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Quick Takes

By Jules Becker

Few local singers captivate an audience as quickly and convincingly as Will McMillan can. Possessing both a lyrical voice and a naturally winning personality, McMillan did just that last June when he debuted a richly affecting new cabaret show called *Will Loves Steve* at Boston's Scullers Jazz Club.

The smart title alludes not only to the singer's partner of 14 years named Stephen but also to a diverse line-up of composers ranging from Stephen Foster and Stevie Wonder to Stephen Schwartz and Stephen Sondheim.

Accompanied handily by pianist Doug Hammer, McMillan delivered vivid show tunes and rarely heard songs with equal power and precision.

Highlights included a sharp study in contrast of the Cat Stevens' pop hit "Wild World" (now named Yusef Islam and born Stephen Georgiou) and the *Sweeney Todd* love song "Johanna" as well as a moving rendition of the anthem-like number "Love Who You Love" from the Off-Broadway hit musical *A Man Of No Importance* (co-composed by Stephen Flaherty). Best of all was his moving delivery, complete with impeccable phrasing, of the stunning song "Connected" by Steve Schalklin from the composer's Off-Broadway musical *The Last Session*.

McMillan presents his repertoire with insightful brief introductions à la Michael Feinstein and a beguilingly intimate approach all his own.

Although the songlist may sometimes include a selection from a so-so musical like *Suessical* (Flaherty) and a rare straining high note (on Wonder's "Overjoyed"), the memorably eclectic concert has enough first-rate material to please the most demanding fans.

Expect to love Will as much as the Steves.

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