

Recipe for Success

Choosing your songs and honing your act for a particular booking can be a tough process. **Jennifer Reischel**, who recently performed in *Cabaret Confidential* at Pizza on the Park, shares her preparations for the musical theatre showcase

I have always felt that the moments before going on stage to commence a performance are not unlike taking part in an extreme sporting event. The combination of heightened energy, excitement and fear causes you to forget such trivialities as the bare shoulders of your cocktail dress or the heaviness of a fur coat under the heat of the spotlight.

I am perched on a stool at the back of famed London cabaret venue Pizza on the Park, the seconds ticking in my head echoing the clanking of cutlery and glasses of dining audience members hastening to finish their culinary creations before the entertainment of the night begins.

Suddenly the compere bounces on the stage, ready to warm up the room with some banter and songs. And then it's time for me to hit the microphone and begin my one-woman slot as part of the musical theatre showcase known as *Cabaret Confidential*.

When I first got the email in November confirming my appearance,

Later that day, a medley idea of parts I would like to play pops into my head and thanks to Facebook, I was reminded by my composer friend Nick Hutson of the *Too Tall Blues*. Having had many earfuls of my grumbling over height issues clashing with casting directors' specifications, Nick did what composers do best and turned my woes and insecurities into a lamenting comedy piece of musical theatre.

Song choices came and went, and I discovered that the key is to combine my knowledge and influence of the musical theatre golden era and cabaret greats with my own desires and needs as a musical artist and person. And so I continued arranging, with the assistance of my multi-talented singing teacher, musical director and general musical accomplice Heather Weir – "Can you help me melt a G major chord into an E flat major diminished minor?" – tweaking, observing, trying out and, most of all, figuring out what doesn't work.

As the act slowly came together in my head as well as on paper and in my body, I was continually acrobatic in



