



**DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF CLASSIC POPULAR MUSIC**

## Hello, Dolly! "A Musical Comedy Dream" Richard Skipper: Matchmaker Supreme NYSMS Hosts 50th Anniversary Celebration

By Jerry Osterberg

Never before in the long annals of the New York Sheet Music Society has the hall been filled to overflowing capacity! Nor has there ever been such electricity, excitement and anticipation for a show without

the grip of frigid weather following a blizzard that had dumped a foot of snow only days before. Eager to move out of the cold, New Yorkers and tourists alike slowly made their way in, blithely unaware of the

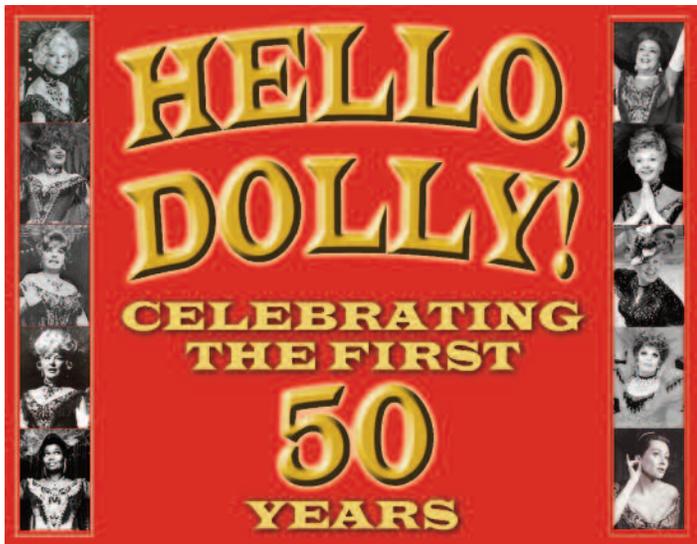
artist. He's been known to immerse himself in his subject with such abandon that when he first met Carol Channing, she exclaimed to her husband: "Oh, look Charles, it's me!" (referring to her then husband, Charles Lowe). A highlight of Richard's career was appearing in the lead role with a cast of 125 and a 25 piece orchestra in a special benefit production of *Hello, Dolly!*

As one of the most successful musicals of all time, *Hello Dolly* played 2,844 performances, staged three Broadway and three West End revivals, numerous national and international touring companies, and regional productions. Costing \$440,000 to produce, modest by today's standards, it grossed more than \$60 million and returned a \$9 million profit to its backers. Besides Carol Channing, the original production included David Burns, Eileen Brennan, and Charles Nelson Reilly. Except for one song on which his collaborator was Bob Merrill, Jerry Herman wrote all of the words and music. Michael Stewart did the book, adapting Thornton Wilder's *The Matchmaker*, Gower Champion directed and choreographed, and David Merrick produced. In spite of stiff competition from *Funny Girl*, *Hello, Dolly!* captured ten of the eleven Tony Awards it was nominated for in 1964, a record unsurpassed until *The Producers* in 2001.

Special  
8  
Page  
Edition

A half-century later, Richard Skipper brought together many of the same people who had made it all happen, and the NYSMS audience couldn't wait to meet them. From the original company were Sondra Lee, a graduate of *High Button Shoes* and *Peter Pan*, recruited personally by Gower Champion to play Minnie Fay while she was away in Rome; David Hartman, cast as Rudolph, the Prussian majordomo of the Harmonia Gardens Restaurant, and doubling as a stage manager; Nicole Barth, one of Champion's trusted dance captains, who had a

*Continued on page 4*



music! Every available chair was shoehorned into the room, aisles suddenly vanished, and still the people came. The turnout was large enough to virtually redefine SRO.

To mark the occasion of the Broadway opening of *Hello, Dolly* almost fifty years to the day, and with countless performers to choose from, Richard Skipper had assembled a marvelous company of alumni, several from the original cast and others from revivals and various touring companies. On the day that the doors of the St. James Theatre opened – January 16, 1964 - New York City was still in

extraordinary experience they were about to share.

During his professional life Richard Skipper has portrayed a singing sailor, a biblical king, a scheming suitor and an employee of a hay & feed store, the latter as "Barnaby Tucker," a principal character in *Hello, Dolly!* But, without a doubt, Richard's favorite role has been that of Dolly Gallagher Levi in the persona of Carol Channing.

