By Jerry Osterberg

Although the legend persists, there’s no proof that Sidney Myer has ever associated with Pan, the ancient Greek god of shepherds, hunters, and rustic music, and known to run in the company of wood nymphs and other deities of the forest. Well, perhaps he may have had a predilection for “rustic music,” quite possibly the forerunner of cabaret. It is true, however, that in his young and carefree days, Sidney worked at one of the New York’s Magic Pan Creperies. This might be where the confusion comes in.

Indeed, his experience at the restaurant was one of the several stories Sidney related to APSS President Linda Amiel Burns during their lively conversation at the March meeting. It seems that Sidney had become friendly with a fellow singing waiter who was a recent graduate of the Neighborhood Playhouse. One day the aspiring actress was in an especially celebratory mood and told him that she had just landed an audition and a screen test for a Jack Nicholson film. About to leave for California, she suddenly realized that she didn’t own a suitcase. Sidney quickly borrowed one for her, and the young hopeful flew west. She got the part, a role in Goin’ South (1978), followed by Time After Time (1979), and Melvin and Howard (1980), which won her an Oscar for Best Supporting Actress. After keeping the audience on the edge of their seats, the masterful raconteur finally revealed the name of the star: Mary Steenburgen.

Sidney has been called “the most beloved man in cabaret,” and a “warm-hearted,” “supportive” individual who “knows how to treat people.” Thirty years ago, he was referred to as “Mister Panache,” based on his having performed at Panache, a room on East 57th Street, for more than five years. It was here that Sidney earned his spurs as a manager and booker. When Panache closed, he took what he had learned plus a book of cabaret singers to Don’t Tell Mama, a club which had opened in the theater district in 1982. It was there that both Nancy Lamott and Karen Mason began their rise to stardom. Sidney said that “Cabaret is the first open door for performers…often the first performing exposure they’ll have in New York City, and many can move on to grander things.” He quipped “…but I liked them all before it was fashionable.”

Asked about the demand to fill up a room, Sidney answered “It’s more important to recognize who comes to a show not who does not.” While he’s aware of the economics, he added that “…even a few people in a room really matters, these are the people who’ve come out to see the show and they deserve to be entertained as if the room were overflowing.” This is a

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President’s Message...
Linda Amiel Burns, President

Happy Springtime to One and All!

It has been a long winter, and I am so glad that we will be enjoying good weather for the balance of the season. I am celebrating 20 years as president of our society, and am thrilled that APSS continues to grow and thrive.

There are three fabulous programs to look forward to this season: April 14th will bring us Marilyn Lester’s Jazz Program; you will find more information about it in this Newsletter. On May 12th we will have Sandi Durell’s annual Songwriter Showcase, featuring an amazing line-up of composers and performers. On June 9th we will end the 2017-2018 season with another Richard Skipper Spectacular. More details to follow!

In March, we saluted Cabaret Month with the one and only Sidney Myer, and the program was a remarkable success. Thanks again to Sidney, and to MAC Award-winning Tracy Stark for a wonderful afternoon. I have known Sidney since the early 80’s. We are close friends, and it was a great pleasure to interview him and hear his terrific stories. The songs he chose to sing demonstrated his versatility and talent, and it was evident to all why he is known as “the most beloved man in cabaret. Read all about this special program in your current Newsletter.

We are extremely fortunate to hold our monthly meetings at The Musicians’ Hall, Local #802, as the mid-town location is very convenient and welcoming. We are happy to announce that a new sound system will be installed soon, a major improvement. APSS plans to purchase a spotlight, so the lighting will also be improved for our performers and our audience members.

Member Exchange Table: I want to thank those who contribute to the table, where members drop off sheet music, books, CD’s and other memorabilia that they wish to share with others. Everything on the table is FREE, but donations are appreciated to help defray our rising costs.

At the last meeting of our dedicated Board of Directors, we began to plan the programs for our upcoming season, which begins in October. We will continue to bring you exciting entertainment, as we have done in the past, fulfilling our promise to keep the great music alive. Remember to tell your families and friends about APSS, and please encourage them to join and support this important organization.

See you on April 14th!

Linda
philosophy he shares with the late Julie Wilson.

