

THE LOOK OF LOVE: THEATREVIEW REVIEW

By Gail Tresidder: 15 Mar 2020

Whatever her subject, Ali Harper adds warmth to their story – her charisma and sweetness is enfolding. This is a lovely thing and perhaps the reason, above all else, that her fans come out on a Nelson night following increasingly ominous world news. So here we are, together with Tom Rainey on keyboard and Harry Harrison on guitar, being close to others to celebrate the wonderfully romantic music of Burt Bacharach – and, by default, his marvellous lyricist Hal David.

The stage looks good. Glittering hanging lights with a backdrop of streamers, changing colour to suit the mood, is simple and effective. Otherwise, just a few props, nothing extraneous, just right.

Harper is in black – a moveable gown that shimmers and shines; Rainey and Harrison also in black. The music is the thing – and the tales of a young Bacharach growing up in New York: his influences from the jazz scene and the many composers living there at the time; how he met Hal David – this marvellous match of words and music – and the early years. Then a giant leap to 'I Say A Little Prayer For You', 'The Look Of Love' and 'Walk On By'. Songs with heart, songs that will last, songs that bring back memories, both happy and sad.

Touring days – especially with Marlene Dietrich in Israel, having the courage to sing in German when it was at that stage a banned language: genuinely fascinating – and for such a romantic writer as Bacharach, a less than idyllic catalogue of failed marriages. Many songs, many stories, all delivered with a dexterity, an ebullience that is captivating.

We have a tender interpretation of Cilla Black's great hit 'Alfie', a wonderful version of Dietrich's 'Falling In Love Again', Harrison plays his ukulele, sings 'Magic Moments', accompanied by whistles from Rainey and Harper, a lot of fun bringing back the 50s. More fun with 'Do You Know The Way To San Jose?' – cue the backing chorus – and on go the auditorium lights; true to character, a little bit of audience participation with 'This Girl's In Love With You'.

Still composing, still conducting, still playing the piano and happily married to his fourth wife for twenty-seven years, Burt Bacharach, now 91, has – more than just about any other composer of his genre – written music to fall in love to.

In a fitting finale, we sing 'What The World Needs Now Is Love Sweet Love' – so right for these times: an anthem to banish the elephant in the room. This is opening night and hopefully, *The Look of Love* tour will be able to proceed.

The Look Of Love: on at CIRCA 23 Jan– 20 Feb 2021

THE LOOK OF LOVE: REVIEW

By Sophie Elizabeth Ricketts for Backstage Christchurch: 17 Dec 2020

After not one but two Covid related bumps in the calendar, renowned songbird Ali Harper has created another musical love letter to an incredible songwriter. The artist under the spotlight this time is Burt Bacharach in her new show: THE LOOK OF LOVE.

Backstage Christchurch reviewer Sophie Ricketts was in the audience last night and thought: "The show was a non-stop parade of hits... I would encourage anyone who enjoys good music and good cabaret to buy a ticket even if they don't already consider themselves a Bacharach fan."

After a year of no international travel, and somewhat limited national opportunities too, it was a joy to feel like I was whisked away to New York City for one night of fun in an underground cabaret. Ali Harper delivered entertainment in spades in her newest show: The Look Of Love. Dedicated to the songs of one of America's most influential songwriters of the twentieth century, the show was a non-stop parade of Burt Bacharach hits. So much so that I would encourage anyone who enjoys good music and good cabaret to buy a ticket even if they don't already consider themselves a Bacharach fan. (But trust me, you are even if you don't already know it.)

I got hooked easily, my favourite Bacharach song ("I'll Never Fall In Love Again") was on the menu early and I found myself unable to control my desire to tap along and bob my head in time with the music. Hal David's lyrics flowed like bubbly champagne from Ali's lips and waves of nostalgia swept over the audience.

