

# CABARETSCENES

## Cyrille Aimée

Birdland  
New York, NY

By Lynn DiMenna  
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With Shirley Temple curls, a wardrobe right out of a Minnie Mouse comic strip and, dare I say, the musicality of an Ella Fitzgerald or Mel Tormé, Cyrille Aimée has quickly established herself as a contender on the New York jazz scene.

Aimée began her five-night run of sold-out/standing "O" performances (as reported by radio's Jonathan Schwartz and her pianist) at Birdland accompanied by her own Surreal Band, including über-talented pianist Assaf Gleizner,

Spencer Murphy on bass, Dan McGuinness on drums, Matt Simons on tenor sax, Dylan Canterbury on trumpet and Django Reinhardt's grandson, David, on guitar and ended it with a performance backed the super-tight Birdland house band featuring Jon Davis on piano, Paul Gil on bass, John Hart on guitar and Carmen Intorre on drums.

No matter the ensemble, Aimée was totally in charge and up to the task and, on her final night, the audience responded with the same enthusiasm she had reportedly received during the entire run. Her adorable, playful persona is matched perfectly by a serious, internationally-flavored musical presence that seems to make all the right stylistic choices spontaneously and effortlessly.

Just 27 years old and having graduated summa cum laude from SUNY Purchase's Music Program, she has already won first place in the Montreux Jazz Competition in 2009. She was also one of three finalists in the prestigious Thelonious Monk Vocal Competition in 2010, winning the praises of musicians and singers alike.

She opened with "They Can't Take That Away from Me" and included several other standards that instantly revealed good taste and sophistication. Johnny Burke and Jimmy Van Heusen's "It Could Happen to You," Irving Berlin's "Blue Skies," "I Wish You Love" ("Que reste-t-il de nos amours?" in French) and Antonio Carlos Jobim/Alonzo de Oliveria/Ray Gilbert's "Dindi" were all deftly handled. However, it was her signature reading of "Polka Dots and Moonbeams" that cemented her place, for me, as a bona fide "rising star." She articulated the lyrics, using her warm, sometimes smoky alto with phrasing that clarified the meaning and made the song her own. An inventive and totally exhilarating duet with the Oscar Pettiford bass solo called "Tricotism" displayed her exceptional scatting skills and also worked to put her in a class with many of the greats.

She'll be back at Birdland for four Sundays in April...don't miss her!