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BRONWYN RUCKER

Bronwyn Rucker's Uptown Follies

Don't Tell Mama, NYC, June 24, 2011

After the musical "Sing Happy" opening of Bronwyn Rucker's *Uptown Follies* by producer/host Rucker, whose good spirits compensated for any notes that went astray, the variety show got off to a rousing start with the effervescent raconteur, entertainment trivia historian and writer, TV and



radio talk show legend, Joe Franklin. Although periodically claiming not to do stand-up, the string of anecdotes about his decades in show business was repeatedly guffaw-producing.

Almost dead center in New York's Gay Pride Week, the guest artists who followed confirmed "variety" as the operative description. Among other items: musical numbers written for *The Vicar's Wife* by the night's accompanist, Mischa Kischkum; an original song "inspired by Shakespeare's sonnets"; an impassioned reading (yes, reading) of the 1888 classic, *Casey at the Bat*; and an audience sing-along of "Yellow Submarine."

If scored against most cabaret shows, Rucker's *Follies* might win but few plaudits for the excellence of the singing, nevertheless I found *Uptown Follies* quite satisfying, and a number of times charming as well and/or even delightful. The Gay Pride Week program's topical choices were well done, several of them absorbing, and the emotion on the part of the players genuinely affecting. Rucker, Kischkum, Randy Taylor, John Newton Reeds, J. Michael Reeds and Marc McBroom did their jobs well. As did techie Denise Andersen on lights and sound.

Incidentally, Rucker declares it should have been titled *Uptown Frolics* rather than *Uptown Follies*. Turns out, all in all, that's a pretty good description.

— Peter Leavy