Looking back at the thousands of performances he’s booked, Sidney said that he originally booked only performers who were on the “cabaret circuit,” but then learned to include others who had “day jobs” with a desire to perform outside their daily roles. According to Sidney “Cabaret allows you to show all the colors of your rainbow” and strongly believes in this is your show. Have it your way.

Not surprisingly, particularly given that he’s gone back to performing after an absence of 25 years, thanks to an invitation from KT Sullivan of the Mabel Mercer Foundation, Linda asked how he found the unusual material he often presents. Sidney answered: “As a devotee of the American songbook... there’s exposure to a lot of music...working with others in cabaret means you get to know a lot of it.”

As a performer, Sidney Myer inhabits his characters. There’s no doubt that he places himself smack in the middle of the action. Sidney is a genuine and credible conveyor of true feeling. Clearly this is what his idol Judy Garland was about, getting to the very essence of the song. “I was drawn to mystique, to style” Sidney told Alix Cohen in 2016. Having met Garland at a concert while still a young boy, he spoke enthusiastically to Linda about the experience as overwhelming and Garland as “positively electric.”

Myra Chanin, writing for NiteLife Exchange, called Sidney a “cross between Noel Coward and Fanny Brice.” Stephen Holden once said that he’s “an engagingly mischievous dispenser of musical repartee,” and more recently, in writing about Sidney’s appearance at the 2015 NYC Cabaret Convention, “…the evening’s high point was a deadpan rendition of a comic obscurity by Sidney Myer, a beloved latter-day vaudevillian.” APSS members got their own taste of this as Sidney, with the magnificent Tracy Stark at the keys, performed “I'm a Bad Bad Man” (Irving Berlin), “It’s So Nice to Have A Man Around the House” (Harold Spina & Jack Elliott), “The Second Time Around” (Jimmy Van Heusen & Sammy Cahn), “Good Advice” (Allan Sherman & Lou Busch), and “Pheromones” (Joan Cushing).

Sidney Myer has always maintained that he considers himself an “entertainer,” not a singer, and gravitates to the unique as “an expression of me. These are the songs I would write if I could.”

Caitlin Caruso is a Brooklyn-based singer, actress, and teaching artist who studied vocal performance at NYU Steinhardt with a concentration in music theater. Since graduating, Caitlin has been directing and singing with Voices in Flow, a music and mindfulness vocal group. She is also a member of the New York Chamber Choir and made her NYC cabaret debut at Don’t Tell Mama, a solo show she arranged and produced. It was a complete coincidence that she opened Sidney Myer’s APSS program on March 10. Accompanied by Tracy Stark, Caitlin sang “Straighten Up and Fly Right,” “So In Love,” “I’ve Got You Under My Skin,” “Every Time We Say Goodbye,” and “Let’s Face the Music and Dance.”
Part III

Two new phrases entered the musical language of their time: “Boswell Sound” and “Boswell Rhythm.” “Boswell Sound” referred to their ability to conjure up unusual and infinitely appealing vocal harmonies, coupled with an astounding vocal blend and wildly creative arrangements with unexpected changes, and amazing vocal gymnastics. “Boswell Rhythm” was their jazzy, syncopated phrasing and astonishingly precise tempo changes, all executed with an extraordinary sense of musical swing.

Rhythmically, they could push the pulse so it sat on the leading edge of the beat—almost rushing, but not quite. This aggressive hanging over the leading edge of the beat was also called “New Orleans drive.” Many musicians from that scene played on top of the beat, but nobody sang quite like this. And three people doing it in perfect synchronicity? Only the Bozzies could do it this incredibly.

IT DON’T MEAN A THING, IF IT AIN’T GOT THAT SWING - When the Bozzies recorded their first side for Brunswick Records, “When I Take My Sugar To Tea,” (their first charted hit), the veteran studio musicians expected a typical session with your average young vocal group. They got anything but. The sisters possessed a musicianship equal to their own. The trio’s sense of self-confidence. The Boswell Sisters were definitely on their way.

WE’RE ON THE HIGHWAY TO HEAVEN - From 1931 to 1936 the Boswell Sisters rode the wave of their greatest popularity. They racked up twenty hits on the US charts, time when all that seemed to lay ahead for the country was more gloom.

