

# CABARETSCENES

## David Auxier & Friends

### It's A Family Affair

Reprise Room  
New York, NY



Dismissing solipsistic “my-life-through-song” cabaret acts as glorified therapy, but confessing he’s been there/ done that, eager-to-please David Auxier instead presents folksy fun, foibles, and fellow singers. Vanity and venting begone, vivaciousness and vocal versatility abound. He sings legit, then light; sincere, then sassy. More variety comes with the prominent participation of what the Nebraska native calls his “New York family” — likeably brassy Suzanne Scott, crooning Steve Cancel, and two especially plucky and playful pals, Hector Coris and David Wells, along with skilled musical director Mark York. The last three also show their songwriting skills. So, deliciously, does David with his MAC-nominated number “A Piano Bar Confession,” displaying sharp comic timing.

David ingratiates himself with the audience with his chatty, down-to-earth, ever-so-casual (but ever-so-well-planned) comments about the changes in his life ranging from geography to sexuality, and his family’s reactions to them. The show began as a presentation for his kin when they visited. With Granny and Cousin Danny and Aunt Fanny gone (but with new fan/ fellow Nebraskan/ cabaret legend Julie Wilson in the audience for a return visit), he’s at home with his new life and friends. Generous in presenting the other singers, the piece feels like a group musical comedy revue with a genial host-star whose all-kidding-aside “I Won’t Send Roses” proves to be a dramatic highlight. Likewise, tenor Steve Cancel provides a respite from the clowning free-for-all with a solo on “I’d Rather Be Sailing.”

A centerpiece of sorts is what David wryly announces as “that most poignant and moving of all art forms — the cabaret medley,” a fast-moving, packed section. The fun and savvy sensibilities of comic corker Coris, revue veteran, seem to inform the piece. In this something old/ something new/ something borrowed/ something mock-bluesy, material from his own catalogue is borrowed. David Wells’ two songs — one mocking formulaic songs and another about how to approach a friend backstage after an underwhelming show — are very laugh-out-loud clever and delivered with panache.

Reprised at The Reprise Room, the show feels patchwork-like, with few threads. There’s an occasional stumble, but joy in the jumble. A baritone with pure head tones, David solidly sells show tunes. On heartfelt songs he’s very effective — especially when one takes the audience by surprise right after some self-deprecating or madcap moments.

Collette Black on lights and sound keeps things bright and makes sure the various voices blended well and are also sympathetically presented. She’s also a fine director whose work in chorus with Coris, currently with *What’s the Point?!*, also brings light and happy sounds to cabaret rooms. The show could use some work—maybe to tip the scale a bit more to real emotion -- and some song assignments and choices seem random rather than ideal to make snug fits. There’s occasionally a sense of effort or disjointed flow, but the grab-bag is well worth grabbing a seat to see.

**Rob Lester**

*Cabaret Scenes*

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