



Tuesday, September 23, 2008

D'Abruzzo, Chase, Creel, Kennedy and MORE Perform at NAMT Benefit; Complete Lineup Announced

By BWW News Desk



To commemorate their 20th Annual Festival of New Musicals, the National Alliance of Musical Theatre will celebrate with a benefit concert entitled, A Toast to 20! on Sunday, October 19th. Jamie DeRoy is the Honorary Chair of the fundraiser, which will feature Broadway luminaries performing songs from past Festival of New Musicals shows.

The concert will take place at Comix, 353 West 14th Street (at 9th Avenue) from 6:00 to 9:00 PM. Hosted by Tony Award-winners Bob Martin and Beth Leavel (The Drowsy Chaperone, Festival 2004), A Toast to 20! will also feature performances by:

Stephanie D'Abruzzo, Will Chase, Gavin Creel, Ryan Driscoll, Malcolm Gets, Lauren Kennedy, LaChanze, Lauren Pritchard, Robb Sapp, Bobby Steggert...and more to be announced!

PERFORMING SONGS FROM PAST FESTIVAL SHOWS:

The Bubbly Black Girl Sheds Her Chameleon Skin
The Drowsy Chaperone
Harold and Maude
Honk!
I Love You Because
The Story of My Life
Striking 12
Summer of '42
Thoroughly Modern Millie
Vanities, A New Musical
...and more!

Music Direction will be by Lynne Shankel (Cry-Baby, Company, Altar Boyz) and the evening will be helmed by Casey Hushion (Tinyard Hill)

For ticket prices and reservations please visit www.namt.org.

NAMT is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization, and your contribution is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Founded in 1985 and based in New York City, The National Alliance for Musical Theatre (NAMT), is a national service organization dedicated exclusively to musical theatre. NAMT

membership includes not-for-profit and commercial theatres, presenting houses, universities, and independent producers. Located throughout 33 states and 6 countries, the 150 member organizations share a commitment to nurture the creation, production, and recognition of new musicals and classics. Last season, NAMT members cumulatively staged over 23,000 performances attended by over 17 million people and reached revenues over \$510 million. NAMT has presented its annual FESTIVAL OF NEW MUSICALS since 1989. The Festival, for "those-in-the-know" according to American Theater Magazine, brings together leading theatre producers and musical theatre writers, with the goal of furthering the development and production of new musicals. For more information, visit www.namt.org.

This year's 2008 Festival of New Musical selections are:

BARNSTORMER

Book & Lyrics by Cheryl L. Davis

Music by Douglas J. Cohen

SYNOPSIS- Before Amelia Earhart, there was Bessie Coleman -- the first Black aviatrix who rose from the cotton fields of Texas and the barbershops of Chicago to finally conquer the skies of France. Her brief but dynamic life inspired the disenfranchised to pursue their dreams, including her own nephew who became a Tuskegee Airman.

BEATSVILLE

Music & Lyrics by Wendy Leigh Wilf

Book by Glenn Slater

Based on the Roger Corman film "A Bucket of Blood"

SYNOPSIS - Greenwich Village, 1959—Playground of bohemians, beatniks and jazzbos. Tragically square Walter Paisley finds that his clay figures, sculpted nudes, and papier-mâché busts bring him the acceptance he desperately yearns for. But what if the world discovered that Walter's body of work consists of actual bodies? A bebop-inflected black comedy/satire.

THE CUBAN AND THE REDHEAD

By Robert Bartley and Danny Whitman

SYNOPSIS--Escaping the bloodshed of his native Island, a young Cuban boy sets sail on a turbulent journey that leads him all the way to Hollywood and into the arms of a fiery, redheaded movie star named Lucille Ball. At the climax of *The Cuban and The Redhead*, Desi and Lucy put their money, their trust and their dreams on the line in a gamble to save one thing—their marriage. They risk it all on an untested medium called television. Can these two star crossed lovers blaze a path that defies Hollywood and history to be together? (This work was formerly known as *Dance With Me*).

THE LEGEND OF STAGECOACH MARY

By Thomas Mizer and Curtis Moore

Synopsis--Ex-slave Mary Fields turns the idea of the real Wild West hero on its head when she travels to 1880's Montana to find freedom, adventure and her long-lost best friend. Along the way, she

discovers a gaggle of square-dancing nuns and a town full of cowboys in need of a little lesson in the American Dream.

