

Sandi Durell Presents: 19th Annual Songwriter Series

By Jerry Osterberg

During the second outing of the Songwriter Series in 2002, Sandi Durell performed "Opening the Show," the words and music written by Bob Ost. There have been other times since, most notably in 2008, when Durell performed "I Just Love Being Here With You," a classic by Harriet Goldberg. Having brought a countless number of talented composers, lyricists, musicians, and singers over the years to NYSMS and APSS, Durell appeared on May 8th, and still undaunted by the challenge of Zoom, presented yet another glittering afternoon of theater.

First up were Jeff and Jacob Foy, a father/son musical-writing team from Indiana. Jacob, twenty-one, is the composer, arranger, and orchestrator, and co-writes the book and lyrics with the senior Foy. A song from their first show *Emergency*, which debuted in 2019 to great reviews was "Male Nurse," followed by the title song of *One Night Only*, scheduled to debut Off-Broadway this Summer.

Sam Willmott is a musical theater composer and lyricist. He has won numerous awards for his writing, among them the Kleban Prize, Fred Ebb Award, Richard Rodgers Award, and is a recipient of a Jonathan Larson Grant. The opening song "Erase You," performed by Ariana Afsar, is from *Bhangin' It*, a production listed for the 2021/2022 season of La Jolla Playhouse. Willmott

wrote it with Mike Lew and Rehana Lew Mirza. The second number, "Celebrate



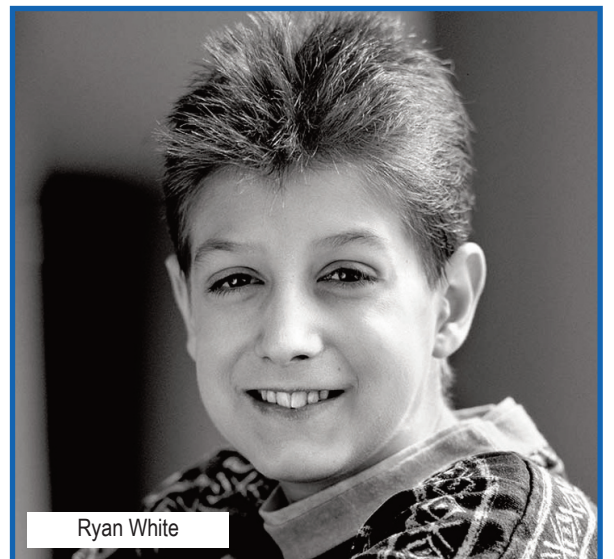
Christiane Noll

the Journey," was presented by a socially distant chorus of fourteen high school students. It depicted cast rehearsals and an opening night performance of a spirited group of youngsters, all of whom are clearly high achievers.

Contributing a beautifully orchestrated and poignant "Empty Stage," was Benjamin Scheuer, the winner of a Drama Desk Award for *The Lion*, and recipient of the Kleban Prize. His diverse resume includes writing music for film and two songs which were adapted into children's books, *Hibernate With Me* and *Hundred Feet Tall*. The second song "Hello Jemima" was accompanied by a clever montage of colorful animation, all

designed to transport the protagonist to England to meet up with Jemima. After utilizing various forms of magical transportation to traverse the ocean, he eventually arrives in the UK. The final stage of the whimsical journey necessitates riding with a stereotypical London cabbie, who brings him to the very front door of Jemima's house. Scheuer's current project is a musical about Peter Roget for the Williamstown Theater Festival.

An award-winning queer director, choreographer and writer, Joe Barros works on Broadway, regionally, internationally, and in film. He also acts as the Artistic Director of New York Theatre Barn which incubates original culture shifting musicals in real time before a live audience. His first song, "Dear Ryan," was inspired by the late



Ryan White

Continued on page 3



President's Message...

Linda Amiel Burns, President

Greetings to APSS Members, Friends, Family and Fans,

It's hard to believe that the June 12th meeting will be the Grand Finale of the 2020-2021 season. I am very proud that we were able to keep the Society alive and well through the pandemic by presenting terrific programs on Zoom. We had the help of many talented producers, performers, composers, technicians, and especially all of you, our supportive members and friends. It is well known that the "magic of music" always helps us get through many of life's challenges, and it is especially true for those who love and understand the healing powers of music and song.