Although the thoroughly outgoing and warmhearted Richard has a broad resume which includes performing, writing, coaching and producing, he is best known as a tribute



Carol Channing



## President's Message...

Linda Amiel Burns, President

The NYSMS season began 2014 with a fabulous and historic event! Richard Skipper produced a marvelous program celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the opening of Jerry Herman's hit musical, *Hello Dolly*. For many years, Richard has been working on a book on this subject and is the world's expert on the show. He brought together members of the original cast, who shared their memories of how this classic musical came about. The Musician's Hall at Local 802 was jammed to the rafters, and every seat was taken. I really don't remember ever seeing such a remarkable turnout for any meeting. The afternoon was thrilling from beginning to end, and you can read all about it in this issue in a story written by our Editor, Jerry Osterberg. Harry Haun, the renowned writer, was at the meeting and wrote a wonderful article in Playbill - you can see at this address: (this page is linked to the article. Just click on this page only)

<http://www.playbill.com/news/article/186700-Looking-at-the-Old-Girl-Now--Hello-Dolly-50-Years-Later/pg1?tsrc=hph>

Don't miss our program on Saturday, February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2014: **Kathryn Allyn and Frank Ponzio present "Playing Hard To Get"** produced by Jerry Osterberg.

Kathryn is a talented young singer and this note explains her passion for great and undiscovered songs: *"Over the years, on NPR, Public TV and at sundry online locales, I heard songs which surprised me and lingered in my memory. Too often, I tried to put my hands on sheet music only to find it unavailable; my favorites were inevitably out of print. Having accumulated a list of orphaned songs and unaware of the New York Sheet Music Society (which could doubtless have saved me some effort), I took them down with my ear from the recordings and arranged them myself. With a huge arranging assist and much coaching by Frank Ponzio—and after a yeoman's work—we have a set of the unknown, neglected gems of Jo Stafford, Julia Lee, Billy Holiday and Betty Hutton."*

For the last two meetings I have taken a table at our "flea market" to put out music books, vocal selections and sheets for members and their guests to take for FREE! Many people donate their collections to the NYSMS and I intend to continue to bring whatever I can carry, to give it away to all of you. Those who make the donations say that they want to give their collections to people who appreciate and can use them.

When you tell people about the NYSMS and say that it is the best bargain in town, now you can hand them our new brochure designed by Glen Charlow, which will help explain who we are and what we do. Let's continue to spread the word to keep this all going!

Happily anticipating seeing you at The Musician's Hall at Local 802 on February 8th for another terrific program!

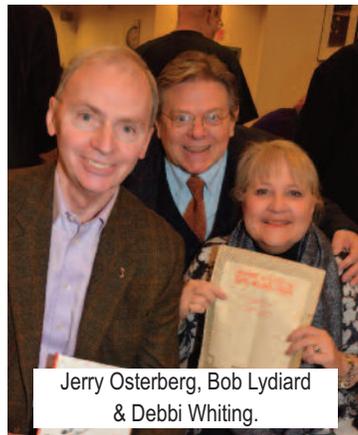
Best Wishes

*Linda*

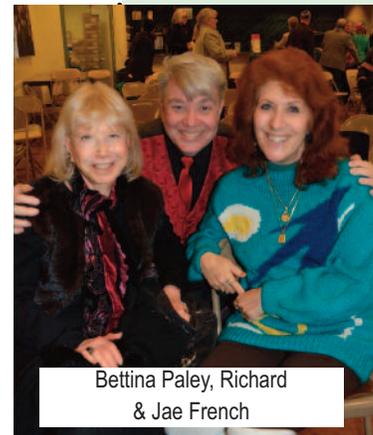
Photos by Rose Billings



Linda Amiel Burns, Lee Roy Reams,  
Richard Skipper, Glen Charlow, Dan Sherman &  
(sitting) Linda Langton.



Jerry Osterberg, Bob Lydiard  
& Debbi Whiting.