Ali is the consummate professional. She's so at home on stage it is easy to fall under her spell and be transported into the world of each song. Her technical abilities are matched with a beautiful skill for storytelling; I would wager that last night she gave one of the most beautiful renditions ever of what I would argue is Burt's weakest song ("What's New Pussycat?"). Her impression of Marlene Dietrich was spot on, such is her talent for inhabiting other singers and telling their stories; those who have seen her phenomenal previous shows "Songs For Nobodies" and "A Doris Day Special" will already be familiar. Ali's heart is so big I wonder how on earth it stays contained inside her body, such is her generosity towards her audiences when she is performing. Her precise execution of delicate and complex material is never void of authenticity, and every smile she gives is generous and sincere.

She is dutifully supported in this show by two of the best musicians in town: Harry Harrison on guitar, and Tom Rainey on piano and in the role of musical director. Tom's arrangements wonderfully showcase the nuances in Burt's writing and enhance Ali's knack for wringing the most emotion out of a lyric. It was clear they were having just as much fun as she was and it warmed my soul.

In addition, a large number of highly skilled local musicians lent their talents to creating her album of the show and building the musical ambiance in each song's arrangement. The physical ambiance within the space was curated nicely in Sean Hawkins' lighting design. Ali was beautifully dressed in a gorgeous outfit which magically transformed to become a second outfit without her ever needing to leave the stage; claps for Roz Wilmott-Dalton and her clever design. My only disappointment was that the programme didn't contain a song list identifying each number in the show, as I would have loved to revisit it all again today. But lucky us, we have the opportunity to buy her album and put it on repeat at home.

Ali Harper seems to have Christchurch audiences wrapped around her little finger; and why shouldn't she? She has the talent, the skill, and the showmanship to justify it. How lucky we are to have the opportunity to transport ourselves into the chic music clubs of bigger international cities without even hopping on a plane! Do yourself a favour, treat yourself to a ticket and witness a masterful artist at work.

The Look Of Love: on at CIRCA 23 Jan– 20 Feb 2021

THE LOOK OF LOVE: THEATRE REVIEW

By Tony Ryan: 17 Dec 2020

This isn't the first time I've seen Ali Harper in a one-woman show, but this time she's written the script herself. If the novel and dramatic originality of Joanna Murray Smith's *Songs for Nobodies* three-and-a-half years ago at Court Theatre, with a director who shaped the show into a fluid and structured entity was more polished, the more personal and less formal approach of *The Look of Love*, at The Piano, works equally well in its own way.

The Look of Love takes a selection of hits from the 1950s, 60s and 70s written by Burt Bacharach, along with some background to his life, and presents them in an intimate cabaret style that keeps us fully engaged throughout its unbroken ninety-minute duration.

If we didn't already know that Burt Bacharach and his lyricist Hal David were behind many of the hits of Gene Pitney, The Carpenters, Dusty Springfield, Tom Jones, Dionne Warwick, Sandie Shaw, Cilla Black and many others, we might have been surprised by the string of familiar songs that make up this show. But, for me, the name 'Burt Bacharach' remains part of the flavour of my teenage years and beyond. The number of those little seven-inch 45rpm singles whose orange (Gene Pitney), purple (Sandie Shaw) and many other coloured labels featured his name and found their way into my treasured collection of recorded music, will always be a nostalgic resonance of those times.

This evening's audience is clearly of the same mind and, if they're also predominantly of the same generation, it's amazing how these songs are familiar and beloved of many younger people as well.

Ali Harper and her musical director, Tom Rainey, consistently demonstrate their deep and personal love of these songs. Both performers convey the musical and expressive essence of every song so completely that memories of the original performances are enhanced. In the past, when singers have attempted to emulate familiar hit recordings, I've sometimes found that comparisons can result in a wish for more authenticity, but here, singer and musicians bring the material newly to life with their own considerable musical intuitions and personalities. Tom Rainey's arrangements retain enough of the original details of instrumentation, while bringing his own insights, extending our perceptions and enabling us to find something new, no matter how deeply engrained our familiarity.

Tonight, guitarist Harry Harrison adds subtle colours to many of the songs, and his ukulele introduction to 'Raindrops Keep Falling On My Head' is one of many heart-in-throat moments as we realise which song is about to emerge.