Many thanks to Board Member Sandi Durell for her remarkable Annual Songwriter Series in May. I thought it was her 16th Annual event, but found a program from 2002, so it is nearly 20 years that she has been introducing us to so many exceptional composers, singers, and experts who continue to surprise and entertain us with their amazing talents. It is the lead story in this Newsletter, so read all about it! The Program was recorded so if you missed it, visit our website to see the video.

Many people have asked me if we are going to be able to get back to The Green Room for our first program in October. Jerry Osterberg will indeed be producing a tribute to the late and great Susannah McCorkle. I have not yet heard back from the management, but will let you know our future schedule for the Fall as soon as it is confirmed. Sandi Durell and I met with Bernie Furshpan, who now produces Metropolitan Zoom, and we discussed the possibility of continuing our meetings in a hybrid form. That means not only live programs but also streaming our meetings for people from out of town, and those unable to attend in person. Lots to think about as we emerge from this pandemic and adjusting to the changes that it has brought about.

Looking forward to our Birthday Tribute to Dean Martin, produced by Will Friedwald and Bill Boggs, on June 12th and hope to see you there.

Linda

Linda Amiel Burns, President
American Popular Song Society



L to R- George David Weiss (Lullabye of Birdland), Linda Amiel Burns, Sheldon Harnick, Bobby Weinstein (Going Out of My Head)

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GLEN CHARLOW
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Ryan White, who became the poster child for HIV/AIDS. The text was based upon the many letters written by children to White during his well-chronicled terminal illness. The words were conveyed by twenty-three middle schoolers who gave truly heartfelt performances. "Good," the second of Barros's songs, was performed by a boy and girl from the larger chorus. The talented couple produced some wonderful, sweet harmony.

Jamie deRoy, who produced her own show for APSS in January, was back with a friend and major star, Christiane Noll. With seven Tony Awards to her credit, including *The Band's Visit*, *Angels in America*, and *Once On This Island*, deRoy's diversified career includes not only producing, but performing in cabaret and theater, as well as film, television, and recordings. Noll, who is the daughter of the late Ron Noll, the Emmy Award-winning Music Supervisor for CBS, made her Broadway debut in *Jekyll & Hyde* and was critically acclaimed for her role as "Mother" in the Kennedy Center revival of *Ragtime*. She gave a fantastic performance of "Wish On The Moon," written by deRoy with Shelly Markham and Barry Kleinbort. Noll's most recent project was a live-streamed new musical, *Coming Alive Again*, presented by the Goodspeed Theater Works in Hartford, Connecticut.

Vocalist, pianist and songwriter, Nicole Zuraitis and her husband, the renowned drummer Dan Pugach, were nominated for a Grammy for their arrangement of Dolly Parton's "Jolene." Without her frequent pre-Covid gigs at Birdland Jazz Club and 55 Bar in Greenwich Village, Zuraitis has been presenting her own shows in *Virtual Piano Lounge*. She has also released her

newest singer-songwriter album,

All Wandering Hearts, which includes "Make it Flood," the first of two songs Zuraitis performed at the May meeting. The second song, "I Love You a Latte," was written as a tribute to her coffee loving spouse. The charming



Nicole Zuraitis

singer managed to coax out a laugh each time she delivered the title line, which happened a "lotte."

Pandemic or not, like everyone on the program, Alan Schmuckler has been a

Music Producer for the Showtime series *Kidding*, where his work was performed by Ariana Grande, Kesha, Dick Van Dyke, and Jim Carrey. He is the winner of Kleban Prize in Musical Theatre, and the Richard Rodgers Award for his new stage musical *The Monster*, an adaptation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Schmuckler performed a lovely tune "Sparrow," and "All Aboard," performed by the Tony Award winning actress Jessie Mueller, and written for *1919: A New Musical*. {It is worth noting that one of the musicals which made it to the stage in 1919, was *A Lonely Romeo*, which featured "Any Old Place With You," written by a seventeen year old Richard Rodgers with Lorenz Hart. Although it was the one song they contributed to the score, it represented the first time they had worked together. Theirs was the only published song from the play, and the first of Rodgers' songs to be published}.

