

CABARET DECADENCE

THIS JUNE, SOME OF THE WORLD'S FINEST cabaret performers take the stage in the Auckland Town Hall Concert Chamber at the first-ever *Auckland International Cabaret Season*, writes Sarah Illingworth.

Launching on 4 June, the five-night festival sees the likes of Lady Rizo (US), Le Gateau Chocolat (UK), Michael Griffiths (AUS) and New Zealand's own Julia Deans bring a splash of vibrant colour to the winter months, with what promises to be a lush collection of cabaret performances that nod to every era.

Conjuring up images of smoky, dim-lit Parisian bars and glamorous costumery and stage sets, the very word 'cabaret' is loaded and decadent. The genre itself has a long and storied history, its seductive allure having contextualised many a tale of love and/or heartbreak. There are few who don't harbour at least some romanticism around the notion of whiling away a night in an intimate club setting, listening to a sultry chanteuse belt out heart-rending tunes.

New York's Lady Rizo brings such a show – with a little comedy thrown in – to Auckland. Mischievous, hilarious and an excellent performer, Rizo's vintage arrangements and theatrical adaptations of pop songs from every era have led the likes of *New York Magazine* to dub her a "cabaret superstar". A 2010 Grammy Award winner as part of a duet with superstar cellist Yo-Yo Ma, she performs regularly at legendary West Village nightclub Nell's, entertaining a celebrity-heavy clientele. This is her first time performing in New Zealand.

Nigerian-born, London-based baritone Le Gateau Chocolat makes his NZ debut also with a larger-than-life drag show applauded by critics and audiences alike. Traversing and blurring the boundaries

between opera, musical theatre, jazz and rap, Le Gateau Chocolat is a vivacious, dexterous diva known for his elaborate costumes and original scores. Having performed with the likes of La Soirée and Basement Jaxx, the latter of whom have described him as "formidably surreal", the artist regularly tours his own solo shows around the globe.

An exciting local addition, the stunning Julia Deans adapts Joni Mitchell's iconic songbook *Both Sides Now* for the theatre in her show of the same name – a world premiere collaboration with former Silo artistic director Shane Boshier. Known to many as the lead vocalist for 90s' rock act Fur Patrol, Julia first dabbled in cabaret in the 2012 Silo production of *Brel*, in which she starred alongside Jon Toogood, Tama Waipara and Jennifer Ward-Lealand. Julia's jaw-dropping performance showcased her versatility as a performer, instantly creating demand for more. *Both Sides Now* is the star's first solo cabaret show, and promises to be something very special.

Julia's *Brel* co-star Jennifer Ward-Lealand herself brings a solo show to the season. First performed as part of Auckland Arts Festival in 2003, *Falling in Love Again* is a mesmerising collection of highlights from the films, concerts and recordings of iconic actress and singer Marlene Dietrich. Featuring songs by Cole Porter, Edith Piaf and Pete Seeger, the show sees Jennifer harness the persona of Dietrich and the spirit of cabaret.

With performances also from Michael Griffiths, Tommy Bradson and the Modern Maori Quartet, all delivered up close and personal, The inaugural *Auckland International Cabaret Season* promises to be a decadent first, an unmissable series of events for all lovers of quality performance.



The fine people of Auckland can look forward to relaxing in the arms of a fierce yet loving diva. The cabaret of Lady Rizo lives in a church of glitter – an hourglass gown leading an intimately sized group toward a moment of togetherness, a joyful, sensual place that celebrates humanity with a sparkling, divine feminine touch. All the while peppering in honest hilarity and soberingly moments of raw rage or sorrow. – Lady Rizo.

Read our full interview with Lady Rizo at www.aucklandlive.co.nz/stories

Auckland International Cabaret Season | LIVE at the Concert Chamber

BOTH SIDES NOW: JULIA DEANS SINGS JONI MITCHELL

Joni Mitchell wrote songs that defined an era. River, Help Me, Blue. Now Julia Deans is let loose on Mitchell's legendary songbook. Continue your emotional education.

**4 June, 6.30pm, 8 June, 7pm | \$25 – \$40*
Table of 6 \$216***

THE MODERN MAORI QUARTET

The Modern Maori Quartet are four good-looking, hip swaying Maori crooners, performing old and new-school classics with a fresh 'golden syrup on fried bread' twist.

**4 June, 8pm, 8 June, 5.30pm | \$20 – \$30*
Table of 6 \$162***

SWEET DREAMS: SONGS BY ANNIE LENNOX

Interpreted by Michael Griffiths, Annie Lennox's lyrics are plumbed for new meaning, melodies reinterpreted and songs peppered with candid musings and remembrances from the moody songstress herself.

**4 June, 9.30pm | \$20 – \$35*
Table of 6 \$192***

FALLING IN LOVE AGAIN

Jennifer Ward-Lealand brings to life the sultry performances of screen goddess Marlene Dietrich for one night only. A dazzling evening of glamour from a time gone by.

**5 June, 6.30pm | \$20 – \$35*
Table of 6 \$192***

LADY RIZO

Revel in the luscious vocals of this Grammy Award winning diva as she combines glamour, wit and insane charm. Don't miss this New York cabaret superstar!

**5 – 7 June, 8pm, 8 June, 8.30pm
\$25 – \$45* | Table of 6 \$234***

IN VOGUE: SONGS BY MADONNA

Michael Griffiths IS Madonna as you've never seen before. No accent, costume or wig. Just "Madge" and a piano, taking audiences through her tough life and tender songs.

**5 June, 9.30pm | \$20 – \$35*
Table of 6 \$192***

THE MEN MY MOTHER LOVED

It's the early 80s. Tommy Bradson is a bastard child following his mother in the shadow of rock and roll. Featuring gems from Cold Chisel, Paul Kelly, Nick Cave and AC/DC.

**6 & 7 June, 6.30pm | \$20 – \$30*
Table of 6 \$162***

LE GATEAU CHOCOLAT

The outrageous, larger-than-life, opera-loving superstar Le Gateau Chocolat makes his Auckland debut, unleashing a delectable confection of mesmerising songs in his exquisite baritone voice.

**6 & 7 June, 9.30pm | \$25 – \$45*
Table of 6 \$234***