For some reason, history has generally underestimated the impact, revolutionary sound and popularity that the Boswell Sisters had. If any musical act has the right to use the word “magic,” it certainly is the Bozzies. Music publishers rarely gave permission for artists to alter songs. Of course, the Boswell Sisters were the exception. Their changes invariably added to the compositional intrigue of the song (the fact that they also sold a lot of records didn’t hurt).

MY FUTURE JUST PASSED - By 1936 it all ended. The trio broke up. After over twenty years of making music together—and five years at the top—the country’s most popular musical group was no more. Why did they break up at the height of their success? The reason given at the time was that Martha and Vet wanted to get married and raise families, while Connie desired a solo career. While this is true, there were deeper dynamics in play. Perhaps for Connie to have a full-on solo career, she needed to break away from the trio. Harry Leedy—Connie’s
husband, and manager for both Connie and the trio—could have contributed in sowing the seeds of dissension by promoting Connie over the group, nudging the trio into the shadows. Perhaps because the trio had run its course. Intense creativity often embodies the seeds of its own destruction within it.

Why were they largely forgotten? Maybe because their music was so new and revolutionary, it defied classification. The music business has a difficult time packaging unique acts. Particularly after they've disbanded. Maybe because they were popular during the Great Depression, a time that was so painful that Americans wanted to forget this distressing part of their history.

After the breakup, Martha and Vet did retire from the biz, settled down to married life and raised families. Connie continued on with a successful solo career. In 1942, she changed the spelling of her name to "Connee." From 1936 to 1954, she had twenty-nine songs on the US charts, including two #1 hits which were duets with Bing Crosby. But our slot machine hit a once-in-a-google jackpot. The Bozzies will never be duplicated. What endures is the amazing musical legacy the Boswell Sisters left to the universe.

PUT THAT SUN BACK IN THE SKY - After being largely forgotten for over seventy years, there is a resurgence of interest in the Boswell Sisters. The Internet has certainly helped create a new audience. YouTube and Vimeo have provided access to dozens of their songs and some film clips and compilation CDs are readily available. Tribute groups and Bozzie-influenced bands are growing from all over the globe: the Pfister Sisters, the Puppini Sisters, Boswellmania, the Stolen Sweets, the DeGeleonardo Sisters, the Ditties, the Boswell Project, the Hazelnuts, O Sister! and more. A burgeoning Boswell Sisters Revival is taking place.

The Boswells created their music in the first part of the 20th century, but this isn't nostalgia. Those 78rpm records may have the audio imprint of another era, but the music itself is still fresh, innovative, and as vibrant as when it was first birthed. The Boswell Sisters deserve wider recognition for their considerable contributions to popular music as well as their important place in American music history.

Thanks to Vet’s granddaughter, Kyla Titus, we now know more of the Boswell Sisters’ story. She wrote a wonderful book, “The Boswell Legacy,” published in 2014. My appreciation of their music deepened the more I learned of their backstory. This book is the best, most authentic source for getting the scoop on the fascinating Boswell saga, from a true insider. If your appetite for the Boswell Sisters has now been aroused, check out the links below. Warning…As I mentioned at the top of this article, listening to Boswell Sisters’ music will put you at risk of “getting Bozzed.” You can get hooked, finding yourself listening to their songs over and over again. Constant exposure can result in a state of long-lasting euphoria.

Editor’s Note:
Paul Chiten is a Los Angeles-based songwriter, composer, producer, musician, singer and artist. His songs have earned him multi-platinum and gold records. His compositions and productions have won Telly, Aurora and Emmy Awards. He has worked with Michael Jackson, Anita Baker, Tina Turner, Donna Summer, Cyndi Lauper and countless others. This three-part series originally appeared in the AFM Local 424 News, and reprinted with the permission of the author.

www.TheBoswellLegacy.com
www.bozzies.org
“The Boswell Legacy” by Kyla Titus
Ain’t Got Nothin’ But the Blues, Part 2

By Marilyn Lester

The American Songbook owes everything to the blues—and in turn to William Christopher Handy who “discovered” the genre in rural Mississippi in 1903, declaring the blues “the weirdest music I had ever heard.” The blues evolved from the field hollers, work songs, spirituals, and country string ballads that captured the anguish of African American slavery and tenant farming. Handy, composer, musician and bandleader, was so taken by this music he began to transcribe and publish sheet music of blues songs. By 1912 with his “Memphis Blues,” the music entered the mainstream. Eventually the blues would make its way from the rural south outward, both musically and sociologically, in the Great Migration of blacks to the north, especially in the 1920s and 1930s.

