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Soul Shadows: Bogue and Hall

Judy Barrat · Friday, March 16th, 2018

It's been a couple of years since Mary Bogue ("Mama Bogue," as Hall refers to her) took Claude Hall under her wing. Under such fine tutelage, Hall has blossomed into an absolute vocal peacock and this much anticipated show did not disappoint.

Following an inspired orchestral overture of "The Shadow of Your Smile" by some of L.A.'s most consistently superb musicians (Karen Hernandez/piano, Dori Amarilio/Guitar, Michael Saucier/bass, Mark San Felipo/drums and Nolan Shaheed/trumpet), Ms. Hall's voice from offstage dramatically filled the room with this poem by Sofiya Turin, in part: "In my soul burns an ember, A solitary flame, A past long ago forgotten... A trace of what's not shown, The places where I've come from, The directions in which I've grown, Soul Shadows," which set the mood for what was to come, or so we thought.

As their names were announced the ladies took the stage, hilariously teasing each other about their significantly disparate physicality, with no lack of bawdy innuendo (Hall, a tall, statuesque darkish-skinned Haitian lady while Bogue is comparatively short, light-skinned and ample-bodied). They continued by comically pointing out the few things they could see in the unlit room, a glittery dress or sparkling bauble, as they segued into a fun and bluesy duet of Lillian Green's "In the Dark." The obvious mutual admiration and affection between these two women created a continuous atmosphere of delight. Claude turned the stage over to Mary who proceeded to pour her heart and soul into absolutely spellbinding renditions of "Mood Indigo" (Irving Mills/Duke Ellington) and "How Can You Mend A Broken Heart" (Robin and Barry Gibb), then perpetuated the idea of leaving the shadows behind for a brighter life, with Dolly Parton's "Sneakin' Around With You."

Claude returned to the stage and delivered a stunningly beautiful interpretation of Leonard Cohen's poetic "Suzanne," followed by a rousing version of Bill Withers' "Grandma's Hands" at the end of which she engaged in some impressive vocal calisthenics with Shaheed's trumpet to the surprise and pleasure of the packed house. Hall emotionally concluded her first solo set with the heartbreaking "My Mother Had a Brother" (George Michael), then lifted the mood with a bit more comical bantering with Bogue before turning the stage back to her for her very passionately delivered "Soul Shadows" (Joe Sample/Will Jennings), "Sack Full of Dreams" (Gary McFarland/Louis Savary) and Nellie Lutcher's "Kinda Blue and Low."

Before inviting Claude back to the stage, Mary presented, especially to her man Peter Leavy who was about to return to NYC, a gorgeous heart-charged mash up of "Ain't No Sunshine" (Bill

Withers)/"Here Comes the Sun"(George Harrison)/"You Are My Sunshine" (Jimmie Davis/Charles Mitchell). Claude began her next solo set with the gorgeous self-penned "August Afternoon," arranged by Mike Farrell, which was an audience favorite, and continued on with Irving Berlin's "This Year's Kisses," Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Quiet Nights" and an intensely powerful "Four Women" (Nina Simone) magnificently sung and, yes, acted out in a further revelation of Halls immensely burgeoning talent.

These two multi-talented ladies closed the show with a heartwarming duet of "The Shadow of Your Smile". All songs, with the exception of Hall's August Afternoon, were brilliantly arranged by Steve Rawlins. Despite the fact that Mary has had some tough mountains to climb recently, she remains a much loved and exciting force in the L.A. cabaret scene and Claude Hall with her charismatic persona and unique vocals, is well on her way. Stay tuned.

Reviewed at Upstairs at Vitello's, Los Angeles, CA March 9, 2018

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