

CABARETSCENES

Rena Strober

Finding Home



In her smart, witty and winsome cabaret-cum-one-woman-musical last year, Rena Strober proved that there is much more to her than a notorious shooting at Rao's. Rather than capitalize on a tragedy, Strober decided to prove why she was so beloved by the regulars at the legendary Italian restaurant, and why she is now a regular performer at the Friars Club: She is a singer with abundant grace, charm, humor and talent, and knows how to combine all of these qualities into a genuinely fun evening. Her debut album, which lifts much material from her show, *Spaghetti and Matzo Balls*, shows off Strober's many talents to great effect.

Finding Home is a lovely collection of rather disparate numbers that range from Hebrew/Arabic peace songs (Mose Ben Ari's joyous "Salaam") to modern reinterpretations of Broadway standards (an adorable "The Secret Service" from Irving Berlin's *Mr. President*) to a half-Yiddish reimagining of "My Way." It's an eclectic mix, but it all works quite nicely. The multilingual Strober switches frequently from Italian to English to Yiddish to Hebrew, sometimes in the same song, and rather than being jarring, the transitions prove instead how universal a good song can be. The more contemporary songs—a dreamy bossa nova "Pure Imagination," Amanda McBroom's lovely "Make Me a Kite" and Jeff Moss' sweet "I Don't Want to Live on the Moon"—blend in beautifully with the older material, creating a good mix of musical styles that can please almost any listener.

At the Triad last year, Strober wisely sang unamplified, letting her natural voice fill the space. Here, she is able to sing much more gently, and finds new layers to the songs. The large band, lead by musical directors William Hindin and Joachim Horsley, fits each song well, and helps make each number a complete emotional moment.

Jena Tesse Fox
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