In the late 1800s, the blues had begun to move from the fields, spread by traveling musicians who’d play at weekend parties and picnics and in the juke joints of the rural south. Many of the earliest blues musicians incorporated the blues into a wider repertoire that included traditional folk songs, vaudeville music and minstrel tunes. The songs often dealt with personal adversity, but also spoke to joyfulness. Ragtime, a syncopated style of music popular from about 1895 to 1917, was influenced by minstrel shows and offbeat dance rhythms (like the cakewalk). The sub-genre, ragtime blues, was a form of the music adapted to a six-string guitar.

But what makes the blues, the blues? The basic form is 12-bars with prominent chord changes predominantly based on the I-IV-V chords of a key (the blues can be played in any key). The blues progression informs lyrics, phrasing, chord structure and duration, and underpins most popular music. This form early on helped birth jazz music. There would be no jazz without the blues; often a jazz orchestra’s brass and reed sections emulate the sound and pitch of a blues guitar. A great many of Duke Ellington’s compositions (even aside from “official” blues) were based on the 12-bar format. Ellington defines the blues in many tunes via the lyric, as in “Ain’t Got Nothin’ But the Blues” (written by Don George) and the “The Blues,” with its pyramidal scheme: “The blues/the blues ain’t/the blues ain’t nothing/the blues ain’t nothing but a cold gray day.”

The blues also had a significant influence on gospel music, and in turn on soul blues and then funk and contemporary rhythm and blues and rock and roll. Early country music was so identified with the blues that country performers such as Hank Williams, Moon Mullican and Jimmie Rodgers all referred to themselves as blues singers. Once the blues became established in urban areas it evolved in Chicago into an electrified style, epitomized in John Lee Hooker and Muddy Waters. Rock musicians—especially British musicians of the 1960s—such as the Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin, John Mayall and Eric Clapton, not only covered blues songs but attribute the blues as an inspiration of their music.

In short, the blues in one way or another has influenced almost every genre of popular music, and the American Songbook is no exception. Richard Whiting (with Earle C. Jones and Charles L. Cooke) dipped into the blues in 1914 with “I Wonder Where My Loving Man Has Gone.” The blues are present in early Berlin; “Home Again Blues” is a perfect example. The Gershwins wrote blues (“Home Blues,” “Three Quarter Blues” and more). Johnny Mercer and Harold Arlen’s classic “Blues in the Night,” Sammy Cahn and Jule Styne’s “There Goes That Song Again,” Jimmy Van Heusen and Mercer’s “Blue Rain” and even Cole Porter with “Lost Liberty Blues” and the more serious “What Is This Thing Called Love?” are all examples of blues songs. The list goes on and on.

The take-away is that without the blues, our lexicon of American music would be unimaginably different.
**Member News...**

If you have any member news, or other items you would like to have considered for this newsletter, please send it by e-mail to the co-editor, Jerry Osterberg: osterbergg@aol.com. It will be subject to editing, depending on size and content, and please remember that we try to go to press two weeks before each monthly meeting. We often get very good items that get to us after the newsletter has been printed and mailed.

Linda Amiel Burns, APSS President, is celebrating four decades of The Singing Experience. A number of APSS members have taken this workshop, some more than once. For those of us who have, we can assure you that you’ll feel like a pro by the night of the performance. Although many students have never sung in public before, the supportive environment has prepared them well for their debut. Call Linda at 212-315-3500 to sign up. The Singing Experience Cable TV show continues on MNN Time Warner: Channel 56 or RCN: Channel 111. The program broadcasts every Sunday at 5:00 PM. You can also see your fellow NYSMS members on YouTube at any time.

Linda is back from her vacation, feeling rested, and about to welcome in the Spring with a new edition of The Singing Experience. Classes for Life is a Song begin on May 16, and continue on May 23, 30, and June 6 from 6:30 – 9:30 @ Studio 353. Performance will take place on June 13 at the Triad @ 7:30 PM. Contact Linda for additional information at 212-315-3500 or linda@singingexperience.com.

