

# internationalfestival

## Saucy, spirited show an education

### CLASSICAL

#### Barry Humphries' Weimar Cabaret

Usher Hall

★★★★★

Saucy, seductive and wonderfully sophisticated, Barry Humphries' survey of music from Weimar Germany with the Australian Chamber Orchestra was also surprisingly serious-minded – you got to learn a lot about the composers Hitler hated from Humphries' sly commentary.

It was very personal, too – amid some shameless name-dropping, he took us through his fascination with this remarkable music – a mix of nihilism and sophistication, as he memorably described it – from a chance stumbling on a suitcase of scores in a Melbourne bookshop



↑ **Diva Meow Meow gives a performance of brilliant conviction**

through to meeting many of the radical composers he'd come to admire. But it was

far from a lecture. By the time it came to Erwin Schulhoff's When Harry Met Sally-style

faked female orgasm in the appropriately titled Sonata Erotica, very far from a lecture indeed. Aussie cabaret diva Meow Meow was the one having all the fun there – in a performance of brilliant conviction – and she also snarled her way through what became a terrifyingly brutal account of Weill's Pirate Jenny, and was joined by ACO violinist Satu Vänskä to purr through the sapphic Wenn Die Beste Freundin by Mischa Spoliansky.

The ACO players themselves powered through this jazz-inflected music with hard-edged precision and magnificently gritty spirit.

But in the end, it was the evening's overall conception, of both celebration and desperation, of dancing on the edge of a precipice, that made it so special – and so relevant.

**DAVID KETTLE**