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## Amanda King & T. Oliver Reid

### An Intimate Affair: A Man, A Woman & the American Songbook

The Metropolitan Room

New York, NY

Amanda King and T. Oliver Reid met a year ago and were drawn to each other's vocal style. An Intimate Affair is broken up into a solo set for each performer with duets bridging and closing the evening. It offers American Songbook selections including cabaret, pop, a show tune, and jazz. T. Oliver Reid's describes his set as "...love in a big city, or Boys Are Stupid." "The Best is Yet to Come" (Cy Coleman, Carolyn Leigh) he begins hopefully. It's a breezy, "Rat-Pack" arrangement. "Remember when you were 22?" he asks. "Let's Fall in Love" (Harold Arlen/Ted Koehler) and "How Long Has This Been Going On?" (George and Ira Gershwin) follow. Curiously neither song is sung with a smile, either vocally or facially. Lyrics seem at odds with the performance. We're on a relationship path. "As Long as He Needs Me" (Lionel Bart from the show, Oliver) has appropriate gravitas. Reid is the only singer I know who can stage-whisper a trill. Three love songs follow expressing surprise, insecurity and emotional dislocation. Presentation makes them feel similar. With funkier arrangements of "Ill Wind" (Harold Arlen/Ted Koehler) and "Feeling Good" (Anthony Newley/Leslie Bricusse), Reid loosens up and engages the audience. He moves around the stage, plays with phrasing and acts more at home.

Amanda King is a big lady with a big beautiful, lush voice. She seems lit from within, warmth and vivacity pouring out of her as naturally as breathing. Soul, swing, and jazz numbers are offered with elegant simplicity whether pumped up or poured like syrup. Her arms move only when propelled by the necessity of expression. "Green Dolphin Street" (Bronislau Kaper/Ned Washington), "Sophisticated Lady" (Duke Ellington/Billy Strayhorn with unearthed 1935 lyrics, not the original 1933 ones), and "Round Midnight" (Thelonious Monk/Bernie Hanighen) are among those classics all ably served. Phrases arch up and then down, circle, draw back and pause with control and finesse. The lesser known "Midnight Swinger" (Hank Jones), introduced by a personal story, puts a twinkle in her eye and ironic spin in her tone. An up tempo, mambo rendition of Cole Porter's "Love for Sale" lets her roll the word (love) around her tongue as if tasting it.

When King and Reid duet, they play off one another with great affection and looseness. "She's wearing stilts," he quips. "This is a work of art, right here, these 4-inch heels and this ass," she retorts with a grin. "Satin Doll" (Duke Ellington/Billy Strayhorn/Johnny Mercer), replete with ample "switcherooni," is bouncy and flirty. A great arrangement of the "very silly" Dorothy Fields/Jimmy McHugh song, "Diga Diga Doo" becomes open forum for infectious vocal and instrumental riffing. Closing with a cheery, animated, swinging version of "Love is Here to Stay" (George and Ira Gershwin), the two leave an audience feeling good.

**Alix Cohen**

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