Broadway's firmament.

Fortunately, [Jeff Harnar](#), who has earned his name in the cabaret community with elegant retrospectives of legends from the golden years, has created the first concert dedicated to the Coleman songbook since Coleman's death. The concert, *A Collective Cy*, not only highlights the many notable numbers of Mr. Coleman's career, but may well be one of the smoothest cabaret shows in recent memory.

And if anyone is up to the task of displaying Coleman's greatest work, it's Harnar. Blessed with a voice that out-Sinatra's Sinatra, Harnar can croon ballads or patter through uptempo numbers with ease. His casual-yet-refined demeanor is perfect for Feinstein's at the Regency (where, incidentally, Coleman gave his final performance before his death), warmly exuding class while warmly welcoming the audience along for the ride. He evokes the old-fashioned nightclubs in which Coleman's music would frequently be heard. The anecdotes he tells between the songs, however, provide new insights on Coleman and his lengthy career, and let us more fully appreciate the songs.

The song list features many of Coleman's standards, from *Sweet Charity* to *Barnum* to *City of Angels*. While dedicated to preserving the original lyrics of the songs, Harnar was able to get new lyrics to some numbers either by the original lyricist ([David Zippel](#)) or Kleban-award winner Barry Kleinbort. The results, endearing new versions of "You're Nothing Without Me/I'm Nothing Without You" and "My Personal Property," respectively, are fresh and funny, and are a gentle reminder of the timelessness of Coleman's music. A cut number from *Barnum* ("So Little Time") is getting its premiere, and at the opening night, a number from *Pamela's First Musical*, a new show Coleman was working on with [Wendy Wasserstein](#) before his death, was presented for the first time. And one of the few songs with lyrics by Coleman ("Somebody") gets a stirring and emotional rendition from Harnar.

The show's band, which Harnar has dubbed "The Rhythm of Life Quartet" (yes, they do the song) gets to swing out with plenty of jazz, from the hippie-inspired beats of *Sweet Charity* to the bluesy big-band sound of *City of Angels*. Musical director pianist Alex Rybeck and bassist Jay Leonhart do double duty from behind their instruments as back-up singers, allowing for some great harmonizing and counterpoints. Ray Marchica keeps a steady rhythm on drums, and Dan Willis' sax and flute work adds wonderful color to the songs. Sara Louise Lazarus' direction is bright and energetic, making the evening into a true celebration of a fantastic career.

Many of Coleman's songs, as Harnar points out early in the evening, focused on love in all its many splended forms. While *A Collective Cy* will certainly appeal to theatre and jazz fans, the pure romance (not to mention sensuality) of many of the songs can appeal to just about everyone. The combination of The Regency's swankiness, Harnar's sweet voice, and Coleman's rich music may just make this concert one of the more romantic events in the city. Make a date now.

EDGENEWYORK.COM

November 2006 - Cabaret Catch-Up by Rob Lester
 Saturday November 11, 2006

.....Last but certainly not least: a feast. It's the musical equivalent of Thanksgiving as songs composed by Cy Coleman are being dished out with great taste, appreciative love and all the carefully-prepared trimmings by expert cabaret singer Jeff Harnar and his top-drawer, first-rate chums at Feinstein's. This is a major event, impressive even for those who have come

to expect such dedication and delivery from Jeff and his musical director/pianist/arranger/occasional duet partner, Alex Rybeck. With Jay Leonhart on bass, Ray Marchica on drums and Dan Willis on sax and flute, the music of the man who gave us the Broadway shows Sweet Charity, Little Me, City Of Angels and Barnum is well served and served up well. And they also put primo polish on perfect pop songs like Witchcraft and The Best Is Yet To Come. A few buried treasures are in there, too, and this sparkling show, A Collective Cy deserves a special Cy-tation. Remaining dates are Sundays and Mondays, November 12, 13, 19, 20. Jeff is working soon with cabaret diva deluxe, Andrea Marcovicci --- who herself is performing at The Oak Room at The Algonquin Hotel.