Bettina Paley, Richard  
& Jae French

*New York  
Sheet Music Society*

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**MEETING LOCATION - Local 802 - Musicians' Hall at 322 West 48th Street.  
Program: 1:45 - 3:30PM.**



## 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 Osterbergg: [osterbergg@AOL.com](mailto: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, NYSMS President, is celebrating the 36 year of The Singing Experience. She would love to have more of our Society's members join the cast in joyful song. Talk to those who have – Joan Adams, Lynn DiMenna, Jerry Osterberg and Carol Shedlin. 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 are every Sunday at 5:00 PM. You can also see your fellow NYSMS members on YouTube at any time.

The Singing Experience performance of *Easy to Love* will take place at Stage 72 @ The Triad on **Tuesday, February 18 at 7:30 PM**. Call 212-315-3500 for tickets and information.

*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: **February 5**, Jay Leonhart: Family & Friends, Jay – bass & vocals; **February 12**, Junior Mace – piano, Hide Tanaka – bass, Michi Fuji – violin; **February 19**, Valerie Capers – pianist/singer; **February 26**, Eugene Marlow's Heritage Ensemble. Suggested donation: \$10. Parking: Icon Parking, East 51 St, between Third and Lexington Ave. \$15 including tax for five hours with validation @ Saint Peter's reception desk. [www.saintpeters.org/jazz/midtownjazz.htm](http://www.saintpeters.org/jazz/midtownjazz.htm) [www.ronnywhyte.com/](http://www.ronnywhyte.com/).

**MEMBERS: SELL YOUR CDS AT MEETINGS!** You've seen Kitty Skrobela at a table full of CDS against the wall. Those represent the recordings of members of the NYSMS. Bring two of yours to any meeting and receive \$15 for each one sold. You can leave one with Kitty for the next time or bring more if both are sold. People check every month to see what's new. Don't lose out! Don't be shy! Bring in those CDS of yours and walk out with hard money!

Do you seek an elusive song? If you do, write NYSMS Board member Sandy Marrone @ [smusandy@aol.com](mailto: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!

Stephen Hanks will reprise *Beyond American Pie: The Don McLean Songbook* at the Metropolitan Room, 34 West 22 Street on **Wednesday, February 5 @ 7:00 PM**, \$20 cover (MAC \$15) + 2 drink minimum. Call 212-206-0440 or 1-800-838-3006.

Sandi Durell has launched TheaterPizzazz.com, a site featuring reviews on and off Broadway, news, previews, celebrity interviews, videos, film reviews, Kidstuff and more. Featured are writers with discerning and informed opinions. Visit [www.TheaterPizzazz.com](http://www.TheaterPizzazz.com).

NYSMS Board member Tom Toce has just released his CD *Hopelessly in Love: The Lyrics of Tom Toce*. It features Carole J. Bufford, Jack Donahue and Jennifer Sheehan, as well as Matthew Martin Ward on piano, Boots Maleson on bass, and guest vocalist Jane Monheit. You'll find it at Amazon, AllMusic, Barnes & Noble and iTunes. [www.tomtocemusic.com](http://www.tomtocemusic.com).

Bobbie Horowitz Hosts: *Great Song Writers Up Close*, on **Thursday, February 13 @ 7:00 PM** at the Metropolitan Room, 34 West 22<sup>nd</sup> Street, honoring David Friedman, Richard Whiting, and Sammy Timberg. The show will feature Eric Yves Garcia, Marissa Mulder, Stacy Sullivan, Victoria Rae Sook, David F. Slone and Bill Zeffiro. David Friedman is a composer, lyricist, conductor and recipient of Backstage Bistro, MAC and Johnny Mercer Awards. He's written for popular singers such as Barry Manilow, Diana Ross, Nancy LaMott, Laurie Beechman and Leslie Uggams; and conducted music scores for Disney animated features, including *Beauty and the Beast*, *Aladdin*, *Pocahontas* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. Richard Whiting composed many popular songs with lyricists including Ray Egan, Johnny Mercer, Leo Robin, Ralph Rainger, Gus Kahn and Oscar Hammerstein II. Among his best known songs are "Hurray for Hollywood," "Ain't We Got Fun?" "On the Good Ship Lollipop," "My Ideal," "Till We Meet Again," and "Too Marvelous for Words." Sammy Timberg wrote music for the cartoons of the Fleischer and Famous Studios for characters *Popeye*, *Betty Boop*, *Superman*, *Little Lulu* and *Casper the Friendly Ghost*. He also served as musical director for the Marx Brothers early in their careers. With lyricists Buddy Kaye and Sammy Cahn he wrote the popular song "Help Yourself to my Heart" which was recorded by Frank Sinatra in 1947 with Axel Stordahl. \$20 cover, 2 drink minimum, \$5 discount for MAC, ASCAP and BMI members. Call 212-206-0440 for reservations or online at <http://metropolitanroom.com/show.cfm?id=133073&cart>.

