

# CABARET SCENES

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GUIDE

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41  
Cabaret  
REVIEWS





# Brian De Lorenzo

## "I Can Sing Just About Anything I Want"

By Stephen Hanks



**W**hen you watch the youthful Brian De Lorenzo sitting near a grand piano and caressing a song with his strong and soothing tenor voice, it's hard to believe he'll be celebrating forty years of performing. On January 12, the fifty-year-old singer/actor will return to a familiar haunt—Boston's Scullers Jazz Club—with his new show *Brian De Lorenzo and Friends*, accompanied by well-known pianist Bill Duffy.

During his forty years in the business, Brian has performed everywhere from Alaska to Israel and in such venues as New York City's Eighty-Eight's, The Encore, Don't Tell Mama, Pegasus, and Birdland; Piaf's in San Francisco, and the Club Café, the Blacksmith House and Scullers in Boston. He's also appeared at the prestigious Mabel Mercer Cabaret Convention

at The Town Hall in New York, the Chicago Cabaret Conventions at the Park West and the Boston Cabaret Festival. Brian's cabaret shows have been nominated for Independent Reviewers of New England Awards (IRNE) for Best Cabaret Show three years in a row. In 2002, he released his CD *Found Treasures*, which was nominated as Recording of the Year by the Manhattan Association of Cabarets & Clubs (MAC), and in 2001, he was named Performer of the Year with his first-place win in the Adult Solo category at Talent America's 27th Talent of the Year Awards in New York. A fixture on the New England cabaret scene, Brian is a founding member of the

**Above**  
The very  
youthful Brian  
De Lorenzo

**At right**  
Still youthful  
after all these  
years





Boston Association of Cabaret Artists (BACA) and served as the organization's president for four years.

We spoke with Brian in early December during his run as Bob Cratchit in the North Shore Music Theatre's production of *A Christmas Carol*.

**Stephen** You sound very excited about your "40th anniversary" cabaret show at Scullers. What will be the theme of the show?

**Brian** The show will mainly be songs I love to perform, with some new ones thrown in, along with a few duets with two or three friends. I expect to sing a song by David Friedman—he

without stifling a singer's uniqueness.

**SH** What motivated you to want to be an entertainer at such a young age?

**BD** Growing up, we always had music in my house and my father was—and still is—a singer. When I was about nine, my parents noticed my knack for music and bought an old upright piano and I started taking lessons. Soon after that, a community chorus called The Fine Arts Chorale, which is based in my home-

town of Weymouth, Massachusetts, and which special-

writes great anthems—and want to do "On the Street Where You Live" because I found a verse

izes in classical choral music, was looking for boy sopranos to sing the parts of the Pickled Boys in Benjamin Britten's *Saint Nicolas Cantata*. Although I wasn't paid for that concert, I consider that to be my professional debut as a performer. When I was in high school, I sang with the Chorale as a regular chorus member, performing the Verdi *Requiem* and other great choral works.

**SH** What singers and entertainers were your earliest influences?

**BD** I don't think any particular singers influenced me growing up, though I would say that my exposure to many different types of music and many different singers informed me as a musician and as a performer. My earliest exposure to musical theater were the TV presentations of Rodgers & Hammerstein's *Cinderella* with Lesley Ann Warren and *Peter Pan* starring Mary Martin and, of course, annual viewings of *The Wizard of Oz*. Then there

were the films *The Sound of Music* and *Mary Poppins*. I listened to the soundtracks of those two films a LOT! Since I was still a soprano, I could mimic Julie Andrews, including

**These pages (from left)**  
**Brian De Lorenzo**  
**in H.M.S. Pinafore**  
**With Kurt Deutsch**  
**in Merrily We Roll Along**  
**In Misalliance**  
**She Loves Me**  
**Brian and Valeska Cambron**  
**in The Roaring '20s**  
**With Marla Mindelle**  
**in The Wild Party**  
**And with Nicole Kempkie**  
**in A Christmas Carol**

the perfect English accent. The only show album I can remember my parents playing

My earliest record collection included John Denver and Barry Manilow, then Barbra Streisand. I also loved singing along to Karen Carpenter songs from the album *Carpenters: The Singles, 1969-73*. I also listened to my parents' albums—Andy Williams, Glen Campbell, Nat "King" Cole, and especially John Gary. My mother collected Gary's albums, so he was my main exposure to classic pop and the Great American Songbook. In recent years, I've been collecting his albums on CD. I don't think it was until college that I discovered Jane Olivor and early Barbra Streisand (pre-1969). I adore Streisand's carefree singing on her early recordings.