Towards the start of the show, a reference to Bacharach's early studies in classical piano and composition (much more important to him than Harper's script would have us believe) made me wonder, as I've wondered ever since first encountering 'What Do You Get When You Fall In Love' in the late 1960s, if its similarity to the opening of the final movement of *Beethoven's 'Piano Sonata no. 25 (Op. 79 in G)'* [begins @ 6'25"] is a deliberate borrowing on the song-writer's part. I suppose we all get our creative inspirations from somewhere!

The conversational style of Ali Harper's script leaves room for the inspiration of the moment, and the informative contributions from Tom Rainey at the piano, along with interchanges among all three performers, make us feel that we are sharing the magic moments of discovery alongside the musicians as they explore each song. Harper's way of talking directly to the audience also has a genuineness, as if we're all friends in her studio listening to her enthuse about the music.

The simple stage setting with suggestive lighting and faultless technical support, along with twenty-or-so pre-recorded backing singers and musicians, all contribute to the engaging and professional presentation, but it's primarily Harper's charm and vocal prowess on which the real success of *The Look of Love* relies.

Burt Bacharach wrote so many familiar hit songs that it's impossible to mention even just those that feature in the show but, for me, the highlight comes near the end when we hear a sequence of excerpts from three favourites – 'I Just Don't Know What To Do With Myself' (Dusty Springfield), 'Anyone Who Had A Heart' (Cilla Black) and 'Always Something There To Remind Me' (Sandie Shaw).

These, followed by 'Alfie' (Cilla again, and arguably Bacharach's greatest song), and a couple more songs about love, bring the show to a close after which the enthusiastic, near-capacity audience must have wandered out into the night, filling the streets of Christchurch with their own hummed, muttered or even out-loud renditions of these timeless classics.

The Look Of Love: on at CIRCA 23 Jan– 20 Feb 2021

THE LOOK OF LOVE: THEATREVIEW REVIEW

By Jo Hodgson: 23 Jan 2021

If you are looking for a night of nostalgia, musical enrichment and exceptional entertainment, then look no further than *The Look of Love*: a show celebrating the music of Burt Bacharach performed by the inimitable Ali Harper with Tom McLeod on piano and guitarist Callum Allardice.

Burt Bacharach is a household name who has influenced the musical landscape from the 1950s onwards – and at the age of 91, he is still performing and writing.

With musical arranger Tom Rainey's sumptuous orchestral arrangements to put us in the right mood, Ali takes us on a journey; a journey back to a simpler time when a young American boy practised piano and discovered the joy of Jazz through the influence of Dizzy Gillispie, Count Basie and Charlie Parker.

Over his writing career, often teaming up with lyricist Hal David, he wrote for such powerhouses as Marlene Dietrich, Dionne Warwick, Dusty Springfield, Perry Como, The Carpenters, Aretha Franklin, Cilla Black and Tom Jones. Even if you don't think you know a Burt Bacharach song, invariably you will discover you do as soon as you hear them, such is the timelessness of this music and how many times they have been covered by a myriad of performers.

On an elegant stage setting, we are enlightened and inspired by Ali's charismatic performance which has us eating out of her hand. She wins us over with her down to earth storytelling which is skillfully woven together and paced and pitched perfectly between entertaining us and delivering contextual information. Her voice flows in and out of the different song styles like syrup, and she is in absolute control of every note, breath and emotional nuance throughout.

The warm and easy-going relationship on stage between Tom, Ali and Callum makes us feel like we have been invited into their lounge for a soiree. They sensitively support Ali and effortlessly manoeuvre around Bacharach's exciting chord progressions, modulations and changes of meter. It is a joy to see Tom back on his piano stool in a live show again and he shifts to the singing spotlight with ease to croon 'Story of my Life', while also joining in with delivering interesting anecdotes about Bacharach's life and musical prowess.

