



Mark Kitanga's

# Boba Cabaret Revue




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*Boba Cabaret Revue is a newsletter highlighting the shows and performers at the Boba Cabaret in Las Cruces, New Mexico. For more information, please contact Mark Kitanga at [mkitanga@gmail.com](mailto:mkitanga@gmail.com)*

## 50 Years in 50 Minutes By Mark Kitanga

Of the nearly two dozen musical reviews the Boba Cabaret has offered, none have been based on the work of a single performer. So it was with great pleasure that August's production centered around a 20th Century legend of the stage, screen, and airwaves with *The Danny Kaye Show*.

Director Charles LeCocq, Lisa Clark, Ida Holguin, William Zimmerman, Steve Helmreich, and Robert Randall were the guides on this hilarious tour of the timeless music, costumes, choreography, and comedy bits of his distinguished career.



"It's really fun to see the audience members who remember Danny Kaye from earlier in their lives," Lisa said. "They really seem to come alive, singing along and laughing as if they're kids again."

BCR sat down with a very pleased Charles to get his thoughts on the show and the brilliance of the performers in the local artistic community.

*Why Danny Kaye for your Boba directorial debut, and how did you go about casting?*

I've been a fan of Danny Kaye from watching "The Court Jester" over and over as a kid. As I got older, he was my biggest inspiration as an actor. A year ago I starred in a musical and based my character on Danny Kaye and his charming, zany characters.



Since then, I've been looking for an opportunity to do a tribute to him. I immersed myself in his classic films and songs until I had his mannerisms and style down. But I never wanted to do the show alone, or just mimic him. I wanted to bring together talented performers from different backgrounds to show how universal and timeless Danny's performances are. So I brought Ida

in because of her wonderfully trained, beautiful voice. I brought in Lisa, who could help the rest of us to look classy while moving our feet. I brought in William because I knew he would be terrific at showing people how enjoyable and funny these routines still are. Steve and Robbie are wonderful musicians and pianists who amaze me with their skills. I'm really proud to be working with all these people, and they are fantastic in the show!

*Tell us about a challenge that you were able to overcome as director?*

Danny Kaye's wife, Sylvia Fine, was a genius in her own right and wrote the lyrics to most of Danny's films. Unfortunately, none of her work has ever been officially transcribed and put into music books. Megan McQueen [and I] couldn't find a single piece of sheet music for us to use from Sylvia's collection. However, I underestimated our pianist Steve, who listened to a recording and watched a YouTube clip, and then showed up at the next rehearsal with complete sheet music he had transcribed on his own. I told you these people are talented!

*How did this experience compare with your work as the head of the theater program at LCHS?*



I love working with the Cruces High students. They have more energy and dedication than any group I've ever worked with, and they have so much talent and potential. But in every great performance from one of my students, and I don't mean this to sound conceited, I see my own training, my own techniques, passed on to them. Most of them have only had one acting teacher (me!), so it's nice on occasion to work with experts who bring skills and talents to the table that are [outside of] my areas of expertise. I've learned so much from the cast of this Boba show, and as their director I've enjoyed working with such uniquely talented people to bring a show together.



## Cabaret Bio

The Boba Cabaret is the brain child of Boba Café owner Chris Waggoner. Chris had been involved in the local musical theatre scene and came up with the concept for a “theatre in the round.”

The first question was where to put the new theatre, since there was obviously no space inside the café. Chris’s first thought was to convert the existing patio outside the café into a very small theatre. So, in November of 2007, planning began and initial designs were drawn up. Fortunately, in February of 2008 the adjacent retail space became available, allowing the café to keep its very nice patio.

The design team of regionally known Faux design artist Newman Peyton went right to work on the cabaret. It was also at this time that the long-anticipated beer and wine license was granted to the café. Chris conceived the room and Newman did the design work for what you see here.

