



Ann Hampton Callaway & Amanda McBroom

The Pheasantry, King's Rd, Chelsea,
London SW3 4UT
to November 13, 2016
www.pizzaexpresslive.com
Reviewed by Jarlath O'Connell

American songbirds, and songwriters *par excellence*, Ann Hampton Callaway and Amanda McBroom have appeared separately many times in London but they appear as a double act for 5 nights at The Pheasantry on the King's Rd as part of the London Jazz Festival and should not be missed.

Accompanied on piano and occasional vocals by songwriter Michele Brouman, who regularly supports McBroom, they both deliver an expertly chosen mix of standards and their own material. The show exudes a warmth which is the essence of cabaret and they are both totally themselves. With cabaret you need to arrive with a personality as well as a pianist.

Callaway's remarkable, dark, husky, multi-octave range means she can scat like Ella on 'All the Things You Are' one minute and the next deliver the pristine soprano sound of Streisand,

which she recreates in two numbers which she wrote for the great diva. One was the extremely lush 'I've Dreamed of You' which Streisand then duly premiered at her wedding to James Brolin.

Callaway's gift for songwriting is astonishing and a regular feature of her concerts is an Improv Session where she asks the audience to suggest key words or themes which she then fashions into a usually great, bluesy, jazz number. This was the night after the Presidential election, when many in the room were licking their wounds, so the words 'Trump', 'orange' and 'blancmange' were on the list. She rose to the challenge magnificently.

The mood lightened somewhat with McBroom's deftly satirical 'Strange Days' and Brouman's 'One of these Days' which had a jaunty Randy Newman-like vibe to it. McBroom has a great comic gift but also delivered a

personal love letter to this city in 'London in the Rain' as well as one of her greatest melodies in the epic 'Wheels'.

Their encore included McBroom's signature 'The Rose' as well as 'Love and Let Love' a simple and heart wrenching ballad which was actually penned in response to Samantha Power's address to the UN about global LGBT rights.

Along the way there was also some sublime Porter, Gershwin and Rodgers & Hart and a cheerful medley of Dorothy Fields' numbers. McBroom and Callaway have such confidence and ease they made the standards sound as fresh and alive as the new work. Their performing styles complement each other beautifully and when called upon, their voices blend in perfect harmony.

With Brouman you will get "Three for the Price of One" here, so do rush. ★