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CSO showcases Jazz Chanteuse Dee Daniels

Night of Nostalgia

BY LINDSAY KOOB

The Charleston Symphony began its McCrady's Pops series with a bang last Saturday, treating a fair-sized audience to a delightful evening of swing-era standards from jazz vocalist-extraordinaire Dee Daniels.

The program, entitled *Great Ladies of Swing*, was a tribute to four of our greatest jazz chanteuses: Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, Peggy Lee, and Sarah Vaughan. Given their exalted statures, it wasn't hard to come up with lots of great music.

No sooner had she delivered "There'll Be Some Changes Made," her first number, when she paused to chat with her listeners from the stage — and she soon had us laughing a lot and eating out of her hand.

I kid you not: The lady stood a willowy six-foot-five (in four-inch heels), but she asked us to imagine her as a short, very voluptuous creature with a "blond bob" — even though (as she pointed out) she's black.

She soon had us trained to respond to her questions with resounding choruses of "Yes, Dee."

After all, she had mesmerized us by then, with that fabulous voice of hers. Her vocal foundation is a rich, often breathy alto, but she made it croon, whimper, simper, flirt, cajole, sob, growl, and scream. She indulged her stupefying four-octave range now and then — swooping up into the vocal stratosphere and laying down silky, spine-tingling strings of high notes.

I wish I had room to tell you about all the wonderful, nostalgia-ridden songs she brought to vivid life, but my faves included two Billie Holiday numbers: "God Bless the Child" and a sock-it-to-'em piece called "Gimme a Pigfoot." Ella Fitzgerald treasures included "Summertime," "Got It Bad (And That Ain't Good)." Among the Sarah Vaughan specialties were "Quiet Nights of Quiet Stars" and "Send in the Clowns."

The CSO — her "big band" backup for the evening — did some sweet swinging of its own under resident conductor Scott Terrell. Then there was her terrific combo: Ted Brancato at the piano, with Russell Botten on bass and Greg Williamson on drums.

The only problem was that poor Dee, even while belting it out, nearly got drowned out a few times when the CSO got seriously cranked up. After intermission, I had to move down front, close to one of the PA system's speakers, before I could catch all the lyrics. Otherwise, did we all have the kind of "finger-snappin', toe-tappin', head-bobbin' good time" that she told us to? And do we want her to come back soon?

All together, now: "Yes, Dee." —*Lindsay Koob*