

# ARTS & LITERATURE

## A Jewish/Japanese holiday show



poverished in refugee camps in places as far-flung as Haiti and Burma.

Now at San Francisco's NO-Hspace, under Theatre of Yugen auspices, his current show, the one featuring that bowing penguin, is called *Mr. YooWho's Holiday*. In it, Cohen's sometimes befuddled, sometimes wily alter-ego, Mr. YooWho, has gone on a trip, but plane cancellations and lost luggage have stranded him, in Japan it seems, with a serving woman skillfully played by Jubilith Moore in a Noh/Kabuki style.

One of the pleasures of the show is watching the contrast between the two performing modes, Moore's carefully controlled movements set against Cohen's loosey-goosey physical flights of fancy: nigiri sushi meets rubber chicken.

Cohen is a slim, balding man with unruly fringes of hair poking out either side of his head. His Mr. YooWho is geeky-looking but he has a sweetness about him, and a smartness, too. Secretly he's no dope, and he deftly defeats the roadblocks in his life by dancing around them, or just jumping over.

He's clown, magician, acrobat, juggler and terpsichorean all rolled into one, and he shares

## Keeping Faith at the Rrazz Room

Review by  
Robert Lee Hall

In 1955 she was the house singer at the Hungry i, where then-unknowns like Mort Sahl, Woody Allen and Barbra Streisand were taking baby steps into show biz. Last week, 55 years later, she held forth at San Francisco's Rrazz Room with a grandmotherly regality, and if her audience sensed it was in the presence of musical royalty, it paid homage gladly.

The queen onstage **Vocalist Faith Winthrop** appeared last week at the Rrazz Room in San Francisco. which she wore, slightly lopsidedly, with a smile.

The "she" in question is Faith Winthrop who, though she didn't grow up in the Bay Area, has made it her home for decades. Like Geoff Hoyle and other talented drop-ins, she's become one of our local treasures.

And she's still going strong, teaching at Mills College, giving private lessons on how to shape a song, doing gigs. Her



with comfortable authority, and she sang with authority. She lent her relaxed, jazz-inflected style to *At the Mercy of Mercer*, a show dedicated to the music of Johnny Mercer, with a nod to one of her influences, another Mercer: Mabel.

And how terrific to be reminded of Mercer's contribution to the Great American Songbook. He wrote, among many classics, "Something's Gotta Give," "Accentuate the Positive," "Unchained Melody,"

*Photo by Sheila Berotti*  
**Jubilith Moore (left) and Moshe Cohen star in the two-person show, *Mr. YooWho's Holiday* playing at the NOHspace in San Francisco through January 2.**

*Review by Robert Lee Hall*

Last Friday I applauded a toy penguin.

Right after the penguin bowed.

That's the sort of thing you expect at a Moshe Cohen show. Founder of Clowns without Bor-

ders, the European-born Cohen, who came to the Bay Area in 1979, has been studying and practicing the art of clowning for decades, performing all over the world, giving workshops and fulfilling his desire to bring laughter to the needy and im-

all rolled into one, and he shares the Chaplinesque quality of being invulnerable, despite the travails he faces, He'll always come out on top, and watching him get there is good for us – we smile right along.

So in a series of graceful, funny interludes, Cohen does his thing: hat tricks and juggling, communing ecstatically with a blow-up globe of the earth and dancing with singing tubes of color, bewitching an audience member with squishy red balls that vanish and multiply, and flamenco dancing with orange trash bags.

Let's not forget to pay homage to that heroic little penguin, a wind-up toy that dives off a pile of blocks into a pail of water. Who wouldn't applaud that?

I applaud Cohen, too. Deftly directed by Sheila Berotti, his gentle, funny show plays in San Francisco's the Potrero district on Fridays through Sundays until January 2. For tickets call 1-800-838-3006 or visit [www.brownpapertickets.com](http://www.brownpapertickets.com). For information on Theatre of Yugen visit [www.theatreofyugen.org](http://www.theatreofyugen.org).

shape a song, doing gigs. Her latest appearance, at the Rrazz Room, was pepped up by the Mike Greensill trio, with the added connection to Greensill that she's given a singing lesson or two to his wife and artistic partner, Wesla Whitfield.

