

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Nicholas Burnham

Inside an Old Queen's Head

By Kilian Kröll

Mid-century show tunes, bouncy tap numbers, and a pro-wedding theme tied together The Bang Group's *Misters And Sisters*, the opening production of *GayFest!* at the Plays & Player's Skinner Studio. Lead performers David Parker and Jeffrey Kazin sang, danced (in tap and pointe shoes) and told jokes with confidence and grace. Demonstrating these well-rounded artistic talents was no small feat in the up-close-and-personal theater that seats about 40 people. The socially lubricated crowd of middle-aged men and assorted friends received the medley of "autobiographical" songs with jovial applause.

I thought I had landed at [a piano lounge](#) in Philadelphia's historic gayborhood, puzzled, as always, by the undying devotion to musical theater in mainstream American gay culture. We heard a string of tunes from "Tea For Two" to "Baby It's Cold Outside," with a lightly sketched narrative of the lead artists' 22-year working relationship. (Well, they clarified that they've had every kind of relationship with each other, except one they also dramatized: Irving Berlin's "Sisters.") Two further dancers, Nic Petry and Amber Sloan, and pianist Anna Ebbesen, rounded out the showcase, which absurdly climaxed with Judy Garland singing "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" over the speakers.

This song and much of what we heard meant something to a lot of people in the room: people who have fought tirelessly to have their relationships recognized and celebrated by society, and who've paved the way for many of the shifting cultural norms we younger generations tend to take for granted. No wonder then that marriage was the recurring theme of the evening, ending with "Old Fashioned Wedding," another wittily performed Berlin duet.

While watching, I prayed that marriage equality will pass soon – not so much for my own benefit, but for a generation of women and men who have fantasized for decades, perhaps centuries, of being able to tap and twirl down that aisle, in dress or tux – who cares! – testifying their love fulfilled. And I say soon, because this generation has worked really hard – using "musical drama as political activism" – and is starting to lose a little steam.

The Bang Group, Mistrs And Sisters, Plays & Players Theatre (Skinner Studio), August 3-4, 2012. No further performances.

The 2nd annual gay/lesbian theater festival, GayFest!, presented by quince productions, continues thru September 1, 2012. For tickets & info: <http://www.quinceproductions.com>

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