



Coming Home to Me: Lisa Rothauser in Concert Review

Posted by Nora Davis

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From start to finish, Lisa Rothauser graces the audience with her larger than life stage presence and her powerhouse vocal stylings. Appearing at 54 Below in a show called "LIFE. WTF?" Lisa delves into the story of her life as a performer, mother, and up and coming songwriter. Performing both interpretations of songs written by legendary composers, including Stephen Sondheim and Jule Styne,

as well as original songs co-written with her talented beau and music director, Tor Hyams. Lisa is a joy to watch as she fully embraces life and the music that clearly makes her heart sing.



There is no question that Lisa's voice is sensational. She hits Craig Carnelia's "Flight" out of the park and she has great comedic timing to boot. In her rendition of "The Ladies Who Lunch," Lisa tells the story of meeting her very own prince charming who sweeps her off her feet and then off to the far away land of Connecticut, but alas he turns out to be not so charming or princely after all. While Lisa's voice shines and her story telling is captivating, I did find myself wanting to see more vulnerability from her. I also wanted to know more about her life in St. Louis and her marriage and kids. I felt invested in Lisa and her

story and so I found myself wanting to see more layers fall away. Lisa moved me when she did finally peel those layers away, accompanying herself and singing “Funny Girl” by Bob Merrill and Jule Styne. It was simply stunning.



Lisa seamlessly segues from her life in Connecticut to her move to the West Village and meeting Tor Hyams with their charming duet “Maybe, Maybe Not,” both written and performed by the duo. Another highlight comes with the original, “I Love His Face.” The lyrics are clever, the music is beautiful, and it’s hard to imagine anyone else singing it.

Lisa’s band is off the charts. With Tor Hyams on piano, Al Street on guitar, James Quinlan on bass, Brad Wentworth on drums, Morgan Price on Reeds, James Colby on trumpet, and Kevin Moehringer on

trombone. They really swing. It's a fantastic group of musicians, Lisa included.

The shows a lot of fun and it's got something for everyone. Keep an eye out for Lisa and Tor's next rendezvous.

THEater in THE NOW

Trouble getting past the stage door? I've got your way into all the news and people you need to know!

Monday, May 18, 2015

Spotlight On...Lisa Rothauser



Name: Lisa Marie Rothauser (yes...I was named after Lisa Marie Presley. No foolin')

Hometown: St. Louis, MO aka "The Lou"

Education: I received my Bachelor of Music from the "Harvard of the midwest"

coined by the locals, but the rest of the world would know it as Truman State University. I inched my way closer to NYC by pit-stopping at Boston University School for the Arts for a couple years to pick up a Master of Music degree with an Opera Performance concentration.

Favorite Credits: Playing Hold Me Touch Me and Lick Me Bite Me in *The Producers* on Broadway were two of my favorite credits. There is nothing more magical than creating a world and singing your tits off on a real Broadway stage. Playing Sharon Graham opposite Lucie Arnaz' Maria Callas in *Masterclass* straight out of college was also a highlight. But nothing could compare to taking credit for the role I play everyday as a mom of two boys. That pretty much trumps everything.

Why theater?: I feel that theatre isn't something you choose, rather, something that chooses you. It has a heavy pull and no matter how hard you try to get out...it's always there...silently pulling you back in and you must. You must listen and take the next ride because there is an energy to be shared and a story to be told and no one can tell it the same way you can. It might be the most frustrating and most

rewarding career in existence.

What inspired you to write *Life.WTF?*: It was originally conceived as a series called *Men.WTF?* a few years back when I was still married and trying to justify how men behave and how the women who love them could learn how to accept their animalistic behavior and live with it. When I was explaining it to my gynecologist (as one does!) he said, "Man, you got stories girl!", I found that broadening it to "life" was the way to go. In dealing with my personal dramas such as divorce and being a mom of two young boys, trying to raise up from the dust like a phoenix was the story I wanted to tell. So I found myself picking material that made my heart sing, cry, and laugh with a sense of heroic triumph.

