

BWW Review: The Silver Screen Era Is Alive and Well When Ann Kittredge Presents MOVIE NITE at Birdland Theater

Ann Kittredge has created a cabaret musical that she was born to play in.

by [Stephen Mosher](#) Oct. 12, 2021



Statuesque, like an Oscar, and glittering like all the stars in MGM Studios' heaven, **Ann Kittredge** stood center stage at Birdland Theater on Sunday and presented MOVIE NITE to a standing room only crowd. It's a beautiful thing for an actor to stand on a stage and begin their evening of entertainment looking out at a sea of applauding hands, listening to the cheers and shouts, all for simply showing up, and **Ann Kittredge** is a woman and an artist

who has earned such a reception. Beloved by many (clearly), Ms. Kittredge is a benevolent presence in the community, blessed with two things that could make anyone fall in love with her (three, if you count her face): a lovely singing voice and an at-the-ready sense of humor. All of these things make her the perfect performer to present an evening dedicated to the music of the movies.

With her imposing stature and cool Patrician beauty, **Ann Kittredge** would definitely have been one of the Silver Screen Leading Ladies, like Carole Lombard, and with her unbridled comedic skills, she would have been one of the comedic greats, like **Jean Arthur**, and with her delicately powerful soprano, she would have been one of the darlings of movie musicals, like **Irene Dunne**. In her sequined evening gown of palest pink-cum-lavender, reminiscent of a creation by Adrian, Ann delivered unto the adoring Birdland throng seventy-minutes of movie music that she ranks among her favorites. That part is important because any singer could announce an evening of movie music and proceed to sing "Over The Rainbow" and "Pure Imagination" and "Goldfinger" but **Ann Kittredge** curated a genuinely interesting song list that resonates with her, making the choices more personal and personally

informed. Perhaps that is why there was so much comedy in Movie Nite, for comedy is a clear focus in Ann's artistic aesthetic.

With light fare like "If I Had A Talking Picture of You" and the classically clever "They're Either Too Young or Too Old" and an ambitious, impressive medley of **Irving Berlin** songs penned for **Fred Astaire**, Ms. Kittredge has many opportunities at musical levity, but her extensive script flows with a steady stream of playful rhetoric and jauntily recounted trivia regarding the compositions, their creators, and the stars who introduced them to the world. It is plain to see how much fun Kittredge had designing the collection and is having performing it, including an abundance of smiles, laughs, flirtation, and some occasional dancing about the stage. And it is so generous of Ann to move so freely about the platform because, like some cabaret rooms, Birdland Theater features audience seating to the sides and even slightly behind the stage. In the hands of a less skilled or less conscious performer, those audience members seated behind the mic stand would have spent their seventy minutes gazing at Ms. Kittredge's hair and hemline; a true professional, Ann saw to it that they were not only included in the evening: they were welcomed into it.

Working efficiently with the Rolls Royce of Musical Directors, **Alex Rybeck**, and the universe's gift to every live music show, **Sean Harkness**, **Ann Kittredge** was able to present to her fans some mesmerizing new treatments of songs we all know, and some surprising song choices we wouldn't have expected. Opting away from "Goldfinger" and "Diamonds Are Forever", Ann went full-on **Carly Simon** for her Bond moment, and recognizing the importance of **Burt Bacharach** to the world of movie scores, presented the title song from the universally ridiculed musical "Lost Horizon" and with resounding success - the former was a new experience in her stratospheric soprano, and the latter was haunting and beautiful, as was an acapella encore tune that this writer wouldn't spoil for future audiences for the world. Indeed, the show that Kittredge and Rybeck have created has a few of those lovely, ethereal moments and they are among the highlights of the show.

Because of the sharp focus on the silver screen era, an era when actors were encouraged to Act, **Ann Kittredge** is allowing herself to lean into her more theatrical nature, both in her performances and her patter, and it works for all of the lighter moments, the comedic bits, the Cahn & Styne, and definitely the (wonderful) **Ginger Rogers** number (a favorite of this writer). There are, though, a few moments in the musical presentation when Ann dials it back and veers sincere: these are the highlights of the evening, these are her money numbers. Even Carole Lombard, **Jean Arthur**, and **Irene Dunne** went vulnerable in their comedy roles, showcasing their hearts, and that is what these moments of intimacy did for Ann, particularly a sumptuously tender

tribute to her Mama (present on Sunday night) and her favorite song, and a breathtaking treatment of "Ah, Sweet Mystery of Life" between Kittredge and Harkness that was, for this writer, the ultimate point of the evening. These moments of authenticity serve to make Ann importantly lovable and relatable, something that doesn't always happen when looking at one of the world's most towering beauties in head-to-toe Vogue...Ann captured perfectly her delicate "The Way We Were" - a song nobody should sing, that most people over-sing, but that Kittredge has mastered through the art of containment and connection. It was an additional highlight to the evening.

This is no fly-by-night club act, a set-list of songs to be sung by a singer standing at a mic, just singing a random bunch of songs they like: this is a piece of cabaret theater, complete with costume and props, sound effects, and song cues.

Though [Ann Kittredge](#) MOVIE NITE was a one-off, more great shows can be found at the Birdland website [HERE](#).

[HERE](#) is the [Ann Kittredge](#) website.

[THIS](#) is the [Alex Rybeck](#) Facebook page.

[Sean Harkness](#) can be found online [HERE](#).

Photo of [Ann Kittredge](#) by Helane Blumfield