

Life is a 'Cabaret' at Warehouse Theatre

By Paul Hyde

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A visit to the "Cabaret," old chum, is always a relevant and thought-provoking experience, says local stage director Shannon Robert.

The Kander-Ebb musical opening Friday at the Warehouse Theatre centers on a 1930s Berlin cabaret, the Kit Kat Club, where the hedonistic proceedings — the music, the risqué banter, the scantily clad girls — distract everyone from the growing

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Miranda Barnett Notus, left, Brenna Yeary and April Schaeffer are Kit Kat Club girls in "Cabaret." STEPHEN BOATRIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY

YOU CAN GO

What: "Cabaret" by John Kander and Fred Ebb

When: 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday; also 8 p.m. Feb. 2-4, 9-11 and 16-18; 3 p.m. Jan. 29, Feb. 5 and 12

Where: The Warehouse Theatre, 37 Augusta St.

Tickets: \$35 for adults; \$25 for seniors; \$20 for students; \$55 for tickets to sit at tables (the \$55 tickets include a bottle of wine for every two people)

Information: 864-235-6948 or www.WarehouseTheatre.com



Katie Rockwell (as Sally) and Will Ragland (the Emcee) star in The Warehouse Theatre's production of "Cabaret," opening Friday. STEPHEN BOATRIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY

Nazi menace.

The musical underscores how ordinary people, consumed with their own pleasures and personal concerns, can become oblivious to a society slowly crumbling in their midst, Robert says.

"The central idea of the story is that these people were not paying attention to what was going on in the world around them," Robert says. "I hope people will talk about this show, why it's relevant."

The show features some unforgettable roles, including the English cabaret performer Sally Bowles (Katie Rockwell), who falls in love with a young American writer, Cliff Bradshaw (Matthew Merritt).

An emcee (Will Ragland) acts as a cynical guide to the drama.

Inspired by Christopher Isherwood's "Berlin Stories" and John Van Druten's stage adaptation of them, "I Am a Camera," the musical also presents a love story between a German woman, Fraulein Schneider, and a Jewish grocer, Herr Schultz.

Robert is directing "Cabaret," with its 18-member cast, for the first time, although she had directed revues of the music and lyrics of John Kander and Fred Ebb.

"I really love Kander and Ebb's approach to telling a story," Robert says. "I think the songs really reinforce the action, which isn't always the

case with a musical."

Robert believes she has an ideal local cast for this "Cabaret."

"It's a pleasure to work with this cast," Robert says. "Katie is fantastic. Will is wonderful. They all work so well together."

Joe Wehunt leads a five-member band for the Warehouse's "Cabaret," and April Schaeffer is the choreographer.

Theater-goers should note that "Cabaret" is for mature audiences only.

The theater is hosting three events associated with the production, including a forum titled "Appetite for Distraction: Staying Vigilant in the Digital Age" (Wednesday, 6 to 7:30 p.m.); pre-show talks on Jan. 29 and Feb. 2 (30 minutes before the show); and a talkback discussion following the show on Jan. 29.

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