What kind of theatre speaks to you? What or who inspires you as an artist?: Honestly, give me a main character with heart that moves from point A to point B with committed choices and I'm IN! Frank Sinatra inspires me. Patti Lupone inspires me. Elaine Stritch inspires me. They were/are artists who knew themselves and marched to their own drum without apologizing for it.

If you could work with anyone you've yet to work with, who would it be?: I am going with people who are alive now so: Carol Burnett cause she is the ultimate. Others: Kristin Wiig, Christopher Guest, Catherine O'Hara, Melissa McCarthy, Harry Connick Jr., Patti Lupone, Julie Taymor, Alex Timbers, and the eclectic list goes on and on.

What show have you recommended to your friends?: *Hand to God*. I believe it is quite possibly the greatest new american play/playwright (Robert Askins) to emerge in the last decade. It's raw, it's hilarious, Steven Boyer and Geneva Carr KILL their roles. The stakes are high and the train is running with perfect speed. I hope it wins all the Tonys. GO SEE IT!

Who would play you in a movie about yourself and what would it be called?: It would be called *Life.WTF?* and Meryl Streep would play me. Of course.

If you could go back in time and see any play or musical you missed, what would it be?: Opening night of *Funny Girl* with Barbra Streisand. It is said it was the most moving and powerful performance ever to hit a Broadway stage.

What's your biggest guilty pleasure?: "Shark Tank". Seen 'em all.

If you weren't working in theatre you would be _____?: I would be a professional Ukulele player. I learned the Uke for this show and I am OBSESSED. I call it my boyfriend. If I could sleep with it and not break it, I would.

What's up next?: My writing partner, Tor Hyams, and I are developing three new musicals at the moment. *Stealing Time*, which premiered at The New York Musical Theatre Festival in 2012 as a song cycle and has now been turned into a full-length musical, *Auburn, The Musical* which we began writing this January as writers at The Johnny Mercer Writer's Colony in association with Goodspeed Opera House, and most recently optioned a book called "The Complete Manual of Things That Might Kill You" and turning that into a hypochondriac's musical romp.



News: Interview with Lisa Rothauser & Tor Hyams of ‘LIFE. WTF?’



Tor Hyams and Lisa Rothauser. The Couple behind ‘LIFE. WTF?’

After sold out shows at Joe’s Pub and 42 West, the dynamic new songwriting team of Tor & Lisa (Grammy-nominated producer/songwriter Tor Hyams and Broadway singer/actress Lisa Rothauser) are back for one night only – with the next evolution of *LIFE. WTF?* It’s their fun-filled evening of song, truth and laughter as Lisa traces some of life’s unexpected twists and turns.

Life doesn’t always go according to plan. St. Louis native and Broadway actress and singer, Lisa Rothauser, grew up with a passion for singing and a

love of showbiz. She broke away from small town life and made it to the bright lights of Broadway only to be swept away to the 'burbs by the man of her mother's dreams. WTF? Ready for a change, Lisa sent the husband packing, dropped the kids off at school, and is headed straight back to the stage. *LIFE. WTF?* is her hilarious and inspiring musical transformation from Broadway performer to Stepford wife and back again.

New York Theatre Guide caught up with Lisa and Tor as they were polishing up the show, and they were kind enough to share a few things with us.

NYTG: First off, how did each of you choose this as a career? How did you meet?

Lisa: I fell in love with being a musical theatre performer while playing Aldonza in *Man of La Mancha* junior year of high school and knew I needed to be in living in New York City making it happen. After performing in the 2nd National Tour and Broadway companies of *The Producers*, my life turned to raising two boys and trying to fit-in as a Stepford wife in CT. Ehem. I continued to do voice-over and commercial work but we kept moving and I kept getting farther away from what I set out to do. After meeting Tor, we naturally fell-into writing for musical theatre, starting with a semblance of our our own story depicted in our first musical *Stealing Time*. I'd written songs in the past but this was something different; more elevated ... special. Ironically it has brought me back to performing more than ever with a deeper understanding of storytelling, character, musicality and passion I had no idea was possible.