NYSMS member Dennis Livingston's debut CD *The Stories in My Mind: The Songs of Dennis Livingston*, is the subject of a one-hour interview hosted by Jim Farley at the *Musical/World Podcast* website. The program includes a conversation about the songs and his life as a cabaret/jazz songwriter, along with anecdotes about his songwriting father Jerry Livingston. The podcast can be heard at [www.musicalworld.us](http://www.musicalworld.us) or the iTunes Store (write musicalworld in the search window). CD can be purchased from CD Baby: <http://cdbaby.com/cd/dennislivingston>.

talent for keeping the director calm; Ron Young, a singer/dancer who was selected just days after arriving from his native Oklahoma; Paul Berne, a replacement dancer; Charles Karel, who later appeared in *Dear World* on Broadway and at the Metropolitan and New York City Operas; Jan LaPrad, and Joan "Buttons" Leonard.

Alumni from various domestic and international tours and revivals included Carleton Carpenter, who debuted in David Merrick's first production in 1944, wrote special material for Debbie Reynolds as well as best-selling mystery books, and shared a gold record with Reynolds for "Abba Dabba Honeymoon"; Wayne Clark, who played 'Louie' the head waiter for two and one half years; Jeanne Lehman, a veteran of *Beauty & The Beast*, *The Sound of Music*, and cabaret performances with Peter Howard, Lee Roy Reams and Steve Ross;

Bob Lydiard, who played Charlie Brown in the original off-Broadway production of *You're a Good Man Charlie Brown*, directed the *Cosby Show* and excels as a professional whistler; Megan Thomas, who eventually got to play the lead in a regional production of *Hello, Dolly!* is married to Bob Lydiard, although they never appeared in the show together; Lee Roy Reams, a Broadway regular – *Sweet Charity*, *42<sup>nd</sup> Street*, *Applause* and more – and ubiquitous cabaret performer; Andrea Bell Wolff, singing and dancing since the age of four, and once a performer with a Greenwich Village based band *Your Father's Mustache*; Spider Duncan Christopher, the son of a singer/bandleader, director, acting coach, and one of eight dancers chosen from among nine-hundred; and Johnny Beecher Sheridan, who, asked by Angela Lansbury what was his favorite show he had appeared in, was

wise enough to give the politically correct response.

Richard did a magnificent job as the master of ceremonies and interviewer of three separate panels. After introducing John Anthony Gilvey, the author of *Before the Parade Passes By: Gower Champion and the Glorious American Musical*, who talked about the fascinating evolution of the story which inspired generations of artists to invest a bit of themselves, Richard's enviable role was to stand back and let nature take its course. The conversations and anecdotes among the former colleagues and friends flowed effortlessly. They had participated in a legendary Broadway musical which had long since become an unbreakable pillar of theater history. Coming when it did for most, it was a life affirming experience they would never forget. The youthful enthusiasm

these actors had brought to the iconic play was clearly just as fresh as if was yesterday. For the audience at Local 802, members and guests alike, the joy which lit up the stage that afternoon was contagious. Judging by the roar of the crowd, none of them anxious to leave, it was a day that they would remember fondly. The palpable glow which remained seemed a catalyst to resuming old friendships and forging new ones.

One of the sweetest moments of the day was when Richard read a letter from Jerry Herman to the *Hello, Dolly!* alumni thanking them for helping to create the greatest success of his brilliant career. Perhaps the best compliment we can offer to Richard Skipper in turn for the wonderful program is to let Gower Champion say it: "I think maybe we've got something!" Please visit Richards website [www.CallOnDolly.com](http://www.CallOnDolly.com). 



Top Row: **Ron Young** (Original Company), **Paul Berne** (Replacement Dancer), **Wayne Clark** (First National Company), **John Anthony Gilvey** (author of *Before the Parade Passes By: Gower Champion and the Glorious American Musical*), **Spider Duncan Christopher** (First National Company), **David Hartman** (*Rudolph*, stage manager: Original Company), **Lee Roy Reams** (*Cornelius* 1977 revival, director 1994 revival), **Johnny Beecher Sheridan** (*Barnaby Tucker*, *Mary Martin* International tour), **Carleton Carpenter** (*Barnaby*, *Mary Martin* International tour), **Charlie Karel** (Original Company).