This room is very whimsical on purpose. From the Roswellian alien space floor design, the Fender Guitar Pick custom concrete tabletops by Tad Davis, to the UFO wine racks, the cabaret is a place brimming with imagination and creativity. Chris’s hope is that patrons feel and see the magic in the room while enjoying the performances.



## A Trip Down Memory Lane

The first show performed at the Boba Cabaret was “A Night In The Life of Stephen Sondheim” and opened in June of 2008. The musical review, directed by Carrie Klofach, featured Ian Sidden, Chris Waggoner, Robert Randall, Cindy Pitts, Lauren Fajardo, and Carrie. The show had three consecutive sold-out performances.

Other musical reviews include “The Mystical Worlds of Lerner and Loewe,” “Rodgers and Hammerstein: Making Headlines,” “Dreamcatcher,” “13 Going on 17,” “Razzama-jazz,” “Happy Holidays,” “Love and Marriage,” “Forget Your Troubles,” “The Music of Andrew Lloyd Webber,” “Cirque de la Vie,” “Homeward Bound,” “The Musical of Musicals: The Musical,” “Kick Up Your Heels,” “The Waiters Guide To Love,” “LOL,” “‘Til the Fat Lady Sings,” and “Yee Haw.”

The cabaret has also hosted several concert performances, featuring guitarist Jake Mossman, Diffusion Sax Quartet, The We Three Trio, Bob Diven, Shawn Robinson, Shane Stewart, Almitri & Bennett, Yolanda Martinez & Desert Wind, and Chain of Fools.

Other notable performers include Megan McQueen, Janet Mazdra, Tom and Karen Warren, Chris Ripple, Carlos Saucedo, Ginny May, David Cunnif, Miguel Torres, Kristin Connor, Thea Chip, Ryan Thorpe, Bob Burns, Dr. Bill Clark, Clint Bellows, Ila McCoy, Shannon Ellison, Leslie Kowalski, Marco Jimenez, Mike Cook, Dave Edwards, Amanda Husson, Anthony Kumpf, Ashley Foster, Margie Brouhard, Lisa Clark, Charles LeCocq, Corey Dlask, Trey LaFleur, Gail Wheeler, Brandon Brown, Steve Helmreich, Jonathon Gallegos, Dan Molloy, Della Bustamante, the students of Alma d’arte Charter High School, and its original bartender and master of ceremony, Justin Raines.

## Spotlight



### Almitri & Bennett

The Boba Cabaret eagerly welcomed the return of this guitar/percussion duo from Ciudad Juárez for one savory weekend in late June. These musical chefs rustled up a hearty smorgasbord of eclectic rhythms and cross-cultural beats to audiences hungry for a big helping of international auditory flavor. Afterwards, the satisfied crowds weren’t left with any room for dessert.

But to fulfill all those insatiable appetites, both artists took distinct approaches. Though Almitri’s only utensil was his guitar, he put on a culinary clinic, bouncing from classical to blues to flamenco and everything in between.

Not to be outdone, Bennett unveiled a buffet of percussion instruments, including an Afro-Brazilian atabaque, Afro-Caribbean shekere, Peruvian cajón, African cabasa, and Brazilian pandeiro, as well as a rain drum, slit drum, and singing bowl. Bon appétit!

Their two unique styles combined to form a mouthwatering medley of jazz, mambo, ragtime, bossa nova, blues, and cumbia for a supremely delicious feast of sound.



# The Darkness and The Light

By Mark Kitanga

Why are stars so fascinating? No other objects in space garner the appreciation that these massive, luminous balls of plasma held together by gravity do. Perhaps it's their infinite volume, enduring longevity, and sparkling beauty. That, or maybe because those kinds of cornball lines are the only shot nerdy guys have at impressing attractive women. Either way, when Galileo enhanced the telescope in the early 17th Century, little did he know the Pandora's box of star worship he was opening.