Tor: I was a record producer and composer in Los Angeles. About the time I turned forty, I had a small, well, maybe a rather large crisis of faith. I was working in music, but for some reason, I still wasn't content. After coming across a Facebook group from the performing arts camp I attended as a kid, I realized I needed to go back to my roots in musical theater. I wrote my first show, *Greenwood*, with Adam LeBow, which debuted at NYMF in 2011. The experience was so moving and felt so right, I knew I had finally found my true musical path in life.

After *Greenwood*, an agent approached Tor about performing a showcase of his material. Shortly after that, we met at an industry meet-n-greet. Lisa needed a demo produced and Tor needed his showcase produced. So we

made a deal. Little did we know that both our lives were about to change dramatically.

NYTG: What is the best part of being “married” to your collaborator? And the most trying part?

Lisa & Tor: Well, one thing’s for sure. We’re not married. But, yeah, basically, we are ... just without all that legal stuff getting in the way of collaboration! The best part of sharing our lives and working together is that we’re constantly deepening the way in which we work and our communication gets more evolved the more we know each other. We’re very close to being at the point where we don’t have to talk at all! That’s actually kind of true. The musical and lyrical language we speak now is at the point where we know what the other is going to say before we have to say it. That’s pretty special. The most trying part is actually the opposite side of that same coin. It can be difficult to separate the work from the personal. We make sure we remember to have fun so we don’t get too bogged down and also create some separate time to process our own individual thoughts and instincts which can get morphed when living all-in!

NYTG: How do you keep family issues from affecting work, and vice versa? Or do you?

L&T: We are both very focused on family. We are also partners in every way so when one side of our family is taking precedence, the other can do the work, and vice versa. Sometimes, when something seems like it is blocking the work, there is an opportunity to use it in the writing. That’s always a fun and a twisted surprise. Then again, if you aren’t putting yourself into what you are doing, the product isn’t going to be good.

NYTG: How do you work out artistic differences?

L&T: I would assume pretty much like everyone. We talk it out, argue, yell, walk away...just with us we can make out at the end of it. Oh, and a martini helps.

NYTG: What has you excited about *LIFE*. WTF?

Lisa: The message. It’s a hero’s journey. It’s a female journey. It’s my story, but it is also the story of what is happening inside most women ie. the

struggle to be successful at a profession, and be the perfect wife, and the perfect mother. There was an article in the NYTimes this weekend titled 'Poor Little Rich Women' by Wednesday Martin and she nailed something that I actually lived, but escaped; the prison we put ourselves in when we look to a man for security, approval, and self-worth. When you lose yourself in order to please one of the masters of the universe, you become a shell of a human and pretty much running around doing everything half-assed and pleasing no one. I woke up and realized that I have a voice. And that voice needed to belt out some show tunes!

NYTG: What do the two of you want to achieve as a team in your careers?

L&T: We would love to see our productions through to Broadway. That is the ultimate destination and we want to see it...and soon!

NYTG: Thank you so much, Tracy, for taking time out of your very busy schedules to talk to the New York Theatre Guide. We will be seeing much more of you in the future!

LIFE. WTF? will be presented at "Broadway's Supper Club" 54 Below (254 West 54th Street – between Broadway & 8th Avenue) on Friday, May 29th at 9:30p.m. There is a \$35 music charge (and a \$25 food/drink minimum). For tickets and information, click [here](#). Tickets on the day of performance after 4:00 are only available by calling (646) 476-3551.



LIFE.WTF? with Lisa Rothauser Set for 54 Below, 5/29

May 5



After sold out shows at Joe's Pub and 42 West, the dynamic new songwriting team of Tor & Lisa - Grammy-nominated producer/songwriter Tor Hyams and Broadway singer/actress **Lisa Rothauser** are back - for one night only! - with the next evolution of "LIFE. WTF?" - their fun-

filled evening of song, truth and laughter as Lisa traces some of life's unexpected twists and turns. This time, they are pulling out all the stops to include brand new songs, props, costume changes and a 7-piece band - with a dancing horn section! Directed by industry veteran **Michael Bush** with musical direction by Mr. Hyams, "LIFE. WTF?" will be presented at "Broadway's Supper Club" 54 Below (254 West 54th Street - between Broadway & 8th Avenue) on Friday, May 29th at 9:30p.m. There is a \$35 music charge (and a \$25 food/drink minimum). For tickets and information, please visit 54below.com. Tickets on the day of performance after 4:00 are only available by calling (646) 476-3551.

