

Edith Drake, 93 Years Young, Has Left Us

By Jerry Osterberg



For those of us who remember Edith and Ervin Drake in the front row for just about every program performed at the New York Sheet Music Society, this will come as an unpleasant surprise. Most would have heard the sad news on October 10, the date of the first meeting of the new season, an otherwise joyous occasion. It hardly seems possible that Edith's death has come less than nine months after Ervin's passing on January 15.

Sandi Durell, who produced a gala performance tribute to Ervin for his 95th birthday in 2014, wrote "Edith (was) always at the side of her beloved husband...They were a stunning pair, inseparable, out every night at cabaret, theater...holding hands and in love till the very end. They brought so much joy to one another and to all of us who had the privilege to share their world."

Edith was born to Isadore and Lilly Bein, Russian emigres, on February 7,

Did You Hear the One About the Crooner, the Baker, and the Cantor? Todd Murray presents "Croon." Move Over Bing Crosby!

By Jerry Osterberg

In spite of his boyish look, Todd Murray has been around for a while. Having been smitten at the age of thirteen after seeing a Broadway production of *Grease*, Todd went on to audition for a semi-professional singing group while still a college freshman. He performed in over 300 concerts over a two year period which led to work at Opryland, Tokyo Disneyland, and in summer stock.

His first professional job in New York City was singing at a synagogue for High Holy Days where his name in the program was changed to "Todd Morgenstern." Following a turn with the Gilbert & Sullivan Players, and after appearing in a national tour of *The Secret Garden*, Todd literally landed in California and decided to stay around. Some soul searching led him to conclude that the feast or famine nature of musical theater was no longer appealing. Todd exchanged a microphone for a mixing bowl and opened his own artisan commercial bread bakery. It was so successful that, upon selling the business ten years later, he had enough capital to re-enter the music business.

Fueled by growing up in a family in which music was part of everyday life: taking music lessons, listening to a variety of musical styles compliments of his siblings - everything from hard rock to Broadway - and singing his mother's favorite hymns in the neighborhood Baptist church, Todd's growing passion for good music was inevitable. In addition to all this, he credits his aunt, a naturally gifted stride pianist, for



Photo by Takako Harkness

inspiring him to become more than a listener.

Taking her advice to heart, Todd embarked upon a career in music, eventually discovering that his rich, bass baritone voice was well-suited to solo performing, particularly in more intimate settings such as cabaret. During his 15 years as a live soloist and well-regarded recording artist, Todd has found that his ideal repertoire is the Great American Songbook, a genre he's embraced with unbridled fervor. "American standards came about at the time that radio and records were just being invented" says Todd. "We had just been through a depression and two world wars. There were so many things happening that these



President's Message...

Linda Amiel Burns, President

We started off the 2015-2016 season at The American Popular Song Society with a bang! We could not have had a better program than the handsome and talented Todd Murray performing his "Croon" show, with Music Director Alex Rybeck on piano and three other marvelous musicians. If you missed this amazing afternoon, visit www.ToddMurray.com and buy some of his CDs; you'll quickly understand why everybody was raving about this wonderful singer. Todd lives in LA, but will be returning to NY to sing at The Metropolitan Room on Valentine's Day: a perfect place to be for an evening of romantic music and for celebrating love!

I am thrilled to be honored by Theater Resources Unlimited at The TRU Love Benefit on Sunday, November 8th 2015, at Sardi's Restaurant from Noon until 4:00. I will be receiving The 2015 TRU Entrepreneur Award "for helping thousands of individuals find their voice, confidence and art for 38 years at The Singing Experience." I have been on the TRU Advisory Board from its beginning, and a supporter of this great organization that "was formed to promote a spirit of cooperation and support within the general theatre community by providing information and a variety of entertainment-related services and resources that strengthen the capacity of producing organizations, individuals producers, self-producing artists and other theater professionals".

There will be a silent auction, a journal, and great entertainment, including performances by the popular Sidney Myer of Don't Tell Mama and our own VP, Lynn DiMenna. If you wish to attend, would like to put an ad in the journal or join TRU – visit: www.truonline.org/store.htm#trulove – I would love to see you there!