**SH** Being at an age now where most of your contemporaries are more pop/rock singers, what

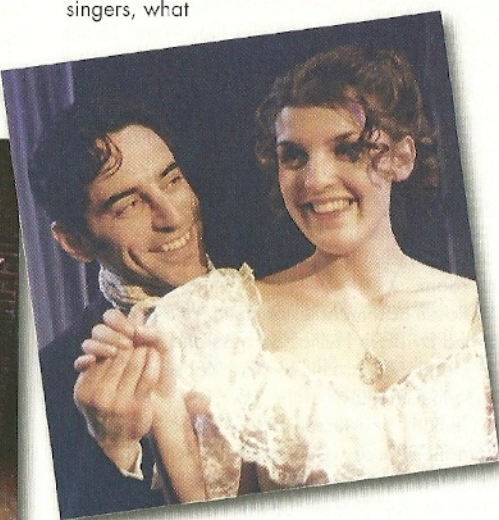
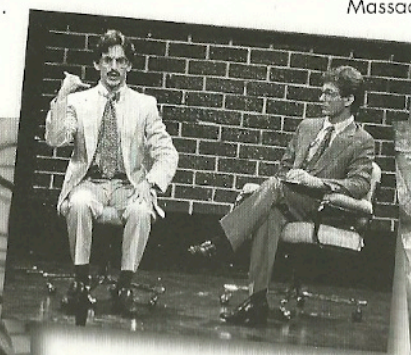
made you gravitate toward the Great American Songbook and musical theater?

**BD** As a voice major in college, I started doing classical art songs and early opera arias and less pop music. When I transferred to SUNY Fredonia, I changed my major to musical theater and started collecting the songbooks of the great American songwriters.

**SH** Do you enjoy cabaret singing more than performing in musical theater and what are the rewards of each?

**BD** I enjoy both for different reasons. In musicals, I get to build and develop a

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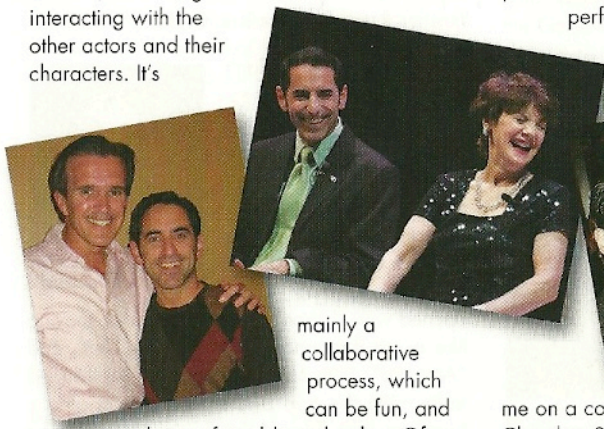


around the house was *Fiddler on the Roof*. I listened to pop radio in the late '60s and '70s and also watched all the TV variety shows including *The Carol Burnett Show* (I always loved it when Bernadette Peters was a guest) and the *Donny and Marie* show. I also watched *The Mike Douglas Show* and *The Merv Griffin Show*, both of which often had Broadway performers and other singers as guests.



**Brian De Lorenzo**  
Continued from page 37

character through rehearsing and performing, not only by my own work and working with the director, but through interacting with the other actors and their characters. It's



mainly a collaborative process, which can be fun, and lasting friendships develop. Of course, I am limited to the lines

**I sang "My Way" accompanied by a 2,500-pipe Mighty Wurlitzer theater organ. How often does one get to do that?!**

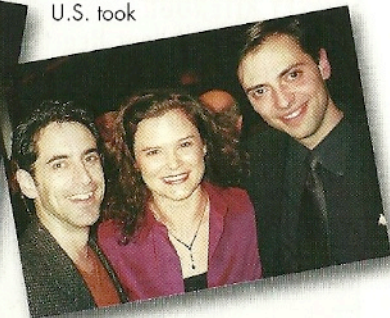
and songs the creators have given my character. In cabaret, although there is the collaboration between the singer and the accompanist, and perhaps other instrumentalists, the process is mostly a solo process—for most of us—so the success or failure of a show rests mostly on the singer.

The great thing about cabaret, though, is that I can sing just about anything I want. If there's a song from a Broadway show that was written for a character I would never get to play on stage—like "Love Can't Happen" from *Grand Hotel* or "I've Never Said I Love You,"—which is on my CD *Found Treasures*—sung by

the waitress in *Dear World*—and I want to sing it, I can sing it. An additional benefit of cabaret is there is no "fourth wall." I can sing directly to individual audience members and make a real connection with them.

**SH** What's the most exciting place you've performed in and what is your favorite performing venue?

**BD** My first trip outside the U.S. took



me on a concert tour of Israel with the Fredonia Chamber Singers. I still remember the amazing feeling at one particular concert in the town of Rehoboth as I was singing the solo part of the spiritual "Ain't Got Time to Die" backed up by the rest of the choir. Everything just clicked and I was on some sort of musical high.

