

# CRL

ABOUT CABARET RED LIGHT  
VAUDEVILLE, BURLESQUE & PUPPET THEATER

**CO-DIRECTORS:** Peter Gaffney and Anna Frangiosa  
**RESIDENT BAND:** Blazing Cherries Gypsy-Funk Orchestra  
**FOUNDED IN** Philadelphia, 2008

## CABARET RED LIGHT

Cabaret Red Light is a 20+ member troupe of Philadelphia's most talented vaudeville performers, mixing original live music, dark comedy, puppet theatre and burlesque in the spirit of the decadent 1920s. Since first forming in 2008, they have performed to sold out audiences at Plays and Players Theater, L'Etage, Chaplin's Music Café and Washington D.C.'s Palace of Wonders, and have been chosen three times by Philadelphia's *City Paper* as Agenda Pick of the Week.



Peter Gaffney and Anna Frangiosa, co-founders of Cabaret Red Light. Photo by Neal Santos.

## HOW IT STARTED

Cabaret Red Light is the invention of Annie A-Bomb and Peter Gaffney of The Blazing Cherries, Philadelphia's "anarchist music collective." Their influences range from Anita Berber to Frank Zappa, Neue Slowenische Kunst to The Muppet Show. Since 2008, they have brought together the most talented names in the Philadelphia theater and music scenes to create 18 original cabaret musicals.

## VAUDEVILLE THEATER

The Red Light cast of characters includes absent-minded devils, white collar criminals, time-travelers, pirates, vampires and thieves, characters from another time and place who commandeer performances in order to persuade the audience, with sweetest seductions (and sometimes pamphlets), to take part in their perversions. Cabaret Red Light's theatrical performances feature members of Sidetracked Theater, Philly Improv, The Waitstaff and other Philadelphia area groups.

## AGITPROP AND BURLESQUE

Boasting of a vast arsenal of props — including a 20-foot octopus puppet and 70-foot snake, to-scale replica of the Atom Bomb, and enormous nutcracker style "Svedka head," to name a few — Cabaret Red Light has also come to be known for its agitprop-style musical theater and burlesque. Combining Brecht's "epic theater" with traditional vaudeville, Cabaret Red Light has been known to turn the tables, subjecting participating audience members to a strip search, or frisking them down for their "papers."



## LAVISH COSTUMES

Cabaret Red Light's look and feel is the creation of co-director Anna Frangiosa (Annie A-Bomb). A ten-year burlesque veteran from Philadelphia and producer of Revival Burlesque, a monthly variety show at the Walking Fish Theater, she is also Head Mistress at the Philadelphia School of Burlesque, and has worked as a costume designer for Philadelphia's Pig Iron Theater Company and Lantern Theater Company.

## CONTEMPORARY DANCE

Cabaret Red Light choreographers Christine Fisler and Melissa "Bang-Bang" Forgione combine abstract and narrative techniques, as well as drawing from styles from the hey day of speakeasy and vaudeville theater. Christine is a dance instructor at The University of the Arts. Melissa has performed with a variety of Philadelphia theater groups, including BRAT Productions and Peek-a-boo Revue.

## EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC

The Blazing Cherries Gypsy-Funk Orchestra, Cabaret Red Light's "anarchist collective" of international jazzmen, violinists, carpetbaggers and Eurotrash, play a range of musical styles. Layering traditional gypsy ballads over funk rhythms, glam rock and technoculture, they are currently working on their third studio album, as well as various homemade instruments (one installment in *The Experiment* featured a piece for musical saw, theramin and midi-glove).



Rolf Lakaemper playing his home-made "midi glove." Photo by Michael Schupp.





**SERIAL CABARET**

Between 2008 and 2010, Cabaret Red Light created three series of original cabaret performances, each one exploring a theme or narrative and featuring a revolving cast of characters and guest talent.

**THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS**

Celebrating and satirizing the excesses of modern-day culture, *The Seven Deadly Sins: A Veritable How-To on the Weaknesses of the Flesh* also instructs the audience on the little pleasures and inimitable charms of all manners of sinfulness. Cabaret Red Light wrote and performed *The Seven Deadly Sins* at L'Etage, one sin per month, then expanded and adapted the series for the Main Stage at Plays and Players Theater.

**THE EXPERIMENT**

After putting final touches on THE MACHINE, Dr. Olivia Q and the rest of the Red Light crew set off for the year 2100 to learn what wondrous things it will bring. What they find is a secret world of fantasy and intrigue where danger lurks in the shadows and the goon squad is always on the prowl. *The Experiment* is a musical journey to the seething underbelly of Progress, featuring crazed clairvoyants, child inventors, futurizing devices of all kinds, and a man in pressed panama linen and waxed mustache that calls Everywhen his home. Debuted at L'Etage, March through June, 2010.



Christine Fisler and Anna Frangiosa (in snake puppet) perform "The Bird of Paradise" in LUSTI, grande finale of THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS at Plays and Players Theater. Photo by Ana Vizcarra.



Shoshi Ruth and Kim Cruise in THE SEVEN DEADLY SEAS. Photo by D. Palumbo.



**THE SEVEN DEADLY SEAS**

In *The Seven Deadly Seas*, Cabaret Red Light joined forces with the Philadelphia Ship Preservation Guild for a once-in-a-lifetime theater-in-the-round-and-under-the-stars pirate show on board the Tall Ship Gazela, a 100-year-old square-rigger at Penn's Landing. The series, involving the Wall Street ventures of legendary pirate Calico Jack, features seafaring folklore old and new, live gypsy-swing music, dancing girls, stage combat and more. Cabaret Red Light performed the first installment, "Waylaid & Hornswoggled," to sold out audiences in May, 2010. They are currently preparing to sail up the Eastern Seaboard for shows in Red Hook, Brooklyn and the Greater New York City area. Proceeds benefit the preservation and operation of the Gazela and other historic vessels.