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BWW Interview: Lisa Rothauser Previews LIFE. WTF?, Coming to Joe's Pub!



Newly divorced and recovering co-dependent, **Lisa Rothauser**, makes her Joe's Pub debut (September 8 at 7:30PM) with eleven, 11 o'clock numbers (go big or go home). Winding through a path of midwestern pathology and ironic hilarity, Lisa's road back to the Broadway is laden with princesses, evil step mothers and even the big, bad Wolf of Wall Street. This one-night only event

features humor, heart and some super special Broadway guests.

For tickets, visit: <http://www.publictheater.org>

Rothauser took the time to chat with BroadwayWorld about the upcoming show and you can catch a special preview below!

What inspired LIFE. WTF?

Originally I thought of a series called Men. WTF? where I would spend the better part of a half hour finding myself in situations where I had to justify how men behave and how the women who love them could learn from me on how to accept their animalistic behavior and live with it. Then it turned into a sort of general-ized "life" theme when my gynecologist said to me,

"Man, you got stories girl!" When I started planning a "come back" so to speak and essentially trying to start over from the ground up after being away for so long, and dealing with life dramas such as divorce, and being a mom of two young boys and actually wanting to have my career back, I found myself picking material that made my heart sing, and gave a sense of heroic triumph.

Do you have a favorite song or moment of the concert?

The final three lyrics/notes of the entire show. It's the definitive moment of the entire show and pretty much sums up the meaning of my life and I'm pretty sure everyone else's.

How does the subject matter of your upcoming engagement at Joe's Pub relate to the changes you've had in your personal life recently?

I cover the milestones -from my humble beginnings in St. Louis to finally performing on a Broadway stage, only to then get swept away from what I was put on this earth to do. When I realized the fairytale I thought I was living was actually a house of cards built on a mound of sand surrounded by a mote with alligators, I had two choices: end up spending the rest of my life on Xanax filled with bitter resentment (not that there's anything wrong with that!), or get back on the horse. I chose the latter, and doing this show is one way of taking the reins and riding full bore.

How do you think the unexpected obstacles you've faced in your adult life have impacted you and led you to this new place in your career?

Everyone knows this business isn't for the faint of heart. I think that the best advice given to anyone endeavoring this path of "showbiz" has to be, "if there is ANYTHING else that you would be happy doing in life than performing...DO IT!" Problem is, when you know deep in your guts that there really ISN'T anything else, then you must do this. Through all of the veering away I have done, I never stopped singing and taking class...always having a foot in the door somehow, some way, whether it was through producing, performing, or writing. Now I feel I have a keener perspective and balance that I couldn't have had before this turning point.

You've appeared on Broadway and several world premiere productions. Are you excited to be returning to the NYC theatre scene?

I am beyond excited to be making my "splash" into the pool again at Joe's Pub and I am very grateful to have the opportunity to sing in that venue with a killer five-piece band led by Grammy-nominated record producer Tor Hyams. He and I not only collaborated for this project, but we have also written a full-length musical called Stealing Time which is moving forward with the amazing **Joe Calarco** as director.

How did working alongside Broadway greats Mel Brooks and Warren Carlyle during your time in "The Producers" impact you as a performer?

Getting the call from **Tara Rubin**'s office for the final callback with Mel was intense. It went a little something like: "Lisa, we're bringing you in for Mel, but you're gonna have to find a new joke because he's either gonna love the one you did or hate it." So I picked a new joke, which he must have loved because I booked it. The Second National Tour was **Warren Carlyle**'s first "baby" even though he assistant directed and choreographed alongside **Susan Stroman** from inception. He hand-pick our cast and I will never forget him teaching me the tapping Nazi audition dance while I was wearing knee-high leather boots (didn't bring dance shoes cause I considered myself a "singer who moves well".) He believed in me and saw my potential. It wasn't until opening night, when I got a note from **Susan Stroman** saying "You ARE a dancer!," that I was right where I was supposed to be. Working with Susan, Warren, and the amazing casts of both the tour and Broadway companies was such an inspiring experience. Most challenging though, was trying not to laugh at Mr. Bart while onstage. He is just one of those people who can't help but make you laugh just by simply being alive and breathing.