Seated: **Joan "Buttons" Leonard** (Original Company), **Jan LaPrad** (Original Company), **Andrea Bell** (first National tour), **Nicole Barth** (original company), **Richard Skipper**, **Sondra Lee** (*Minnie Fay*, Original Company), **Megan Thomas** (last National tour), **Jeanne Lehman** (*Irene Molloy*, last national tour), **Bob Lydiard** (*Barnaby*, 1977 Revival)



Jeanne Lehman, Richard, Bob Lydiard, Sondra Lee & Megan Thomas

Photo by Rose Billings



David Burns & Carol Channing



Spider Duncan, Christopher, Harvey Evans, & Wayne Clark

Photo by Rose Billings



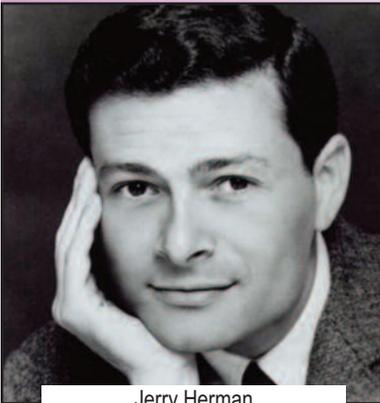
Carleton Carpenter & Richard

Photo by Rose Billings

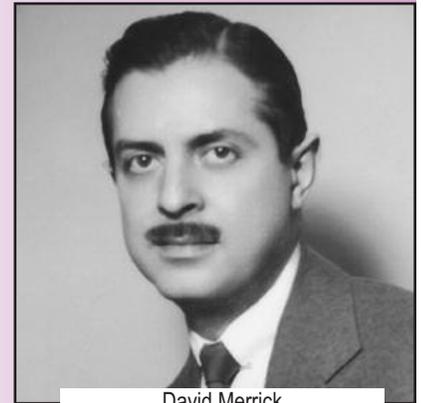


Richard & David Hartman

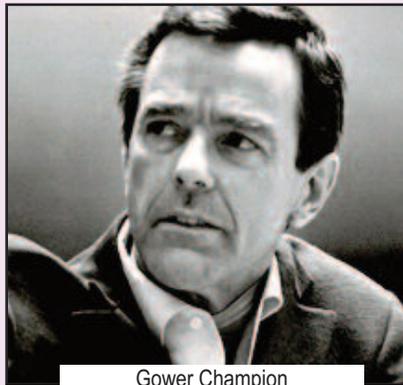
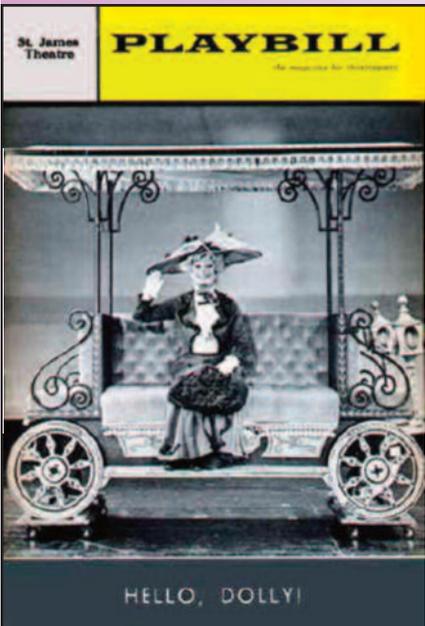
Photo by Rose Billings



Jerry Herman



David Merrick



Gower Champion



Carol Channing & Jerry Herman



Lee Roy Reams & Carleton Carpenter

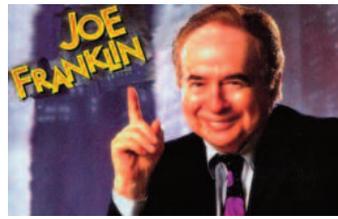
Photo by Rose Billings

## Chatting with 'Mr. Nostalgia' Joe Franklin

By Edie Stokes

Joe Franklin was—and is still—called *Mr. Nostalgia* from his earlier days on radio and TV where he interviewed stage and screen personalities down *Memory Lane*. When I spoke with the master interviewer at his office, I felt I was going back in time. Joe looked and sounded like he had some fifty years ago. The office was swamped with posters, music, records and CD's attesting to Joe's rich background in show business. He has written over twenty books about his experiences throughout the years.