The orchestrations surrounding the performance enhance the emotional power and stylistic authenticity of the music. Given that Ali recorded her 'The Look of Love' CD with these musician's, she has a relationship with them all and includes them as if they are all there on the stage with her, rather than a faceless backing track. A very minor quibble is I wished the mix allowed Tom and Callum's instrumental sound to be just a little more forward at times, to bring more focus to their sound in the room.

Whether it is a sassy salsa, being humorously silly and over the top, a sultry torch song or a poignant ballad, Ali takes us into the heart of all of these hit songs. With songs such as 'Do You Know the Way to San Jose', 'The Look of Love', 'Always Something There to Remind Me' through to 'What's New Pussy Cat', 'Magic Moments', 'Walk On By' and 'Alfie', we are treated to Ali's ability to paint the songs with so many vocal colours from brassy twang, rich chest warmth, husky sensuality to the emotional and judicious use of breath.

Her performance is a vocal and dramatic masterclass of effortlessness which has been developed through years of honed practice and exploration. As a singer, I love observing how other singers traverse technically through a performance like this and am equally awed and inspired by the craft on display tonight.

Ali is a darling of the New Zealand performance scene and makes her mark wherever she goes. Her knack for delivering at such an exceptional level of performance to breaking out into good ol' Kiwi as if she is having a cuppa with us at the kitchen bench endears her to us all.

The overriding message from 'The Look of Love' is clear: music is unifying, and right now more than ever, what the world needs now, is love sweet love.

The Look Of Love: on at CIRCA 23 Jan– 20 Feb 2021

THE LOOK OF LOVE: REVIEW

By Peter Mechen for Middle C: 23 Jan 2021

By [Peter Mechen](#), 23/01/2021

THE LOOK OF LOVE – An Evening of songs of Burt Bacharach
written and presented by Ali Harper (vocalist)
with Tom McLeod (musical director/piano) / Callum Allardice (guitar)

Music arranged, produced and mixed by Tom Rainey
Soundtrack played by members of the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra
Backing vocals performed by Jennine Bailey, Naomi Ferguson and Juliet Reynolds-Midgely
Recorded and engineered by Thom O'Connor
Produced by Ali Harper and Iain Cave (Ali-Cat Productions)

Circa Theatre, Taranaki St., Wellington

Saturday, 23rd January 2021

I can't think of another performer I know whose presentations give me more pleasure than do those of Ali Harper's, for her unbeatable combinations of artistry, energy and sheer charisma! And here, at Circa Theatre once again, we were treated to all of those qualities put at the service of the music of one of the most iconic songwriters of recent times, Burt Bacharach. His is a name which, like those of songwriters of previous eras, such as Irving Berlin, George Gershwin, Cole Porter, Johnny Mercer and Hoagy Carmichael, has become synonymous with the act of creation of songs that immediately bring to listeners' minds memories of specific times, places and people.

For Harper this show seemed something of a chameleon's act throughout the presentation, one that she brought off with characteristic whole-heartedness and engaging flair – unlike with her previous shows I'd seen in which she personified either a single performer ("A Doris Day Special"), or a number of stellar artists, either as themselves ("Legendary Divas") or as their star-struck fans ("Songs for Nobodies"), her focus this time was a songwriter. How adroitly and persuasively, then, was she able to train her focus on either a singer associated with the song, or the situation/or context of the song itself, giving something of an organic feel to the songwriter's motivations in each case and thus recreating Bacharach's very own "story" through music.

I wondered beforehand just how Harper would approach these works, given that the confines of the theatre might have seemed to suggest a more intimate, cabaret-style performance, one that would have admirably suited many of Bacharach's songs that I remembered. When we first entered the auditorium it seemed possible that this was to be the case, with "music stations" visibly set up for the singer, for piano, and for another solo instrument – what happened then was that, after the pianist and guitarist had begun, and Harper had entered, the song accompaniments "burgeoned" into what sounded like a full symphony orchestra backing for many of the numbers, Harper explaining at some point that the musicians were in fact members of the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra, whose "sound" had been pre-recorded to recreate that well-remembered "Bacharach sound" – many of the songs would have responded well to "cabaret" treatment, but the music undeniably resonated more ambiently in the memory in these sumptuously-crafted "orchestrated" accompaniments.