Doug Cohen's incredibly impressive resume includes *No Way to Treat a Lady*, *The Gig*, *The Big Time*, and *Children's Letters to God*. Along the way, he won the Fred Ebb Award, two Richard Rodgers Awards, and a MAC Award for "Shalom, Santa," written with APSS Board member Tom Toce. His latest musical, *Don't Stay Safe*, which was co-written with Cheryl L. Davis, was nominated for a 2021 Drama League Award. Cohen introduced Jeffrey Deutsch, who performed a breezy "I've Got My Eye on You," and Karen Mason, whose performance of "Come Back to Bed" was touching. Cohen wrote it as an assignment for a songwriting master class hosted by Lee Adams, the winner of two Tony Awards. Mason can currently be seen in the Netflix series *Halston*.



busy fellow. He has written the music, words, and score, and served as the

Las Vegas in the Heyday of the Rat Pack

By Marilyn Lester

Today's Las Vegas is a far cry from the swinging, Mob-ruled town of the 1950s, but back in the day, the plentiful casinos were filled with high rollers and



an abundance of very high-profile, A-list performers from New York, Broadway, Hollywood and beyond. The 1950s was the heyday of iconic Las Vegas; it was the era when the Rat Pack dominated a city built on wild, exotic, late-night entertainment.

The region Las Vegas occupies has been inhabited since prehistory, but it wasn't until westward expansion in the early 1800s that a town was established. That outpost, used mainly as a water stop for wagon trains, and later railroads, grew rapidly and became the incorporated city of Las Vegas in 1911. When work began on nearby Hoover Dam in 1931, the population of the town suddenly swelled, bringing in construction workers—and the Mafia, which cannily saw an opportunity for profit built on casinos and entertainment. Thus, the first gambling license was issued and Las Vegas was on its way. In the latter years of the 1930s, the dam completed, workers were replaced by a growing number of tourists who embraced the city as a burgeoning resort destination.

In 1941, hotels and casinos began to pop up with regularity, beginning with the El Rancho Vegas and the Mob-financed Flamingo. Other now legendary hotel casinos, all mostly Mob-connected, soon followed, including the Sahara, Sands, Riviera, Fremont, Desert Inn and

Tropicana. By 1954, 8 million people were visiting Vegas yearly, spending \$200 million in an ever-increasing number of casinos, and enjoying big attractions such as Liberace, Bing Crosby, Andy Williams, Carol Channing, and of course, the Rat Packers—Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis Jr., Dean Martin, Joey Bishop and Peter Lawford.

In those days, whites-only policies prevented Blacks from staying at “white” hotels, even though they might be headliners there. Infamously, entertainers such as Sammy Davis, Jr. and Ella Fitzgerald, were forced to stay elsewhere and had to access the venues they were performing in through service entrances. Ironically, it was the Mob that made initial attempts at desegregating the hotels and casinos it controlled. It was a profit-motivated stance. By putting nonwhite-owned clubs out of business, the Mob could control even more market



share. In 1955, crime boss Will Max Schwartz opened the upscale Moulin Rouge, the first racially integrated hotel casino in Vegas. It closed within a year, but only because Schwartz and his business partners fell out. Still, the seed of integration had been planted, especially as the Civil Rights Movement was gaining steam.

Famously, Frank Sinatra was a driving force in integrating the casinos. Sinatra refused to play at the Sands Hotel unless pal Sammy Davis, Jr. was provided with a room on the premises. Joined by other Rat Pack members, including Dean Martin, the group began making similar demands on other hotel

casinos in the city. Martin, by the way, actually owned a minor piece of a Las Vegas hotel casino, the Riviera, when he was a headliner in the showroom there.

Frank Sinatra had given his first Vegas performance in September of 1951 at the Desert Inn, but the Sands had become a particularly popular venue in the early 1950s. It attracted names such as Lena Horne (billed as “The Satin Doll”), Louis Armstrong, Judy Garland, Marlene Dietrich, Jimmy Durante and many more. The main room, the Copa Room (named after New York’s Copacabana nightclub) employed band leader/conductor, Antonio Morelli, who became a famous Vegas player in his own right.

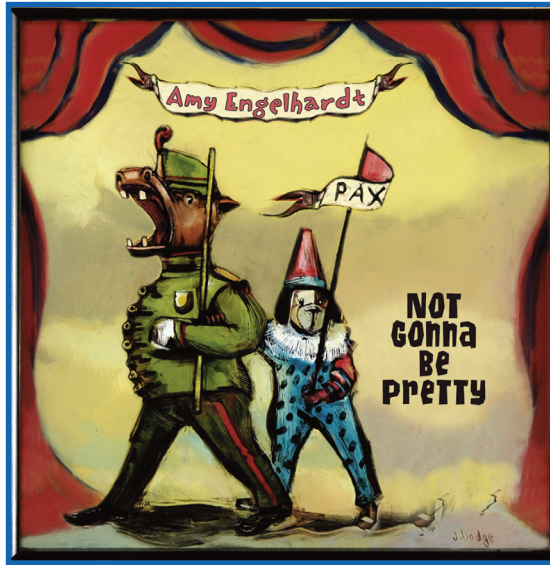
“Vegas Vic” made his debut in 1951; this was the 40-foot neon cowboy sign erected above the Pioneer Club, aligning with a promotional campaign proclaiming that Las Vegas was “Still a Frontier Town.” Vegas Vic was mechanical, able to move its arms, wink and blow smoke rings from his cigarette. Another tidbit about Vegas: Louis Prima and his then-wife, Keely Smith, pioneered the lounge act concept at the Sahara; the two quickly became one of the biggest late-night attractions in town.