On November 14th – Will Friedwald will be presenting a very special edition of his popular "Clip Joints" with author Patty Farmer. The program, called "Playboy Swings" is about the influence that Hugh Hefner's Clubs and TV Show had on promoting music and providing a circuit and exposure for many great entertainers. Patty's terrific book will be available for purchase.

I am looking forward to seeing you on Saturday, November 14th at The Musician's Hall at Local 802. You can join or rejoin online at www.americanpopularsongsociety.org, or at the meeting. Membership still only \$50 per year (couples \$65) and non-member entrance fee \$15.

See you very soon,

Linda



Our photographer, Rose Billings with Editor, Jerry Osterberg



Linda, Lynn DiMenna & Debbi Whiting

American Popular Song 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 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, NYSMS President, is celebrating the 37th 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 38th Anniversary Season of the Singing Experience continues with *Holiday Dreams*, beginning **November 12**. Additional rehearsals on **November 19, December 3 & 10**. Rehearsals are at Studio 353, located at 353 West 48th Street, between Eighth and Ninth Avenues. For additional information, call 212-315-3500 or e-mail: linda@singingexperience.com.

The Singing Experience will stage its next performance – *Holiday Dreams* – on **Thursday, December 17 @ 7:30 PM** at Stage 72 at The Triad Theater Cabaret, 158 West 72nd Street. There's a \$15 music charge and a two drink minimum (cash only). For reservations: call 212-315-3500 or e-mail Linda@SingingExperience.com.

Theater Resources Unlimited will be presenting its 2015 Entrepreneur Award to our very own Linda Amiel Burns on **Sunday, November 8**, from 12:00 to 4:00 PM at Sardi's, 234 West 44th Street. To purchase an ad in the journal and/or participate in the silent auction, or to purchase tickets, go to: <http://www.truonline.org/store.html#trulove>. Please join in celebrating Linda's well deserved honor by going to the website now and help support a wonderful organization.

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: **November 4**, Mark Russell – satirist/pianist/singer; **November 11**, Frank Perowski Big Band; **November 18**, Maud Hixson – singer, Rick Carlson – pianist; **November 25**, Beegie Adair – pianist; **December 2**, Roz Corral – singer, John DiMartino – piano, Jay Leonhart – bass; **December 9**, Sinatra Tribute – Chris Gines/Hilary Kole/Eric Comstock/Ronny Whyte/Boots Maleson/David Silliman. 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.ronnywhyte.com/ www.saintpeters.org/jazz/midtownjazz.htm.

A message from APSS Board member Tom Toce: I've got a new show that I'm excited (and nervous) about. It's called Songwriter in the House (as in—Is there a doctor in the house?), and it features me singing and playing a collection of songs I've written over the years. Most of my songwriting has been for other people, songs from musicals or songs written for cabaret singers to perform. But I'm a child of the 60s and 70s, and I've also always written guitar-based singer-songwriter songs. I've never put myself forward as a performer, but I actually do perform my own songs pretty well, according to other writers I've encountered at songwriting circles and such, and so I've put a set together that I think makes sense. I'm totally outside my comfort zone with

this, so that alone should be fun to see. Besides me on guitar, I have the great Jon Burr on bass, and the excellent backup singers Justin McElroy and Honor Finnegan. I'll do a few pertinent covers, too. And I hope I'll find one or two other "songwriters in the house" each night to come on stage and do a song. I have some great songwriting friends! I have three dates at the Metropolitan Room: **Monday, November 23 @ 9:30 PM; Saturday, December 5 @ 1:00 PM; and Monday, December 28 @ 7:00 PM**. Cover is \$20 (\$5 off if you're MAC or BMI or ASCAP), two drink minimum. I'd be so happy to see you there! Reservations for the first date (drop down box for other dates): <http://metropolitanroom.com/event.cfm?id=219657&cart>

APSS Member Corky Romash will be presenting a brand new show *Corky* at Parnell's on **Saturday, December 12**, from 8:00 to 11:00 PM. Steve Lowenthal on piano. 350 East 53rd Street. No cover. \$25 minimum. For reservations call 212-753-1761.