I admit that it took me the length of the song "The Look of Love" to "adjust" to this "full-on" instrumental approach, not being a great fan in principle of pre-recorded sound and its deployment, but gradually coming to accept the sonic soundscape Harper and her valiant musicians deemed appropriate – thereafter I was caught up in the sweep and full-frontal engagement of it all – and, as with all sound recordings, the ear soon adjusts to pretty much whatever one hears and allows the essential enjoyment to reassert itself.

I'd hoped that, despite knowing many of the songs from radio-listening over the years, I'd be floored by surprises of the "did he write THAT?" variety – and I certainly wasn't disappointed! Unexpectedly encountering numbers such as "The Story of My Life", "Raindrops keep falling on my Head" and (perhaps most movingly of all) "Alfie", pushed my Bacharach-parameters

into hitherto uncharted regions, both enlarging and deepening my appreciation of his achievement, the latter song in particular one of those "not a note wasted" creations, and fully supporting the statement made by Harper and her pianist Tom McLeod when discussing Bacharach's style of composing – that he didn't like "vanilla", or plain sweetness, but would "explore" unconventionalities in both harmonies and melodic lines. Here, "Alfie" seemed to proclaim itself as one of the great songs, Bacharach devising an almost Mussorgsky-like melodic progression that's close to "sprechgesang", plainly, though not entirely unsympathetically delineating the hero's character, and put across by Harper simply, directly and most movingly.

In some shape or form there's that avoidance of "vanilla" in most things I knew Bacharach had written as well – the spontaneous quirkiness of "Say a Little Prayer for Me", "Walk on By" and "Anyone who had a heart", for example, songs which somehow transmit both impulse and deeper emotion into and through music and find their mark. Bacharach may have had notables such as Dionne Warwick, and even occasionally Cilla Black as his music's exponents, but here Ali Harper proved as worthy, insightful, and thrilling an interpreter, from the heart-in-mouth "opening up" of the emotional guns in "Magic moments" at the words "Time can't erase the memory of....", to the almost confessional candour of "A House is not a House", a song which is all impulse and reflection, here expressed by both singer and pianist with exquisitely-focused simplicity.

Mentioning of Bacharach's song-writing partner Hal David and the latter's gift for crafting words whose individual sounds and configurations were matched by the music straightaway put me in mind of George and Ira Gershwin's equally combustible partnership, and, in fact, daring me to suggest to Harper that perhaps one day.....but no, it's the here and now that should remain my subject, more properly paying tribute to the singer and her "team" for my enrichment of knowledge and awareness of Bacharach's activities – Marlene Dietrich's musical collaborator during the 1950s? – goodness! As for his contributions to films such as "Casino Royale", "Alfie" and "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid", not to mention "What's New, Pussycat" – well, I obviously didn't take much notice of film credits in those carefree days of my youth!

What I thought Ali Harper conveyed most warmly and lastingly was Bacharach's ability in his music to relate to and uncover people's emotions concerning basic human needs – I came away from the show with what seemed like pocketfuls of familiar feelings reawakened and stirred, some gentle tickling, and others via uncomfortably prodding, a full gamut of experience suggested and shared. And we delighted in the medium as well as the message, in the singer's unfailing ease and warmth of communication and infectious, all-embracing delight in putting across the music for our pleasure.

The show was supposed to conclude with "What the world needs now", described by Harper as "a song for our time", the sentiments of the relatively unfamiliar verses expressed with filled-to-the-brim conviction, and the choruses lustily joined in with by all present – a standing ovation necessitated a "second conclusion", with Harper and her musicians giving us "That's what friends are for" to the ambient accompaniment of audience members' torchlight beams bringing light to the darkness and hope to all present for a brighter future. Thank you, Ali! – so much appreciated!

