

# Review: Funny Girl in Concert

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**Web URL:** <http://www.mooneyontheatre.com/2013/10/01/review-funny-girl-in-concert-2013-2014-season-preview-harold-green-jewish-theatre-company/>

## **Toronto's Harold Green Jewish Theatre Company's Funny Girl in Concert launched their current season with musical precision and larger-than-life performances**

These are stories that have been millennia in the making – stories that capture the very heart of the Jewish existence. Now entering its seventh season, the [Harold Green Jewish Theatre Company](#), held its 2013 – 2014 season fundraiser last night at the [Toronto Centre for the Arts](#).

The night featured a workshop production of [Funny Girl](#) (reviewed below), and was a smash success in its execution – heralding boisterous bouts of applause and multiple standing ovations from its spectators.

“It’s a show like this that really highlights the quality of our productions,” said Dene Cohen, president of the theatre company’s board of directors.

For Cohen, the [Harold Green Jewish Theatre Company](#)’s most important mandate is to share stories and theatrical productions that appeal not only to the Jewish community, but to all who appreciate art and culture.

“[The Jewish people] have such a rich history that’s full of universal themes. While we aim to showcase this rich history, I truly believe concepts like love and tragedy are easily shared and appreciated with a wider audience,” she said.

And so, Cohen explained that one does not need be of Jewish descent to appreciate any of the shows that are running during this current season.

“We have great shows that have earned much critical acclaim from around the world. If you love theatre and musicals, then I guarantee you won’t be disappointed.”

Indeed, the shows that Cohen is most looking forward to include [There's No Business Like Irving Berlin](#) (playing November 3<sup>rd</sup>), which is a theatrical take on the song of the same title written for the musical, [Annie Get Your Gun](#). She also recommends [New Jerusalem](#), a theatrical look at Spinoza – one of the history's most celebrated philosophers.

For regular patron Linda Miller, who has been a season ticket holder since the theatre company's inception, the [Harold Green Jewish Theatre Company](#) provides a vital outlet to share stories in a more creative way.

"We have hundreds of books and magazines that do a fantastic job at bringing our community's accomplishments to the forefront of what people are talking about," Miller explains. "But none of them connect with their audience, connect with their hearts and souls, connect at such a personal level the way that theatre does."

For her money, the production she most looked forward to was last night's fundraiser.

### **Funny Girl In Concert**

The workshop production of [Funny Girl](#) featured strong performances all around. While Toronto's own Gabi Epstein had enormous shoes to fill as Fanny Brice – the role made iconic by one Miss Barbara Streisand – she was simply charming. And wow, does she ever have powerful pipes.

Her take on *Rain on My Parade* filled the entire auditorium with pitch-perfect sound. Every song she covered channeled Streisand, and the delivery of her lines was endearing. One minor flaw, however – there were certain moments during *People* that were unfortunately pitchy. But to her credit, singing back-to-back numbers can drain the wind out of even the most seasoned professionals.

A special nod should also be given to Theresa Tova as Fanny's mother. Loud, boisterous and nerve-grating, she was absolutely sublime throughout the entire performance. But what made her delivery most memorable, was the apparent ease with which she delivered her dialogue. If there was anybody in Toronto meant to play Mrs. Brice, it would be Tova.

Eddie Glen, as Eddie Ryan, was genius. At times it felt like I was watching a carbon copy of Nathan Lane, but definitely in a good way. Glen was high-energy and high-flying. It was his musical performances that seemed the most natural. He was having a great time on stage, and that translated into numbers that often had entire sections of the audience swaying along.

Lastly, but certainly not least, Paula Wolfson was a show stealer. It was all the little things she did supplemental to the songs and dialogue that really earns her mention here. An extra laugh, a tiny wink to the audience – Wolfson was the most engaging of all the performers and her seasoned run in theatre definitely shone through last night.

Combining beautifully executed musical precision with larger-than-life performances all around, [Funny Girl In Concert](#) was a special feast for the audio and visual senses that marked a memorable night for Toronto theatre this fall. And if the [Harold Green Jewish Theatre Company](#)'s upcoming season is going to be anything like last night's performance, then its shows are definitely ones you won't want to miss.

**Details:**

- [Funny Girl In Concert](#) played September 30<sup>th</sup> at the [Toronto Centre for the Arts](#)
- For more information on the Harold Green Jewish Theatre Company's 2013 – 2014 season, [visit their website](#).