Ronny Whyte has a new CD: *Nevertheless, the Kalmar & Ruby Songbook*, featuring Warren Vache, Lou Caputo, Ben Sher, Boots Maleson & David Silliman. The brilliant album includes: "Nevertheless," "Give Me the Simple Life," "Who's Sorry Now," "Three Little Words," "A Kiss to Build a Dream On," and "I Wanna Be Loved By You." 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 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!

Sandi Durell is Publisher-Editor of TheaterPizzazz.com, a vital website that presents up to date theater reviews, news, interviews and previews, along with cabaret reviews and videos. There is a large contributing group of writers who offer discerning and professional reviews and information. Sandi is a Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle Awards Voter, member of the American Theatre Critics Association, League of Professional Theatre Women, The Lambs, and The Dutch Treat Club. Visit: www.theaterpizzazz.com.

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 or the iTunes Store (write musicalworld in the search window). CD can be purchased from *CD Baby*: <http://cdbaby.com/cd/dennislivingston>.

Bob Levy is out with a brand new CD – *Connections*, with lyrics by Bob and music provided by Harriet Goldberg, Alex Rybeck, Ronny Whyte, Dennis Livingston, Jon Burr, Kisanthi Pappas, and the man himself Bob Levy. The vocalists are Pappas, Dane Vannatter, Barbara Porteous, Ronny Whyte, Judi Figel, Joyce Breach, Matt Ray, Jinny Sagorin, and Jamey Whiting. The album features top musicians which include the Billy Novick Trio & Quartet. www.silkrivermusic.com, www.cdbaby.com.

Surprise! Author David Hajdu makes his songwriter debut with *Waiting for the Angel*, culminating a five year collaboration with esteemed multi-genre composers Jill Sobule, Fred Hersch, Renee Rosnes, and Mickey Leonard. Featured vocalists are Jo Lawry, Michael Winther, and Karen Oberlin, with musicians Steve Wilson, Steven Bernstein, Charles Pillow, Peter Bernstein, Dave Eggar, Sean Smith, Carl Allen. www.mirandamusic.com, www.cdbaby.com.

Todd Murray...

Continued from page 1

songs became embedded in the American cultural tapestry.”

Enter *Croon*, the title of Todd’s most recent recording, and the long running act from which it is derived. Todd has been performing both *Croon* and an earlier show *Stardust & Swing* to great acclaim.



Alex Rybeck, Todd, Sean Harkness, Dan Gross, Steve Doyle

He’s long been a bi-coastal performer, generating solid reviews wherever he happens to be. By way of example, here are a few of the superlatives we’ve seen: “If the essence of cabaret is an intimate conversation between a singer and the audience, then Todd Murray has the art form mastered;” “Todd Murray is a songwriter’s dream. He sings the songs as they were written, and he sings them in a dreamy, stunningly rapturous style;” “Murray is a natural, with beautiful, deep, rounded notes and a low range timbre that comforts the ear;” and most recently, “This suave, handsome baritone...is such a confident singer that his performance...is the real deal.”

Luckily for the members of the American Popular Song Society, Todd was in town for the Cabaret Convention and a three night run at the Metropolitan Room, and generously agreed to open our 2015-2016 season. Having now seen *Croon* three times, I can attest that everything written by the above reviewers is true! Judging by the reaction of the APSS audience on October 10, there appeared to be unanimous agreement. Todd clearly respects the intelligence of his fans, and the honest gesture is fully reciprocated. While one might simply say that Todd Murray is a showman of the “old school,” such a sentiment would leave a lot to be said and savored. The power of Todd’s performance is based upon an unbeatable combination of his being a superb singer, choosing exceptional material, and having a style that is at once warm and inviting.

An extraordinary band, all of whom have been supporting Todd for several years, was the catalyst that brought all the elements together, making for a program nothing less than unforgettable. Not only are Alex Rybeck – piano, Sean Harkness – guitar, Steve Doyle – bass, and Dan Gross – drums, exceptionally talented instrumentalists, but they can sing in harmony! This was especially evident in “I Can’t Help Falling in Love with You” and “Whispering.” Following a sparkling opener, combining “Lover” and “I Wanna Be Loved,” Todd’s

well-paced program included “The Nearness of You,” “You Are Too Beautiful,” “I’ve Got You Under My Skin,” “This Guy’s in Love With You,” “I’m Your Man,” and “I’m Leaving Today,” which was written by Todd and his musical director, Alex Rybeck.