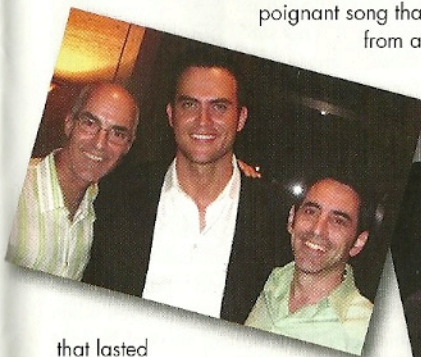
I also have fond memories of a tour of Italy and Spain with the Liz Swados musical *Esther*. After a performance in Palermo, Sicily, a large number of audience members remained in the theater discussing the show well after the curtain came down. It was surprising that they knew the story so well and were interested enough to discuss it, especially since I, as a "guy," didn't even know the story before I had done the show in Boston the previous year.

Recently I did a concert in the beautiful 2,400-seat Hanover Theatre in Worcester, Massachusetts, and not only did I get to sing with my friends, the very talented Kathy St. George—*Fiddler on the Roof* on Broadway—and Maureen Brennan—Tony-nominated for *Candide* on Broadway, I sang "My Way" accompanied by a 2,500-pipe Mighty Wurlitzer theater organ. How often does one get to do that?!

**SH** What compelled you to record the kind of songs you have on *Found Treasures*? Were you just trying to be different and expose unknown

songs to people? Was it tough to find songs that were not only well composed but good for your voice?

**BD** I really enjoy bringing lesser-known songs to audiences, basically saying to them: "You really need to hear this gorgeous, poignant song that came from a show



that lasted only two weeks on Broadway" or "Listen to this great song that was cut from a Broadway show." I also wanted to make a recording that wasn't just a re-hash of songs that everyone had heard before. It was relatively easy to find the songs because I had been collecting them for a while.

I love to go into old music shops or used bookstores and pore through the sheet music and show selections and try to find songs that have meaningful lyrics and music that might suit me. I've been known to spend hours in an old bookstore doing that. So, I have a pretty extensive sheet music library. I also have a large CD library that includes many musicals that even some theater fans might not know about.

**SH** What role in a classic Broadway musical would you love to play that you haven't had the chance to yet and why?

**BD** The first two that come to mind are Seymour in *Little Shop of Horrors* and The Baker in *Into the Woods*. They suit me both vocally and physically and I would get to exercise my comic chops in the former and my dramatic chops in the latter. There's also Frankie Valli in *Jersey Boys*. Does that count as a classic Broadway musical?

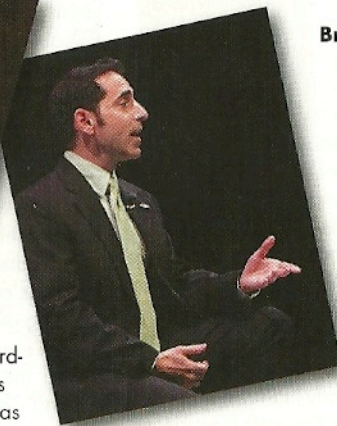
The most enjoyable role I've done is Jinx in *Forever Plaid*, a show that is just such a joy to perform. I think audiences adore the characters, the music and the story, and they

just don't want it to end.

**SH** What else do you have coming up after your show at Scullers?

**BD** Between February 26 and March 13, I'll be in a revue with the New England Light Opera celebrating the 100th birthday of Frank Loesser called *Heart and Soul: The Music of Frank Loesser*. I start teaching a class at New Repertory Theatre in Watertown [suburban Boston]

**From far left  
Brian & George Dvorsky  
BD & Kathy St. George  
With Julie Reyburn  
& Mark Hartman  
John Amodeo  
Cheyenne Jackson  
& Brian  
In Performance**



called "Acting a Song for Auditions and Open Mics" on January 24, which also happens to be the

twentieth anniversary of my first date with my husband, John. We'll also be celebrating our tenth wedding anniversary—our "illegal wedding" we like to say—and our seventh legal wedding anniversary in June. John and I were the 113th same-sex couple to legally apply for a marriage license in Massachusetts and, consequently, the entire country.

**SH** What are your performing ambitions for the future and do you feel you can realize them?

**BD** I want to continue working as an actor, cabaret singer and concert artist. I'd love the opportunity to appear on and off Broadway and to do film and TV work. I love to travel, so it would be great to be able to tour the U.S. and other parts of the world doing concerts and cabarets. Also, if the producers/writers of *Glee* are reading this, the character of Rachel often talks about her two dads, but we've yet to see them, which I find extremely frustrating. I offer my services as one of Rachel's dads! I look like I could be Lea Michele's father. ○

**Editor's Note:**

Brian is at Boston's Scullers Jazz Club Jan. 12 at 8 p.m. Visit [www.briandelorenzo.com](http://www.briandelorenzo.com)