Some other highlights of the 1950s include a two-week show, headlined by Ronald Reagan, at The Last Frontier, in 1954; the last appearance of the team of Bud Abbott and Lou Costello before their permanent breakup in 1956; and Elvis Presley’s Vegas debut in April 1956 at the New Frontier Hotel. In 1955, Noël Coward was paid the then



Songwriters cont...

The last performer of the afternoon, and the person who literally held the entire program together as APSS's resident tech expert, was MAC Songwriting Award winner Amy Engelhardt. She has garnered a Richard Rodgers Award, is an O'Neill Finalist, and an OBA Best New Musical nominee for *Bastard Jones*. Other theater writing includes *Triptych*, commissioned by the New York Museum of Transit, Carl Sagan's *Contact*, and *Tesla*. Those old enough to remember the beloved quiz show *Name That Tune* may find it interesting to know that Engelhardt is the creator, director and Artistic Producer of *Tune in Time*, New York City's musical theater game show. Engelhardt presented a promotional video for



Bastard Jones, a musical choreographed by Joe Barros, and completely financed with voluntary contributions at every stage of the project. The cast of nine,

which included two handicapped singers and dancers, performed "The Pursuit of Happiness." The storyline of the play, which addresses discrimination of every kind, provides an entirely fresh meaning to the iconic phrase.

The program ran close to three hours. Because every songwriter was live, Durell was free to engage in lively and enlightening conversations. Including the singers there were several faces and names which were familiar to APSS members, although a goodly number were not. It is refreshing to know that such exceptional talents continue to appear, and Durell manages to find them. Our sincere gratitude to Sandi Durell for two decades of sparkling entertainment! 🎵

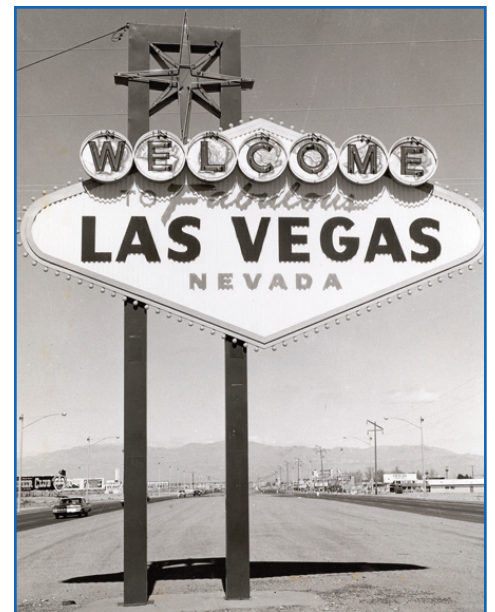
*Have a nice Summer
See you in October when
membership will be due*

Rat Pack cont...

astronomical sum of \$160,000 for a four-week run at the Desert Inn. The first topless show, *Minsky's Follies*, was introduced in 1957, which opened doors for similar shows, such as the French production *Lido de Paris* in 1958 at the Stardust Hotel. Another Las Vegas icon was introduced in 1959—the installation of the large "Welcome to Las Vegas Nevada" sign, designed by Betty Willis.

