

# Sam Arlen and George Bugatti at Crazy Coqs, W1

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Every time you watch *The Wizard of Oz*, every time you hear Sinatra sing *One for My Baby (and One More for the Road)* you know that Harold Arlen's legacy lives on. Yet considering how many classic melodies he composed — from *Over the Rainbow* to *Stormy Weather* — it's curious that his name isn't better known. This show by his son Sam and the singer-pianist George Bugatti goes a long way to putting that right. Responsible for an off-Broadway revue called *The Wonderful Wizard of Song*, they have put together a scaled-down version in which the occasional rough edge is all part of the charm. A reserved figure, Arlen takes charge of most of the narration, adding saxophone solos, while Bugatti, a much more ebullient personality, supplies the showmanship. They make an unusual but surprisingly effective team as they sketch Arlen Sr's journey from a Jewish upbringing in Buffalo to his collaborations with lyricists including Johnny Mercer, Ted Koehler and Yip Harburg.

It's the fact that Arlen had so many partners that perhaps explains why his public profile is lower than it deserves to be. Musicians, on the other hand, have always admired his sophisticated writing, steeped in a love of jazz: Ethel Waters once called him "the Negro-est white man I know".

We don't learn an awful lot about his inner life, but the flow of memorable songs is quite breathtaking and Judy Garland fans will enjoy the home-movie footage from the set of *The Wizard of Oz*. While the second half is a shade overextended, the duo still more than make the case for putting their subject back in the spotlight.