*Mr. Nostalgia* lit up the nighttime hours, starting at midnight, with humorous chit-chat and interesting personalities. Joe Franklin invented the talk show, starting a new trend. He has been a radio and TV personality for over forty-five years, setting a high in the *Guinness Book of World Records*. In the course of his career, Joe interviewed five U.S. Presidents, including Ronald Reagan and Richard Nixon, as well as some of Hollywood's royalty, such as Cary Grant, Lucille Ball and Shirley Temple. He loved to help performers and at one point he even tried to reunite Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis after their split.



Joe also gave many people their first exposure—Barbara Streisand, Billy Crystal and Al Pacino among others.

Joe went to Benjamin Franklin High School in the Bronx and palled around with a neighbor, Bernie Schwartz, who later became Tony Curtis, whom he remembers fondly. Joe had some favorite singers—naming two 'oldies but goodies'—Kate Smith and Al Jolson. His favorite performer was Eddie Cantor because he made people laugh; something much needed in the depression years.

Joe's favorite interview was the one he did with Bing Crosby. He really enjoyed his personality. When Joe did an interview, he was always sincere and cared about the person he was speaking with. He recently performed at the *Metropolitan Room* to a sold-out crowd, his versatility now extending into stand-up comedy. Joe Franklin is another 'oldie but goodie' and when he smiles, he can still light up the room! 🎵

Editor's note: This originally appeared in [www.TheaterPizzazz.com](http://www.TheaterPizzazz.com).

## A Message from Richard Skipper..

My love of Hello, Dolly actually began with my love of Carol Channing. Being a child of the sixties, it was also a song I heard on the radio and television specials from many artists...but the version I always gravitated to was the original cast recording. I eventually found myself performing AS Carol Channing around the world. I also have come to know her personally. When I decided to close the door on that chapter of my life performing as Carol, I began to ponder what was next.

As I began to realize that the fiftieth anniversary of Hello, Dolly was looming, I decided to write a book celebrating the women who have played Dolly. Interestingly enough, that decision came to me while I was in Palm Springs for the Palm Springs Film Festival. They were screening Dori Berenstein's award-winning documentary, *Carol Channing: Larger Than Life*, of which I am honored to be a part of. I say interestingly because that is where I conducted my first interview. It was with Roberta Olden, who

was Ginger Rogers' personal assistant. We first met on neutral territory, at Roberta's place of business. Once the ice was broken, Roberta invited me back to her home to share with me passages from Ginger



Roger's diary as well as her mom's diary entries from both the opening and closing night of her Broadway run of Hello, Dolly! She had taken over from Channing when Carol went on to do her first national tour.

After Roberta, one interview led to another and they all, for the most part,

came easily. As I did more and more interviews, I became more and more convinced that I desired to celebrate EVERYTHING about Dolly and the past fifty years. This project has become a true labor of love.

To drop a few names, I have been lucky enough to interview Morgan Freeman, who made his Broadway debut in Hello, Dolly starring Pearl Bailey, Georgia Engel who made her debut in Dolly with Phyllis Diller and would continue with Ethel Merman, and many others too numerous

to name here. I have been lucky enough to visit the homes of many I have come to know and love. Thanks to the New York Sheet Music's own Glen Charlow, my designer and friend, we began compiling a website called CallonDolly.com. As I move towards making this book a reality, I hope the website will suffice. I really would LOVE your feedback and/or suggestions. Feel free to contact me if anything is missing that you think should be included.

