

# Marcus Dagan

## On Land And On Sea

By Barbara Leavy

**S**inger, songwriter, memoirist, Marcus Dagan, deliberately chose the Laurie Beechman Theatre for his show *Short Stories: Songs with a Twist*, which would be his re-introduction to New York cabaret, and New York cabaret's to him. He counted Laurie a friend, referring to her in his memoir, *Songs and Their Stories*, as a "lovely person and a GREAT singer." In 1979, Marcus was performing at a club called Good Times, and Laurie worked there as a waitress. He remembers that on Saturday nights she would "stop" the place when she sang three or four times and that the owner "wouldn't even allow the register to ring when she was on stage." Still, being a singing waitress was hardly her goal; she compared it to being a mere soldier in an army. If she couldn't be a general, she would quit. According to Marcus, a song came to him, "We Are All Soldiers (in the Army of Song)." Its lyric defines the joy but also the frustration of

being a singer. A week later, a triumphant Laurie Beechman announced to her friends that she had auditioned for *Annie* and was now part of the cast.

Dagan's October show at the Beechman made obvious his own significant gifts as a performer. Accompanying himself on the piano, with an electronic drum box for additional rhythm, he made familiar songs seem new (for example, "Look to the Rainbow" from *Finian's Rainbow*, and Noël Coward's "Sail Away"). He achieves novelty within the familiar by employing original and unexpected phrasing—unusual but never seeming contrived. He also provides subtle and equally unexpected shifts in rhythm. As a singer, Dagan is in the tradition of such songsters as Barry Manilow and Neil Diamond (he does a Diamond show on cruise ships). His voice is versatile, ranging from smooth and strong, to slightly husky and earthy.