ORDINARY DAYS

By Adam Gwon

SYNOPSIS--When Deb loses her most precious possession—the notes to her graduate thesis—she unwittingly starts a chain of events that turns the ordinary days of four New Yorkers into something extraordinary. Told through a series of intricately connected songs and vignettes, Ordinary Days is an original musical about growing up and enjoying the view.

PAMELA'S FIRST MUSICAL

Book by Wendy Wasserstein

Lyrics by David Zippel

Music by Cy Coleman

Based upon the book by Wendy Wasserstein, illustrated by Andrew Jackness

SYNOPSIS—Pamela is a young suburban girl who feels out of place. Her mother has passed away and she lives with her father and two brothers who don't understand her. Pamela's active fantasy life and infatuation with Broadway Cast CDs keeps her from being too lonely. On her 11th birthday, she learns that her father is about to re-marry. The rest of her family is thrilled which makes Pamela feel like even more of an outsider. Just when Pamela thinks her entire world is going to crash, her eccentric Aunt Louise arrives. Aunt Louise is a New York fashion designer who sweeps Pamela off to New York City and her first Broadway musical. She meets producers, writers, actors, directors and choreographers and discovers the off-stage and on-stage magic of Broadway Theater. As Aunt Louise says, "A Broadway Musical can cure anything." Pamela's trip to New York inspires her to write and direct her own musical and to "collaborate" with her blended family, which, ultimately, brings them all together.

Note: This was one of the final projects of Wendy Wasserstein and Cy Coleman.

SEE ROCK CITY & OTHER DESTINATIONS

Book & Lyrics by Adam Mathias

Music by Brad Alexander

SYNOPSIS--Fueled by a brilliant pop-rock score, See Rock City & Other Destinations ventures to tourist destinations across America, mapping out stories of sightseers who need to get a little lost in order to find themselves. From Coney Island to Mt. McKinley, the Alamo to Niagara Falls—get ready to take the leap!

Note: SEE ROCK CITY & OTHER DESTINATIONS won the 2008 Richard Rodgers Award for Musical Theatre.

THE YELLOW WOOD

Book by Michelle Elliott

Music by Danny Larsen

Lyrics by Elliott and Larsen

SYNOPSIS—17-year-old Adam is frantically trying to memorize Robert Frost's poem "The Road Not Taken" before English, but because he didn't take his Ritalin, he can't get much farther than the "Two roads diverged in a yellow wood..." before a fantastic wood begins coming to life in his school. Desperate to prove he can turn his life around, Adam struggles to get beyond his ADD, his cultural heritage and his unique but unruly imagination. Adam is pulled deeper and deeper into the Yellow Wood, where he must face the reality of who he is and decide who he will ultimately become.

Regarding the 20th annual Festival of New Musicals, NAMT Executive Director Kathy Evans said, "Our NAMT member producing organizations, as well as the entire professional theatre industry attending the Festival, will see a lot of amazing talent. We look forward to celebrating our success stories from the past 20 years and are excited to help these amazing writers find new productions for their work."

From last year's Festival 2007, seven of the eight shows presented have found commercial options or regional productions:

THE BREAK-UP NOTEBOOK: THE LESBIAN MUSICAL by Lori Scarlett and Patricia Cotter – Commercial Option, 2008

CASEY AT THE BAT by Gordon Goodwin and Tom Child– Production at Brigham Young University 2008-2009

THE GYPSY KING by Randy Rogel and Kirby Ward – London production 2008-2009

KINGDOM by Aaron Jafferis and Ian Williams – Development at Weston Playhouse (VT) January 2008; 2008 Richard Rodgers Award for Musical Theatre.

THE STORY OF MY LIFE by Neil Bartram and Brian Hill – Commercial option 2007, Broadway opening 2009

TELL ME (f.k.a. *The Chocolate Tree*) by Marshall Paillet and A.D. Penedo – Full production at Actor's Cabaret of Eugene (OR) 2008

TINYARD HILL by Mark Allen and Thomas M. Newman – Development through 3 NAMT theatres – The Human Race Theatre Company (OH), Goodspeed Musicals (CT), and Red Mountain Theatre Company (AL)

Other past Festival highlights include the Tony Award winners *The Drowsy Chaperone* and *Thoroughly Modern Millie*; off-Broadway successes such as *I Love You Because*, *Songs for A New World*, *Striking 12*, and *Summer of '42*; and regional hits like *Ace*, *Children Of Eden*, *Harold and Maude*, *Honk!*, and *Meet John Doe*.

Photo of Will Chase by Walter McBride/Retna Ltd.



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