Take the entertainment industry. The Hollywood Walk of Fame is lined with thousands of stars. Two of the most popular studio franchises of all-time have the term in their names (*Trek* and *Wars*). And the biggest video game character of all-time, Mario, even becomes **invincible** when he touches them.

But stars have done much more than just dazzle our visual senses. They have also been a source of curiosity and inspiration to performers for centuries. And after the Boba Cabaret's July performance, *Starry, Starry Night*, it's clear director Megan McQueen has also been spellbound by those twinkling lights from above.

"[The show] is a tapestry of tunes tied together with the theme of stars," she said. "Mostly the songs reference stars in the celestial sense, which inspires the look and feel of this dreamy show."

Indeed, the production deftly highlighted the emotions that stars often evoke within each of us, making it both entertaining and relatable. To set the mood, a huge canvas of van Gogh's "Starry Night" anchored the stage background. Several strings of single-color Christmas lights were strewn carefully above the stage lights and complemented the music beautifully.

Accompanying audiences on this ethereal trip were Thea Chip



(*Earth Angels*), Ginny May (*LOL*), Eric Tarin (*Cirque de la Vie*), and Boba newcomers James and Victoria Gier.

"It was definitely a different experience performing in such an intimate venue, but we had a great time!" Victoria gushed.

Both are teachers, have performed with Doña Ana Lyric Opera and, hold degrees from NMSU's music program. James is also a singer/songwriter and performs locally. In fact, one of his original songs actually played a big part in the concept for this show.

"Megan called James up one day and said that she was listening

to his song, 'She Shines,' and had this idea of doing a show," Victoria explained. "So we all started coming up with different songs that [referenced] stars and Megan put it all together."

*Starry, Starry Night* featured 15 sublime ballads, as well as several piano solos of Mozart's variations on "Ah! Vous dirai-je, Maman" (aka "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star") interspersed between songs by the always ubiquitous Ginny.



Thea covered songs from popular musicals ("You Are My Lucky Star," "Lost in the Stars"), Victoria crooned some heartfelt selections ("Like a Star," "I Only Have Eyes for You"), and the whole cast was in on the opening and closing numbers ("Good Morning Starshine," "In the Still of the Night"). There were even some Disney classics, with a solo by Eric (*Peter Pan's* "Second Star to the Right") followed by the girls (*Pinocchio's* "When You Wish Upon a Star").

Unlike most Boba performances, this one was almost entirely free of dialogue, but there were still plenty of moments of levity.

"There was definitely a lot less interaction with the audience," Thea noted, "but this was the first show I've been in where the audience was ready for the sing-along. Programs in hand, sitting up, and just waiting to sing. It was awesome!"



She would be referring to the lyrics to AB-BA's "Fernando," which were listed within the show's programs so patrons could participate in the classic Boba sing-along.

And of course...props. During a playful rendition of the Oscar-winning "Swing on a Star," Victoria donned a cow hat, Eric a pig hat, Thea a fish hat, and all three were fitted with a monkey sock puppet over one hand and a magic wand in the other.

But the star of the show was the versatile James. He went contemporary with Coldplay's "Yellow," opera with "Stars" from *Les Miserables*, quiet acoustic with "Vincent," the tribute to the Dutch painter, and even personal with "She Shines," a song he penned.

"He's a wonderful local talent," said Thea, who dueted with James for his song. "And I really liked that we were able to feature one of his originals, to which our audiences responded very well."

Outside of Boba, in Las Cruces, and for most of the country, excessive light pollution has made it virtually impossible to see the night sky in all its majestic glory. But inside the cabaret, for a few weekends in July, some lucky locals were able to experience a glimpse at the magic and wonder stars can still hold over us.

## Cabaret Dining 101

The best thing about eating at Boba Cabaret is that you can enjoy everything on the Boba Café regular menu, plus more!

That means all the appetizers, soups, salads, and sandwiches that have made Boba Café such a popular lunch and dinner destination are also available during Dinner Theatre.

