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## Women strike perfect chord for showcase

Women In Voice, Princess Theatre, Woolloongabba. Wed-Sat until July 3.  
Reviewed by Noel Mengel

**T**HE magnificent old Princess Theatre must have seen some wonderful entertainment in its 100-year history – especially if it has witnessed anything to match the scope and quality of this year's Women In Voice.

It provided a perfect backdrop for the eighth season of Brisbane's favourite cabaret showcase for female performers.

Each of the six are tremendous singers who draw on a rich variety of sources – folk, opera, rock'n'roll, rhythm and blues, jazz, gospel and musical theatre.

That's a great deal to ask from one small band, but under the direction of bassist Helen Russell they were able to swing as effortlessly across the styles – and with as much wit and grace – as the singers.

Alison St Ledger opened the night with a set of beautifully paced songs from writers as varied as Burt Bacharach and the Indigo Girls, and soprano Deborah Cheetham paid tribute to influences from Barbra

Streisand to Julie Andrews with a Puccini aria along the way.

"No pigeonholes," Margret Roadknight sang in the spicy *Timeless* and she was true to her word as she poked fun at '50s pop, played African thumb piano and soared into a gospel number by Mahalia Jackson.

Carita Farrer was hilarious in sending up some '70s duets we've all been trying to forget, and Lil' Fi's celebration of shopping therapy encompassed the Coasters' *Love a Bargain* and a version of *I Say a Little Prayer* that can stand proudly beside Aretha Franklin's.

Leah Cotterell's performance was a particular delight. Her husky, soulful voice was marvellous, and her reading of June Tabor's Celtic lilt *I Wonder What's Keeping My True Love Tonight* is worth the price of admission alone.

Fine music is being made around the world on any night but it's hard to believe there was anything, anywhere that could have been better than that emotional performance.

It's just one highlight among many in this show, which continues from Wednesday until Saturday. Don't miss it.