I believe it was well over a year ago that I approached Linda Amiel Burns about celebrating the anniversary of Hello, Dolly with The New York Sheet Music Society. We secured the date and eventually changed it to be closer to the actual anniversary of the Broadway opening. As we started getting closer to the date, I began putting together a reunion of the original cast and other casts that Carol Channing led. That also led to other companies such as the *Mary Martin International* tour which co-starred

*Continued on page 8*

On April 14, 1961, David Merrick met with Michael Stewart over breakfast in the Oak Room of the Plaza

## Hello, Dolly! Before the Parade & After

By Jerry Osterberg

Merrick had recently acquired the rights for an adaptation of Thornton Wilder's *The Matchmaker*, and invited Stewart to write the book for a new show. Basing his creation on original material dating back to 1836, Wilder wrote *The Merchant of Yonkers*, adding a new character Mrs. Dolly Gallagher Levi, a meddlesome matchmaker who had a natural talent to charm. She was the kind of woman who drew attention whenever she entered a room.

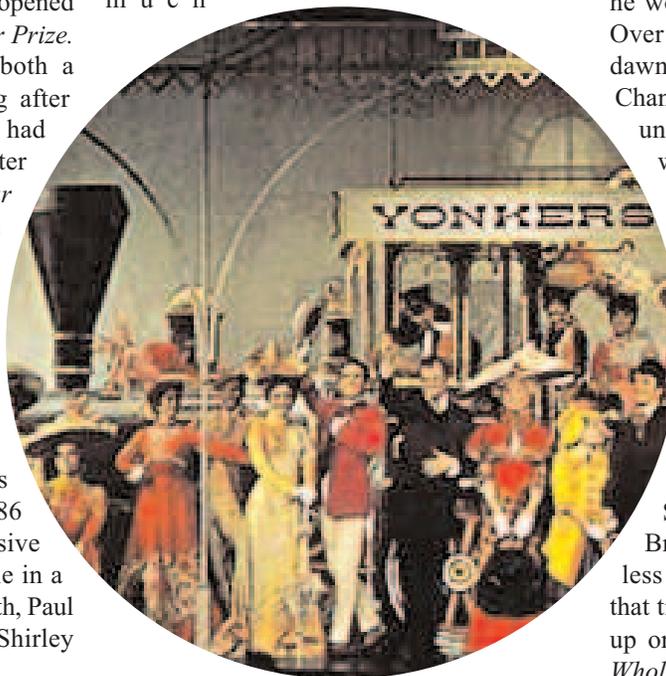
*The Merchant of Yonkers* opened on Broadway on December 28, 1938, closing after thirty-nine performances. Earlier that same year, another of Wilder's plays opened – *Our Town* – which won the Pulitzer Prize. Thirty years later, a revival won both a Drama Desk and Tony Award, long after Grover's Corner and the Webbs had become permanent fixtures of theater history. Possibly boosted by *Our Town's* success, the playwright began the process of revising *The Merchant of Yonkers*, this time focusing the story on Dolly. Following a well-received production in Edinburgh, *Matchmaker* made its Broadway debut on December 5, 1955 with Ruth Gordon as the now prominent character Dolly and Robert Morse as Barnaby. The show ran for 486 performances followed by an extensive national tour. Morse reprised his role in a film version in 1958 with Shirley Booth, Paul Ford, Anthony Perkins and Shirley MacLaine.

David Merrick had collaborated with Michael Stewart for *Carnival* and wanted to field the same team for *The Matchmaker* adaptation, including Gower Champion and Bob Merrill. When Merrill declined rather than work with Champion, Merrick needed to not only find someone else to write the score, but he needed to persuade Champion who was initially reluctant to break away from a budding career in Hollywood. Everything fell into place when Stewart reached out to Jerry Herman, whose reputation was largely based on *Milk & Honey* which enjoyed a 543 performance run. At Stewart's suggestion, Herman borrowed a draft of the recently completed book and wrote four songs over three days, including

"Hello, Dolly!" After a fifteen-minute audition for Merrick, the incredulous producer said "Kid, the show is yours."

After advising Herman to tailor the songs for Ethel Merman, whom he intended for the leading role, much to Merrick's surprise, Merman turned him down, begging off because she had decided to cut back on lengthy commitments, and begin the process of retirement. Putting his star search aside for the moment, he set about to find a director. Merrick approached Jerome Robbins, Joshua Logan, Joe Layton and Harold Prince who had recently staged a

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acclaimed production of *The Matchmaker*. But Prince didn't like the score, most especially the flagship song "Hello, Dolly!" and quickly expressed his lack of interest.