In addition, there are some specials offered exclusively for Boba Cabaret patrons.

First, a wide variety of sushi rolls can be ordered as appetizers, such as the california, tempura shrimp, and New Mexico rolls.

For dinner entrées, the delicious Chinese vegetable stir-fry is the special and a very popular dish. It comes with your choice of beef, chicken, or shrimp with a medley of stir-fry vegetables sautéed in your choice of sauces: kung pao (spicy), plum (sweet), or oriental (regular), and steamed white rice.

Boba Cabaret also offers a wide variety of wines by the glass or bottle, from brands like Kendall Jackson, Avalon, and Kenwood Reserve. Our house red (Black Box merlot or cabernet sauvignon) and white (Black Box chardonnay) wines are also available by carafe in liter or half-liter sizes.

Our bottled beer collection ranges from the normal domestics (Bud, Miller, Coors) to common regional selections (Corona, Tecate, Negro Modelo) to premiums (Newcastle, Anchor Steam, Sierra Nevada). On draft we offer Michelob Ultra and Blue Moon.

Ordering at Dinner Theatre is simple. For each ticket, patrons get one beverage and one entrée. For appetizers, it's one for every two people. If a party has an odd number of people, round up. For example, for a party of three, two appetizers are included.

Of course, additional food and beverage items are available à la carte for Dinner Theatre, as are all items ordered at the Cocktail Show.

## COMING SOON...

*"Dreamin' with The Mamas & The Papas"*  
Sep. 10-11, 17-18

Hop in for a nostalgic road trip to the peace and love of sunny California with this musical tribute to the iconic '60s folk rock band.

Director Megan McQueen, Della Bustamante (*Yee Haw*), Philip Alvarez (*Homeward Bound*), and Ian Neff (*Cirque de la Vie*) will be joined by Irving Torres on guitar and Brandon Brown on drums to sing some groovy tunes and invoke the era's happy vibes.

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*"Earth Angels"*  
Oct. 1-2, 8-9, 15-16

One year removed from their first public performance, this female foursome will be making their triumphant return to the Boba Cabaret stage with all the soul, sass, and shenanigans audiences loved.

Carrie Klofach, Thea Chip, Ginny May, and director Megan McQueen will be harmonizing to a brand new set of all your favorite pop and R&B classics from the '50s and '60s.



**Boba Café**  
**1900 S. Espina St.**  
**Suite #8**  
**575.647.5900**  
**bobacafelc.com**

## Details, Details

Boba Cabaret takes place in the room adjacent to Boba Café's main room. Shows are Friday and Saturday nights on most weekends, usually with two performances each night.

Dinner Theatre costs \$27.50 per person and covers the show admission, appetizer (one per two people), dinner entrée, beverage (beer/wine included), and gratuity.

Seating begins at 6 pm, and it is HIGHLY recommended you arrive at that time so that dinner can be served as quickly as possible. The show begins promptly at 7 pm and once it starts, service will no longer be available.

The Cocktail Show costs \$10 per person and only covers the show admission. Appetizers and beverages are available à la carte.

Seating begins at 8:15 pm, and it is HIGHLY recommended you arrive at that time as the show begins promptly at 8:30 pm. As with Dinner Theatre, once the show begins service will no longer be available.

After each show, servers will deliver a bill to patrons who have purchased items that are not included in the admission price.

Reservations are not required but are highly recommended, as shows can sell out fast and tickets are issued on a first come, first serve basis.

If a show is not sold out, walk-ins are acceptable, but, as with reservations, it is HIGHLY recommended you arrive at the applicable seating time.

Upon arrival at the café, please check-in at the front register to receive a ticket so that you are directed to the proper table once seating begins.

Reservations can be made in person at Boba Café or by calling (575) 647-5900.

We look forward to seeing you at the next Boba Cabaret show. And don't forget to tell everyone about the best dining and entertainment value in southern New Mexico.