She's coached the likes of Paula West, Ben Vereen and Holly Near, too. Influenced by the best – Peggy Lee, Sarah Vaughn, Mel Torme – she warmed up audiences for Billie Holiday and Tony Bennett before going on to warm up audiences all by herself. She made her TV debut on the *Today Show*, has recorded several CDs and is the founding director of Glide Memorial's choir.

By the evidence of her Rrazz Room appearance, she's still going strong, though she joked that at her age she was glad to have been provided a stool to sit on. A pretty, white-haired woman in a trim black suit, she looks like a Jewish aunt who has just cooked up a nice brisket and hopes you'll enjoy it. She took the stage

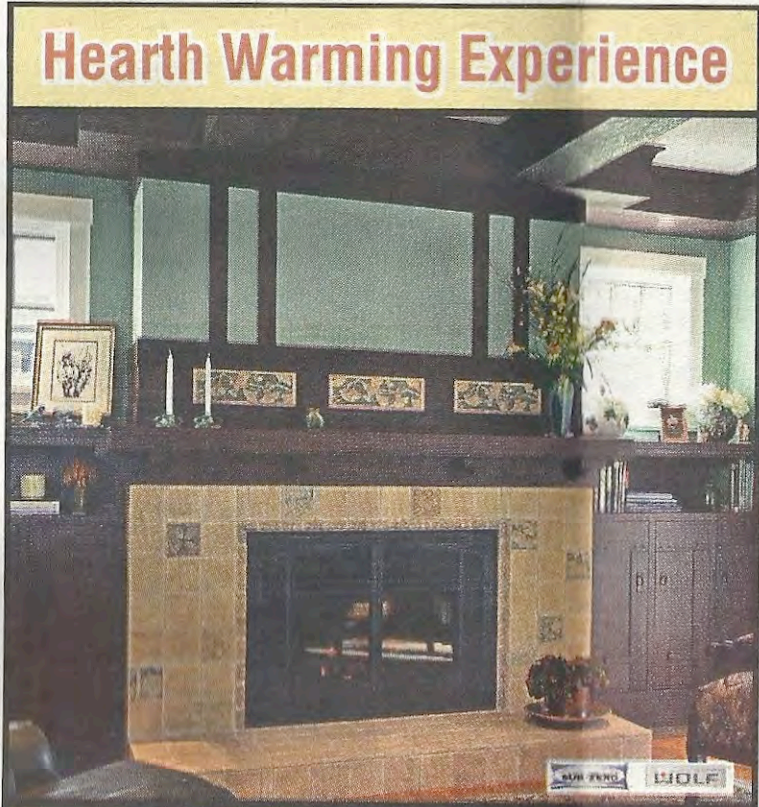
"Gotta Give," "Accentuate the Positive," "Early Autumn," "Hit the Road to Dreamland," "Moon River" and dozens more that have given voice to our experience.

Winthrop is a terrific songwriter as well, and one of the pleasures of her show was her own witty compositions: "It's a Personal Thing," "I'm Way Ahead of the Game," and the very funny "Carnegie Deli," in which she complains that on a revisit to one of the favorite Big Apple eateries from her youth, "There was not a Jew in the joint!"

So-called progress may transform some things, but it hasn't diminished Faith Winthrop.

The Rrazz Room has more talent in store for the holiday season: Kim Nalley, Russ Lorenson, and Bud E. Luv. Martha Reeves, Paula West, and bright young cabaret star Judy Butterfield show up in January.

For tickets and information call 1-800-380-3095 or visit [www.TheRrazzRoom.com](http://www.TheRrazzRoom.com).



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 the Piedmont community*

