

# Anya & Robert's "Hello, West 46th Street: An Evening of New Cabaret Songs" – A Cabaret Review

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Here's a cabaret review of Anya Turner & Robert Grusecki's *Hello, West 46<sup>th</sup> Street: An Evening of New Cabaret Songs*; catch it the 23<sup>rd</sup> of August on West 46<sup>th</sup>!

"Your hist'ry sets my foolish heart aglow  
Like Barbara Cook at Brothers and Sisters  
And Blossom Dearie whispering her show  
At Danny's"

—from "Hello West 46th Street"

Among the definitions of "smart" in *Webster's New World Dictionary* are: "brisk, vigorous, lively"; "alert, clever, capable, quick, witty"; "neat, clean, fresh"; and "in keeping with the current fashion, stylish." All of these definitions apply to a style of cabaret that once flourished in New York City. Often featuring

the authors of the material, this is where Nichols and May got their start, as did Comden and Green, and the lovely Blossom Dearie made a home. For a few minutes (70 to be exact), Anya Turner and Robert Grusecki brought the magic back to Don't Tell Mama on July 19th.

The married couple co-write their material with no acknowledged division of labor between music and lyrics. Grusecki stays at the piano and provides the musical accompaniment while Turner takes center stage and does most of the featured singing. Since Grusecki is a songwriter who sings while Turner is a singer who writes songs, this is an ideal arrangement (although the former does a touching solo tribute to his father "Paul").

Early in the program, Turner announces that they are offering contemporary cabaret songs, "if there is such a thing." Truthfully, they work in traditional forms, evoking Maltby & Shire, Kander & Ebb and Stephen Sondheim here and there, while remaining uniquely themselves. However, their topics are often very current, from aging (both of parents and oneself) to the changing world to transsexuals. And all of these topics, and more, are treated with great compassion and a generous heart.

Many of the songs are quick and specific character studies, from the temp worker with her constant companion, her headphones ("Ordinary People"), to "Janet (and like that)" about Turner's mother to novelist "Harper Lee". The writing is detailed and yet concise:

"I live alone  
I eat my breakfast when I want to  
No one hurries me  
I call up friends  
Sometimes we make a date for bridge  
But nothing worries me"  
—from "Janet (and like that)"

In between these explorations of personalities, the duo offers up amusing songs of their own experiences in show business ("How Do You Write a Song" and "We Wrote a Show") and other personal matters.

Throughout, their patter is brief, to the point, and never less than natural and charming. They seem to truly enjoy performing these songs for the audience, offering them up as gifts.

When the delightful duo throws another party at Don't Tell Mama on August 23, I highly recommend you accept their invitation.



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