The Look Of Love: on at CIRCA 23 Jan– 20 Feb 2021

THE LOOK OF LOVE: REVIEW

By Sophie for Wellingtonista: 23 Jan 2021

Review: The Look Of Love

by SOPHIE on JANUARY 25, 2021 in MUSIC, REVIEW

I've seen Ali Harper before, at Old St Paul's in 2012, and I was struck by her humour and professionalism then. It was a fun night out with my Robot Mum and we both enjoyed hearing songs we knew, and some we didn't, performed by someone who knew her craft and was super skilled.

On Saturday night, The Look of Love opened at Circa, and I was delighted to be able to take my mum along again.

Ali Harper is a bit of a national treasure – cabaret, acting, musical theatre; she does it all. But she also creates her own shows and records albums, which I think is pretty baller. She's not just a participant. She's a BOSS.

The small stage of Circa One was well-lit, with mic stands placed at different points to allow Harper to move around and share her performance with the whole audience. The live accompaniment were Tom McLeod expertly playing piano and Callum Allardice nailing the guitar. But Harper knows that Bacharach needs an orchestra, needs a horn section, and needs backing vocals, so she recorded fantastic arrangements, working with the esteemed Tom Rainey, to back it all.

Was it weird to have two musicians onstage and the rest pre-recorded? Initially, yes. But it gave her, and us, a lovely intimate dynamic between her and her onstage musos, and as she said herself, she couldn't have fit (or afforded) the whole cast onstage. Plus the recording experience meant she was able to produce an album for the show.

The boys were clearly having a good time and both sang as well as playing, McLeod having his own very competent solo time. Harper is a generous collaborator, and an appreciative one, giving them repeated credit and love for their support and their talent.

So we embarked upon a journey, with Harper providing biographical detail around Bacharach's life and development as a composer. She referred to the research she'd done and it was very clear she'd done it with affection and respect. I love that so much. How he came up, how he collaborated with his lyricist Hal David, his mostly terrible lovelife, and how he pushed to make his music challenging, interesting, and different.

She also gave great respect to the artists who made his songs famous; Marlene Dietrich, Dusty Springfield, Dionne Warwick, Aretha Franklin. Admittedly, her Dietrich impression left me a little cold but that's just a low damn voice to try to emulate, and while Harper's range is impressive, it felt a little dense down there.

Sometimes a performer who's worked a lot in musical theatre can be a little jazz hands and fake smile. While the production is great and all, it feels like they're just performance robots going through the programming to elicit the appropriate response.

Here's the thing, though. Ali Harper is a freaking extraordinary vocalist with stupendous charisma. That's clear, no one can deny it. BUT she was also obviously having a ball and loving every moment of what she was doing. She loved her collaborators, she loved the music, and she loved us, the audience. She was basically there, in the spotlight, looking a million dollars in her sequins,

genuinely thrilled that THIS is what she gets to do for a job. She gets to sing songs that make her happy, for people who get happy as well. She looked out at us, and no part of her smile was fake. I don't need to talk about Harper's voice. She's been doing this for the last 20+ years and she KNOWS her craft. I saw her 9 years ago and was impressed, but now I'm just speechless. It felt effortless. I doubt it was, but DAMN, she just opened her mouth and magic came out. She drove her mic like NASCAR. I'm basically on my knees chanting "I'm not worthy!"

Ali Harper got to do something really cool. She got to make a show, and a REALLY good show, based on a composer who was a formative part of her own life soundtrack. She was so clearly, and so tangibly delighted to be singing Bacharach's songs. She wanted to give him respect and credit. She wanted to share with us her love of those songs. She knew she couldn't replace the artists we hear in our heads when we think of the songs – those artists ARE the songs. But she paid homage to the creators and the artists, and she also made each song her own. And when the whole studio was standing up, holding their phones up with the flashlights on (some of us had to show our mums how to put the flashlight on), she was just so full of joy. She was like.... You guys get it. You love these songs, too! Let's sing together! Isn't this freaking wonderful?!

