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FRANCA VERCELLONI

Classically Trained, Practically Broke

The Duplex, NYC, March 8, 2010

Clever concept: Enter fast-moving, flustered, funny, feisty Franca Vercelloni, accordion in tow, dashing in (almost crashing in) because she's late for work. "Work" is slogging through her shift in sing-along piano bar hell, as she does in real life. Rrrrrring!!!! Her cel phone goes off; it's Mom, full of advice, questions and nags. Hassles abound, like bad tips and

tipsy customers. We're privy to likeably acerbic Franca's inner monologues and memories and migraines, sung or spoken, as she plays the piano, plays the accordion and plays the victim. This multi-tasker is a cute hoot, sharp tongue in cheek or in check. There's lots of talk and much is fun, free-spirited and flip. She survived a childhood where her aunt purposely switched the TV's color settings so Franca always thought the famously blue cartoon Smurfs were green. Then she got her own blues via high-pressure piano recitals, competitions, being groomed for a life of Beethoven, doomed to a life of

bar rooms. No wonder she relishes "There's Gotta Be Something Better Than This" from *Sweet Charity* as if she wrote it. She does write many of her other songs, comical catharses, some stronger than others, some marred by false rhymes ("chains"/"name") or occasional awkward scanning of lyrics. There are L.O.L. moments in them, too. She musicalizes the aforementioned frustrations as well as woes of a side career being a plus-size model whose attributes aren't the pluses the agency wants. But, as a performer/writer, she has pluses, promise, pluck and yuk-yuk-yuk.



— Rob Lester