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THE BALLAD OF AN UNHAPPY CAFÉ

I'm calling you: this heartrending melody by Bob Telson in the Percy Adlon film in 1987 is still in our memory. The story of this improbable meeting with Jasmin from Bavaria and Brenda the Afro-American owner of the Bagdad Café is back. This time on stage: at the Paris Mogador Theatre. And it's still magic all the way...

One may have to hurry. The show is due to end on November 5. It would be a pity not to see Bagdad Café the Musical. Not Bagdad Café 2 or the return of or some kind of a follow up set up for profits. Percy Adlon is not this kind of man.

This tale, capable of making a tough cookie cry, as a musical, with a real orchestra, real singers, and authentic hip hop dancing choreographed by Bianca Li is a completely new work. The audience will find the same spellbound atmosphere from the movie that won an Oscar in its time.

Those who have seen it, and they were numerous at the time, never forgot this Bavarian woman, Jasmin Munchstettner, a role that revealed the German actor Mariane Sagebrecht. Nor this brave desert housewife, Brenda, played by Jevetta Steele who sang a song that became a world hit. She is the one who picks up the role, almost 20 years later at the Theatre Mogador. A few years on, and a few pounds heavier, but with a voice full of emotion that left no one at the première, last Tuesday, unmoved.

Needless to say that Sissi Staudinger alias Jasmin Munschstettner has no reason to be envious of Mariane Sagebrecht. What's more, she sings divinely, and she dances as well. All other members of the cast have the know-how made in the USA, that spontaneity, and freshness as a bonus. The setting is simple: a painted canvas, a miniature train running across the horizon, a bar and a few chairs and there we are in the middle of nowhere, at the deep end of the American desert.

In this sad café called Bagdad, the surrealistic arrival of the fat lady in a Bavarian costume will transform it into the inn of happiness. There lives: a crazy painter, played at Mogador by John Margolis with no less talent than Jack Palance in the movie, Brenda's kids, their pals, and the regulars of the place who dance and sing marvellously as a true musical requires. Some tunes, as "Calling You" in its day, could become hits. All things considered, as is expressed by one of the characters in Bagdad Café: too much harmony. Obviously, nothing is perfect.

Charles Danna