Things began to look up for Merrick when Gower Champion began to feel disillusioned over his fling with Hollywood and a multi-dimensional disappointing experience upon his return to theater, particularly as it pertained to projects involving Lillian Hellman and Alan Jay Lerner. What really convinced Champion to come on board, however, was an innovative staging concept – the use of a ramp which extended from the stage and encircled the orchestra pit. This would allow him to create

the continuously choreographed dancing that he felt was crucial to his vision of how to present the show.

Only one task remained to be done – engaging the right performer to play Dolly. Among those considered were Nancy Walker and Nanette Fabray. Merrick and Champion undertook a short journey to Long Island to see Carol Channing in George Bernard Shaw's *The Millionairess*, but Champion was somewhat reluctant due to Channing being so closely identified with her character Lorelei Lee, the leading gold-digger of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. He and Merrick agreed that she would be wrong for the role, except that Champion was not completely sure. After giving Channing the bad news, she asked if he would be willing to listen to a reading. Over the next several hours, well into pre-dawn, they worked continuously until Channing had convinced Champion that she understood who Dolly Gallagher Levi was. Said Channing "She's funny, Gower. She's a funny woman. She's so aggravating, we have to laugh." Now thoroughly persuaded, Champion called Merrick and asked that he meet them the next day to hear Channing read. Champion would later say "She read for him and that was it."

From the day of David Merrick's first meeting with Michael Stewart until *Hello, Dolly!* opened on Broadway – January 16, 1964 – a little less than three years had passed. During that time two of Merrick's productions went up on the boards – *I Can Get It For You Wholesale* and *110 in the Shade*. He went on to have more success with *I Do! I Do!*, *Sugar*, *Play it Again Sam*, and *Promises, Promises*. Gower Champion teamed with Merrick again for both *I Do! I Do!* and *Sugar*. Michael Stewart added *Seesaw*, *Barnum* and *Mack & Mabel* to his resume. Jerry Herman's legacy expanded exponentially with *Mame* and *La Cage Aux Folles*. The stars aligned miraculously for *Hello, Dolly!* for everyone connected to the show, most prominently Carol Channing. During the course of her long career she appeared more than 5,000 times as Dolly. Nothing she did before and nothing since has ever eclipsed that iconic role. Carol Channing will forever be our Dolly and there's no denying it.



## What's Coming Up Next...

February 8, 2014

### Kathryn Allyn and Frank Ponzio: Playing Hard to Get

(Jerry Osterberg producer)

Over the years, on NPR, public TV and at sundry online locales, I heard songs which surprised me and lingered in my memory. Too often, I tried to put my hands on sheet music only to find it unavailable; my favorites were inevitably out of print. Having accumulated a list of orphaned songs and unaware of the New York Sheet Music Society (which could doubtless have saved me some effort), I took them down with my ear from the recordings and arranged them myself. With a huge arranging assist and much coaching by Frank Ponzio—and after a yeoman's work— **we have a set of the unknown, neglected gems of Jo Stafford, Julia Lee, Billy Holiday and Betty Hutton.**

Kaye and Frank's recent projects include performances at Stage 72, in *Doing it for Defense* (their exploration of WWII's morale-boosting Victory Disc Program), *Playing Hard to Get* at The Metropolitan Room and Stage 72, and regular appearances at midtown's TomiJazz. **Upcoming engagements** include an appearance at the Dutch Treat Club on February 11, and a return to TomiJazz on February 12.

## And After That...

March 8: Jeff Macauley – Songs of Norman Gimbel

April 12: To Be Announced

May 10: Songwriter Series - Tom Toce, Producer

June 14: Hilary Kole: (show TBA) - Jerry Osterberg - Producer

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### Richard Skipper...

*Continued from page 6*

Carleton Carpenter and Johnny Beecher Sheridan (Cornelius and Barnaby). How lucky I was that many who were coming into NYC for the reunion the next day were also available to be part of the NYSMS panel on Saturday, January 18th. The day was beyond my wildest expectations. I think Jerry Osterberg has captured the excitement of all of who who were lucky enough to be part of this historical afternoon. I'd like to personally thank you all

for this incredible experience that I will NEVER forget. Fifty years ago, Gower Champion brought many of these players together to create magic. Fifty years later, I was lucky enough to bring them together once again for you. Please add your thoughts to my guestbook at [www.RichardSkipper.com](http://www.RichardSkipper.com)



*With MUCF gratitude,  
Richard Skipper*



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