Why should people head to Joe's Pub to see this show?

It's raw. It's real. It's a story of the human experience. We cover everything from Funny Girl to Sinatra to an old-school Whitesnake tune so...I guess the question would be, why shouldn't they see this show?!!

PALM BEACH ARTSPAPER

News and reviews from the arts in and around Palm Beach County

Actress Rothauser chronicles ups and downs in 'Life. Who Knew?'

Written by Hap Erstein on 03 November 2015.



Palm Beach International Film Festival president and CEO Jeff Davis was very taken with Lisa Rothauser's autobiographical one-woman show with music and thought it would be a good fit for his new and newly refurbished Palm Beaches Theatre in Manalapan.

But he thought the title, *Life. WTF?*, was too crude for his venue and audience. So out went WTF and in its place came a new title, *Life. Who Knew?* Gone too is the act's opening number, which was also called *WTF?* "I've got to tell you I don't hate the idea, because now we can have two versions of the show, with and without the 'F' word," says Rothauser. She calls herself and her musical director/significant other, Tor Hyams, "malleable writers, and we had fun rewriting it to clean it up. Now we can take it on cruise ships or go anywhere with it. Then for the 11 o'clock shows, we can put the 'F' word back in."

Rothauser is no stranger to Palm Beach County, having appeared at the Caldwell Theatre in 2002 in Avi Hoffman's biblical romp, *Songs of Paradise*. Asked what she remembers most about that production, she talks of an injury she sustained here. "I think I sprained my finger. We had to do a thumb fight and I literally had to go to rehab for my thumb," she says. "That was the last time I'd been in the area, but we're excited to bring this new show there."

Life. Who Knew? tells the up-and-down saga of Rothauser's career and personal life, which were often out of synch. "I was basically starting my career and I was on fire," she says, cast as she was in the national tour and then the Broadway cast of *The Producers*. "I was so happy to be in what I consider is one of the best shows to ever hit Broadway. I had just gotten married when I booked the tour and then moved into the Broadway production.

"My ex-husband now, but my husband at the time, was a Wall Street guy. I fell in love with what I thought was Prince Charming, but he really wasn't," says Rothauser. "I realized, for a lot of reasons that are all in the show, it was not a good thing. We were not working well. I realized he was schtupping everybody except me.

"While my career was happening, I had this life of being a Stepford wife. But I woke up one day and went, 'Oh, god, this is not' and 'He's not' and 'What the hell do I do?'

"I realized that he was not going to change and I filed for divorce. That's when I realized I am a singer and a songwriter and I am funny. I needed to share what I do with other women and the world, to empower them as well as make people laugh."

OK, it might not sound that funny, depending on how dark your sense of humor runs, but imagine Rothauser's tale injected with comedy and songs. Over the past year, it has been evolving, moving closer to the form she long pictured in her mind.

"We have more instruments — six — we added some jokes, we got rid of the stuff that nobody really gets, added stuff that people really do and that's why we're coming to Florida," says Rothauser. "I hired a comedy writer who's written for Bette Midler's Vegas shows and also Betty Buckley and others. He helped me out with making the banter a little quicker and quippier."

Why should people come see *Life. Who Knew?* “If people are interested in the whole awkward truth, they should come,” says Rothauser. “They’ll feel a lot better about their own lives. And don’t we really love schadenfreude?”

LIFE. WHO KNEW?, at *The Palm Beaches Theatre, 262 S. Ocean Blvd., Plaza Del Mar Shopping Center, Manalapan. 2 pm and 7 pm Thursday, 7 pm Friday, and 2 pm and 7 pm Saturday. Tickets: \$29. \$20 for students and seniors. Call: 561-362-0003 or visit www.pbifilmfest.org.*