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Free To Dream – The Songs Of Katsaros And Schermerhorn

By: *Joel Benjamin*



Karen Mason

The iconic and beloved New York Pops got a lot of moral and artistic support—and hopefully some filthy lucre—for its music education programs at Joe's Pub where they presented *Free To Dream – The Songs of Katsaros and Schermerhorn*, starring five Broadway headliners, all in great form. The Pops' education programs bring the techniques and love of classical and other musical forms to schools throughout the City.

Doug Katsaros, the composer of the songwriting duo, led the Dream Band and also, with Elise Morris and Margaret Dorn, performed as the Dream Band Singers who added vocal heft and harmony to the guest artists Liz Callaway, Stephanie D'Abruzzo, Karen Mason, Anthony Rapp and John Tartaglia, all esteemed Broadway veterans.

Free to Dream, a sixteen-song cycle, takes place on a July 4th "beneath a summer sky" and tells the all-American story of people in love, in despair, yet ever hopeful, revealing their inner stories while the Country celebrates the holiday. The songs alternate between patriotic pop anthems and quiet, internal stories. "It's All

About Tonight" and "Free & Independent," sung by the Dream Band Singers were two upbeat songs, performed in front of a series of images of fireworks and landscapes projected on a huge TV screen. These accompanying background images varied between portraiture and more generic images of waves, flowers and sky.

Liz Callaway, Stephanie D'Abruzzo & Anthony Rapp sang a quietly rousing ballad "Beneath a Summer Sky" celebrating heroes followed by "It's About Us" a sad rumination on a lost relationship sung by Anthony Rapp and the nostalgic "Liberty Diner" sung by John Tartaglia, telling of an old-fashioned restaurant/neighborhood gathering spot. Doug Katsaros told the bittersweet story of "Charlie and Gladys" and Karen Mason skillfully probed the woes of a lonely wife in "Empty Shell."

After a series of personal vignettes, came "Independence Day Swing" an upbeat march sung by Mr. Tartaglia & Ms. D'Abruzzo and an eloquent "Gift of Light" about the power and meaning of the Statue of Liberty sung by Mr. Mason & Elise Morris. The Camp Broadway Kids scooted out to sing the title song, "Free to Dream" along with Ms. Callaway, leading to the rousing finale songs, "So Many Roads" and "Sing Another Day."



Anthony Rapp
Photo credit is Johanna Weber.

Despite what must have been scant rehearsal time—most lyrics were read off the music—the performers were all terrific, even playing around with each other the way only professionals can. The eight-member Dream Band occasionally enthusiastically overwhelmed the singers who, nevertheless, gave thoroughly professional and richly textured performances. The New York Pops musical director, Steven Reineke, was a genial host.

The two most important revelations of this energetic and uplifting program were that Doug Katsaros and William Schermerhorn are great song writers with a terrific future, and that the New York Pops and its education mission deserve all the attention and funding it they can muster.

FREE TO DREAM – THE SONGS OF KATSAROS AND SCHERMERHORN

Presented by the New York Pops

Joe's Pub at the New York Shakespeare Festival

Lafayette Ave.

New York, NY

Monday, August 2nd, 2010 at 7:00 & 9:30 pm

Information: Joe's Pub – <http://www.joespub.com> or 212-967-7555; New York Pops – <http://www.newyorkpops.org>



Stephanie D'Abruzzo and Liz Callaway



John Tartaglia and Stephanie D'Abruzzo