

First night reviews

Theatre

La Cage aux Folles

Opera

Partenope

Theatre

Hay Fever

Cabaret

Melinda Hughes

Dance

Rosalind

Concert

Yamato

Cabaret

Melinda Hughes

Crazy Coqs, W1



A song about selfies? Really? If there's one aspect of modern life that has been done to death by satirists, you would think it's our appetite for documenting every detail of our social life. Melinda Hughes, though, is so clever that she can trick us into thinking that the smartphone has just been invented.

An opera singer who is turning herself into a seasoned cabaret diva, Hughes has a happy knack of updating Noël Coward's wit for a 21st-century audience. She and her co-writer and musical director, Jeremy Limb (who muttered the occasional droll aside from the piano stool), inhabit a rarefied world of Sloanes and oligarchs and owners of country piles who don't appear to have changed much since the days of Evelyn Waugh.

I'm Going to Meet Prince Harry fused bright young things with *Made in Chelsea*. There was a transatlantic edge to the humour too. *Britannia Waives the Rules* cleverly revisited the age-old difference between American English and the home-grown variety. Hughes's soprano may not be the warmest of instruments — that classical training was never too far from the surface — but her precise diction ensured that every pun hit the mark.

She fired a few barbs at Donald Trump as well. An easy target, of course, but *Tweets in the Night* added a presidential gloss to the Harold Arlen-Johnny Mercer standard. Interspersed through the show, the extracts from Melania Trump's diary were slightly more hit-and-miss, although Hughes got the voice and the arched eyebrows just right.

The bassist Robert Rickenberg and the drummer Jamie Fisher were Limb's adept foils. A show that ended all too quickly took a darker turn on a bilingual reading of *Das Lila Lied*, the defiant gay anthem from the Weimar era. *If You're Gonna Go, Go . . .* brought us back to the present with a gloriously over-the-top power ballad take on Brexit.

Clive Davis