As the 1960s rolled on, Las Vegas began its slow but steady morph into the city we know today as a place that's more Disneyland than Sin City. It began in 1966 with Howard Hughes, the highly eccentric and hugely wealthy entrepreneurial financier, taking up residence in the Desert Inn Hotel. Hughes had begun making a practice of moving into and out of hotels (always in the top

floor penthouse), residing for varying lengths of time at his whim. He and his entourage of personal aides arrived at the hotel in November, 1966. Eventually asked to leave by management, and refusing to vacate, Hughes bought the Desert Inn in early 1967. Shortly thereafter, he began extending his influence in Vegas by creating an empire of real estate, hotels and media outlets—spending an estimated \$300 million to do so. Hughes became one of the most powerful men in Las Vegas, credited with disengaging the city from organized crime and transforming the image of Las Vegas from its Wild West frontier roots into an increasingly cosmopolitan destination. Now, more than a half century later, the Las Vegas of the Rat Pack is only a memory of a place once



hiply exotic and ineffably glamorous. 🎵

By Steffie Lederman

LIVIN' LARGE, *Lovin' Lucy*

GLEN CHARLOW OPENS HIS ARMS AND
HIS HEART TO THE MEMORY OF EVER-
LOVABLE LUCILLE BALL

Part Two of Two Parts

Determined to chase down the real collections on his own, rather than just acquiring them in one fell swoop, Charlow had to retool his self-analysis. "The horrible realization that I was a collector set in", he mockingly laments. And knowing that he wasn't just casually buying, but was keenly collecting, helped him to pursue his new acquisitions with a fervent passion.



Charlow unearthed his future collectibles through legwork and logic. He scoured flea markets, classified ads, secondhand stores, and then eBay, which was just starting to launch on the Internet. "I once found a magazine, which was very old at the time, that had an ad for the Lucille Ball Fan Club on the back," he reminisces. "I wrote to the address on the ad and asked to join the club. I got back a notice saying that the original fan club no longer existed, but another get-together was in the works."

"Soon his solo searching became enhanced through connections with like-minded collectors. He began corresponding, visiting, attending conventions, and rubbing elbows with Lucille Ball aficionados. His horizons were opening up and his collection was both expanding and becoming fine-tuned - more personally honed."

One of the benefits of meeting other Lucy zealots was the chance to begin relationships with crew members, guest stars, and other creative types who orbited around Lucy's stardom.

Additionally, he has had an active correspondence with Lucy and Desi's daughter, Lucie Arnaz, an entertainer in her own right.

Having originally migrated to the Big Apple to try his luck in showbiz, Charlow has had opportunities to tread the stage boards. Combining his love of showmanship with his favorite TV show, he has mounted a one-man cabaret act entitled "Loving Lucy: A Tribute to Lucy, Desi, & 'I Love Lucy'". He's performed this revue at a New York City club, and has made cameo appearances with bits and pieces from it at other performers' venues. "I sing songs like the ones done on 'I Love Lucy' - the ones mainly performed by Desi Arnaz," he explains. "I sing a 'Wildcat' medley [a show Lucille Ball starred in on Broadway] and a 'Mame' medley [a film that Lucy helmed]. I tell about the journey Lucy took through her career to get the title of 'Queen of Comedy', and I talk about my collection and how I got it started."

Glen Charlow's evolution as a collector and as a pop culture historian is something to sing about. He has taken a childhood fancy and has cultivated it into something that sustains him socially and professionally. In addition to his sought-after work as a graphic designer, he has a Web site that sells Lucy-centric collectibles and is currently putting the finishing touches on a CD of his favorite songs. "Two Desi favorites, 'Cuban Pete' and 'Straw Hat Song', are both on the CD," he shares.

Though his life with Lucy has helped him to forge lasting friendships with talented artists, super collectors,

and other quirky characters, there's one special person he was never able to embrace: Lucy herself. "The one and only time I got up the nerve to write a fan letter," he says, "I sent it to her in the hospital. The day after I mailed the

letter is when she died. I got back a note from the family that was basically a 'thanks for remembering Mom and thanks for writing.'"

A few years after his favorite performer passed away, Charlow commissioned an artist to create a portrait that immortalized Lucille Ball in her different characters and at different stages of her life. The color portrait hangs in his living room today.

"I sent a photocopy to Lucie Arnaz and asked what she thought of it," Charlow shares. Lucy's daughter liked the idea, but wasn't too pleased with the central portrait image. "The rest of it was fine, though," he continues.

The spirit of Lucy pervades Charlow's home, and the memory of her talent resides in his heart. He sees her legacy of laughter and love as universal and unyielding: "Wherever you go, there are kids and adults who say they have favorite episodes, and they never once tire of talking about how great her shows are. Many say her show has healing powers. I fully believe this. If you're ever feeling blah, running a fever, or are laid up in bed for a few days, turn on an episode of 'I Love Lucy'. I guarantee she'll make you feel 100 percent better. I'm no doctor, but take in an episode of 'I Love Lucy', and call me in the morning!"

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