

Julius Monk presents DEMI-DOZEN

37 West 56th Street: An address that in-the-know sophisticated New Yorkers knew very well in the mid-1950s – the resplendent reconverted townhouse of one John Wanamaker that served as the home to a delectably delicious series of cabaret entertainments presented at the Upstairs at the Downstairs by Julius Monk.

Julius Withers Monk was born in 1912 in North Carolina. He began his career as a pianist in nightclubs in New York and Europe. Then in 1941, the tall, lean, elegantly mustached Monk managed Le Ruban Bleu, a supper club in Manhattan. He was there until he went to San Francisco in 1956 to become master of ceremonies at the club the hungry i.

But New York beckoned almost immediately and back he went to become the new manager of the Downstairs Room on Sixth Avenue, which had formerly been called the Purple Onion. He opened his first revue there in 1956. *Four Below* was the title and it was a smash. After its successful run, *Four Below* was followed by *Son of Four Below* and *Take Five*.

Then came the move to 56th Street and the Upstairs at the Downstairs. That room opened in 1958 with *Demi-Dozen*, another delightful revue as you're about to hear. Monk had an uncanny ability to not only cast his shows with brilliant revue performers, in this case Jean Arnold, Ceil Cabot, Jane Connell, Jack Fletcher, George Hall, and Gerry Matthews, but to find up-and-coming songwriters and in the case of this album

that included the team of Tom Jones and Harvey Schmidt, who would soon go on to write the score to *The Fantasticks*. Also featured in this revue is a song by another up-and-coming team, Cy Coleman and Carolyn Leigh – their song for *Demi-Dozen* is a classic Coleman/Leigh song, "You Fascinate Me So." But the majority of the material in *Demi-Dozen* is by Jones and Schmidt and their contributions are uniquely them and uniquely wonderful. The Monk revues were very much of their time, but they are still completely entertaining all these decades later.

I had the pleasure of working with Cy Coleman and also had the pleasure of recording a huge number of Jones and Schmidt rarities over the years, along with the revival cast album of *I Do! I Do!* and the studio cast album of *Collette Collage*. Harvey became one of my dearest and best friends back in 1991 when I first met him and worked with him. He was a wonderful, warm person, and someone whose friendship I absolutely treasured. He did the original art for the covers of my first three novels, *Benjamin Kritzer*, *Kritzerland* (yes, that's how we got our name), and *Kritzer Time*, and they are classic Harvey and stunning. Harvey passed away just a few short weeks ago and so I am thrilled to get this album onto CD as our little tribute and gift to his memory.

— Bruce Kimmel
April, 2018

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A Reminiscence from Sara Ballantine, daughter of Ceil Cabot

My Mother, the great Ceil Cabot became a special favorite of Mr. Monk, and appeared in many of his cabaret revues. I'll be honest, I was very very little when *Demi-Dozen* opened, but I have many memories of my Mom singing around the house! *Demi-Dozen* was an album I listened to over and over. I thought my Mother was the most amazing person on earth. She was insecure about not having her dear friend Jane Connell's glorious soprano, or Jean Arnold's sultry strong sexuality, but the laughs she garnered were hers and hers alone and gave her a varied and unique following. Julius remained a life-long friend, and I learned an awful lot about style and life in general from him. He was a brilliant result of his own creation, and there has never been anyone like him. For my 6th birthday, he gave me my very own little leather analysts' couch!

— Sara Ballantine
April, 2018