

CABARETSCENES

Bronwyn Rucker

Bronwyn Rucker's Uptown Follies

Don't Tell Mama
New York, NY



The title of *Bronwyn Rucker's Uptown Follies* piqued my interest and brought me to Don't Tell Mama. *Follies* turned out to be a variety show with a succession of performers and, almost dead center of the celebrations in New York's Gay Pride Week, much of the emphasis was on gay life.

After a musical "Sing Happy" opening by producer/host Rucker, whose good spirits compensated for any notes that went astray, the show got off to a rousing start with her first guest, the effervescent raconteur, entertainment trivia historian and writer, TV and radio talk-show legend, Joe Franklin. Although he periodically claimed not to do stand-up, his string of anecdotes about the celebrities he'd known in his decades in show business was repeatedly

good for guffaws.

The rest of the evening confirmed "variety" as the operative description. Among other items, we had musical numbers written by the night's accompanist, Mischa Kischkum, for *The Vicar's Wife*, a song "inspired by Shakespeare's sonnets," Cole Porter's "Manhattan" with an adapted lyric, an impassioned reading of the 1888 classic, *Casey at the Bat* and an audience sing-along of "Yellow Submarine."

I found *Uptown Follies* eminently satisfying, and a number of times charming and/or even delightful. Still, scored against an *American Idol*, or even most cabaret shows, Rucker's *Follies* would win but few (if some) plaudits for the excellence of the singing. That notwithstanding, most of the Gay Pride Week program's choices were well done, several of them absorbing, and the emotion on the part of the player often affecting. Rucker, Kischkum, Randy Taylor, John Newton Reeds, J. Michael Reeds, and Marc McBarron Kessler did their jobs well. As did techie Denise Andersen on lights and sound.

Incidentally, while the show at Don't Tell Mama was titled *Bronwyn Rucker's Uptown Follies*, Rucker refers to it as her *Uptown Frolics*. Turns out, all in all, that's a pretty good description.

The next installment of the *Uptown Frolics* is August 26, at 7 pm at Don't Tell Mama.

Peter Leavy
Cabaret Scenes
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