Midday Jazz Midtown continues on Wednesdays (1:00 PM to 2:00 PM) at Saint Peter’s Church (East 54 Street entrance) @ Lexington Ave), NYC, Hosted by Ronny Whyte. Programs: April 4, Jonathan Karrant – singer; April 11, Japan Jazz Flute Big Band, Yuko Hoshi – musical director, special guest – Aly Ryerson; April 18, Libby York – singer, Bruce Barth – piano, Neal Miner – bass; April 25, Lou Caputo’s Not-So-Big-Band. Suggested donation: $10. Parking: Icon Parking, East 51 St, between Third and Lexington Ave. $15 including tax for five hours with validation@SaintPeter’s_ReceptionDesk. www.ronnywhyte.com www.saintpeters.org/jazz/midtownjazz.htm.

Linda will be moderating a special seminar on Thursday, April 26, from 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM at The Theater Center @ The Jerry Orbach Theater, 210 West 50th Street, 3rd Floor. Called The Business of Cabaret, the discussion will focus on the tools needed to sustain a career in cabaret. There will be a performance and a social gathering afterward with wine and other beverages. The panel will include Sandi Durell, Bernie Furshpan, Sidney Myer, Mark Nadler, Lennie Watts & Deborah Grace Winer. Tickets are only $20 and can be purchased on-line.

Our Board Member and Editor Jerry Osterberg, who also acts as Vice President & Editor for the Down Town Glee Club, now an organizational member of APSS, is pleased to tell you that they’ll be presenting a Spring Concert on Thursday, May 17 @ 7:30 PM at the Baruch Performing Arts Center, 55 Lexington Avenue at East 25th Street. The program Prince of the City, is a tribute to Hal Prince, whose connection to Broadway reaches back several decades. Song selections will include a baker’s dozen of musicals such as Sweeney Todd, Pajama Game, Damn Yankees, Fiddler of the Roof, Candide, West Side Story, Call Me Madam, Phantom of the Opera, Kiss of the Spider Woman, and more. Tickets can be purchased on-line through www.downtowngleeclub.org. Ticket Price is $21, but APSS members will receive a 50% discount. For additional information, contact Jerry @ 516-435-7817 or osterbergg@aol.com.

Board member Marilyn Lester is now the Executive Director of the new nonprofit American Songbook Association (an outgrowth of the Cabaret Scenes foundation). The mission is publishing the magazine, bringing the music into the schools and providing quality, low-cost performances to senior citizens, students and all who love songbook music. Please check out www.americansongbookassociation.org.

APSS Board member Tom Toce has recorded a studio version of his successful MAC Award nominated cabaret show Songwriter in the House at the Metropolitan Room last year. The recently released CD is different than Tom’s earlier album. It features his singer-songwriter songs and his vocals throughout. Backing Tom are Jon Burr - bass, Sean Harkness - guitar, Justin McEllroy & Peter Millrose - vocals. The CD is available on CD Baby. https://www.cdbaby.com/cd/tomtoce.


Hilary Kole’s newest CD: The Judy Garland Project (Miranda Music) is now on-sale. The remarkable performer conjures the spirit and beauty of Judy Garland in stunning arrangements of songs made famous by the legendary singer, including The Trolley Song, The Man That Got Away, Over the Rainbow.

Do you seek an elusive song? If you do, write APSS Board member Sandy Marrone at smusandy@aol.com or call 856-829-6104. You can also visit Sandy in New Jersey to see thousands and thousands of sheets of music, most of which can be yours very reasonably. She is a marvelous resource and a super-great lady! Having heard from only a few of our members over the past year or so, Sandy wants to remind you that she’s still at it, adding to her collection every day, and always willing to part with sheet music at especially fair prices for us. Sheet music was the reason we were founded thirty plus years ago, after all, and she’s only a phone call or e-mail away. Sandy continues to be willing to offer free appraisals with no expectation of having right of first refusal and can provide unbiased advice as to how and where to sell music. It’s not a secret, pass it on please.

Send Member News to Osterbergg@aol.com no later than the 15th of each month for the next issue.
April is Jazz Appreciation Month, and to celebrate America's own music, we're taking a look at what's new in a genre that's been in constant evolution from the day it was born. And that's the essence of jazz! From writers to players to vocalists, Jazz – What's New? Explores some modern trends and styles, focusing on how new standards and classics of the Songbook are being interpreted.