Yes, lady. It WAS freaking wonderful. And thank you so much.

Ali Harper has a whole-ass month of this show so if you like music, or love, or people, or... OK, if you hate life, don't go. Everyone else, get amongst it. It'll make you smile.

The Look Of Love: on at CIRCA 23 Jan– 20 Feb 2021

THE LOOK OF LOVE: REVIEW

By Ralph McAllister for Kapiti Independent: 23 Jan 2021

Ralph McAllister Reviews 'The Look of Love'

January 26, 2021

Ralph McAllister says 'The Look of Love' brings a Quartet of Excellence to Circa Theatre in Wellington,.

He writes: 'Last month THE OLDER THE BETTER played to packed houses, proving that not only the quality of the revue, but live performances are what audiences appreciate more and more after struggling through ghastly 2020.

'A celebration of Bacharach'

Now playing at Circa for the next month, Ali Harper brings THE LOOK OF LOVE, a celebration of the phenomenal Burt Bacharach.



Who?

Never heard of him!

Oh yes you have.

Bacharach -- from the 1950's and still going strong

Beginning in the 1950's, Bacharach is still composing at 91, after a lifetime of hits including Oscar and Grammy awards, and literally hundreds of songs.

Now Ali has dipped into this cornucopia of excellence and chosen many of Bacharach's greatest hits, including I Say a Little Prayer for You,

Anyone Who Had a Heart, Alfie, What's New Pussy Cat and Do You Know the Way to San Jose, etc etc etc.

She delivers with her usual style, versatility and brilliance through 80 minutes that fly past.

'Probably her best show'



It would have been impossible to reach what is probably her best show ever without the supreme talents of pianist and musical director Tom McLeod, guitarist Callum Allardice and the ubiquitous Tom Rainey, who arranged and recorded a backing orchestra .

What a quartet!

So what do you get when you fall in love with the show?

Joy (What the World Needs Now)

Memories (Raindrops)

Laughter (thanks Colin)

Don't miss it!

Ralph McAllister

The Look Of Love: on at CIRCA 23 Jan– 20 Feb 2021

THE LOOK OF LOVE: REGIONAL NEWS REVIEW

By Madelaine Empson: 23 Jan 2021

Burt Bacharach: a name synonymous with musical genius. And yet, I know his name, I know so many of his hits, but I had no idea he wrote them! *The Look of Love*, Ali Harper's latest show, sees the award-winning singer honour the songwriter responsible for *I Say a Little Prayer*, *What the World Needs Now*, and *Raindrops Keep Fallin' On My Head*. My friend and I had more than one 'aha moment'. "Wait, he wrote that one too?"

With twinkling fairy lights, a sleek piano, and a couple of bar stools and mic stands the only adornments, the stage is set for intimacy and glamour. Ali is cloaked in sequins (clothes design by Roz Wilmott-Dalton) that catch the light and accentuate her star power. She is accompanied by resident musical director and pianist Tom McLeod (what chops!) and guitarist Callum Allardice, who brings a distinctly cool, laid-back vibe. Backing them all is the full might of musical director Tom Rainey's arrangements, recorded with brass, strings, drums, the whole shebang.

The whole shebang is a great way to describe *The Look of Love*, a show in which everybody gives their all and then some. Harper's joy is palpable, infectious. There is no way you can watch her perform and not see it radiating from her. There is no way you can leave the theatre without feeling it yourself. Her talent is difficult to put down in words; not only does she nail every note, her voice runs the full gamut of emotion, articulating the love and love lost that Bacharach's songs so masterfully express.

In between songs, Harper shares Bacharach's stories and waxes lyrical about her onstage and offstage collaborators, showering them with praise, adoration, and respect. Judging by the thunderous applause and standing ovation, the audience feels exactly the same way about Harper herself.

Go to *The Look of Love* and let Ali Harper catch you between the moon and Wellington City.

The Look Of Love: on at CIRCA 23 Jan– 20 Feb 2021