By the time you read this, Todd is most likely to be back on the West Coast. But, if you haven’t yet seen *Croon*, you’ll have at least one more opportunity without needing to go out to Hollywood. Todd will be reprising the show, with a number of additional tunes, in New York at the Metropolitan Room on Sunday, February 14 at 4:00 PM. Why not make it an all music weekend, with Saturday at the American Popular Song Society, and Sunday with Todd Murray? 🎵

Edith Drake...

Continued from page 1

1922, at 267 West 123rd Street in New York City. Barely out of high school,

she worked as a showgirl and model at the 1939 Worlds Fair in Queens. As kismet would have it, Edith enrolled at City College of New York where she met Ervin while performing in a musical. They dated for three years until Edith, still modeling and by now a Broadway showgirl, decided to end the relationship. Not surprisingly, the statuesque beauty had begun to attract the attention of other eligible bachelors.



“She broke my heart” said Ervin in recalling the depressing period in his life. Referring to “all these Wall Street types,” he added “I felt like I couldn’t compete, so I just withdrew from her life.” Edith married Norman Edwin Berman in 1944, while Ervin tried to cope as best he could. Plagued by months of sleepless nights, he sought distraction by listening to all night radio broadcasts. One evening Ervin heard a haunting melody by Irene Higginbotham, who would go on to write tunes recorded by Nat King Cole, Woody Herman, Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman, and other jazz greats. In an interview with Will Friedwald, Ervin said: “...it hit me...smack! This is exactly what I felt when Edith left me.” He immediately sat down and within twenty minutes wrote the complete lyric to “Good Morning, Heartache,” originally recorded by Billie Holiday, later recorded by another 100 singers.

Cabaret Legend Jan Wallman Dead at 93



Joan Rivers & Jan Wallman

By Jerry Osterberg

It's been almost twenty years since Jan Wallman ran a cabaret room. The last of them, an elegant club at the Iroquois Hotel on West 44th Street, next to the Algonquin's Oak Room, closed in 1998. Having lasted for more than ten years, its opening signaled something of a comeback for Wallman, financed as it was from the proceeds of a benefit performance at Carnegie Hall in 1986. The late Judy Kreston, one of the regulars at Jan Wallman's, organized the event, *Celebration of Jan Wallman*, with the help of an all-star cast which included Stiller & Meara, Joan Rivers, Dick Cavett, Bert Convy, Marcia Lewis and Linda Lavin. Also on the bill that evening were Kaye Ballard and Margaret Whiting, who had never appeared in one of Wallman's rooms, unlike the rest of the performers.

In an interview by Scott Barbarino

for *Cabaret Scenes* magazine in 2007, Wallman, who had just won the MAC Lifetime Achievement Award, talked about her long career as a cabaret manager extraordinaire and unofficial talent scout for nearly forty years. "I knew about what we called nightclubs because we had them in St. Paul Minnesota. My family was very much into music, and my father was in Chicago as much as we was home.

When there was something really great in the theater there, he would bring the family down and we'd stay at the Palmer House Hotel.

My very first night in New York (1950's), I went to One Fifth Avenue and saw a wonderful show there...I loved that place and got there as much as I could. I was always a live music junkie, and there were many, many really smart rooms in New York in those days: The Blue Angel, Bon Soir, Café Society Downtown and the Vanguard, before (it) was really a jazz place. I was out to those places all the time.

I actually got started trying to do someone a favor. There was a room called Upstairs at the Duplex. I knew the room was going to be up for grabs, because the people who had been running it were bowing out. Jimmy DiMartino, the owner, said he thought that Don (Ross, Nina Simone's first husband) was too young to run it. But...I came in with

him and did some publicity...we started booking the room with three acts on the bill, six nights a week, three shows a night, at 10 PM, 12 PM and 2:00 AM.

The opening act was musical comedy. We had stand-up comedy in the middle like Joan Rivers, Woody Allen, Dick Cavett, Howard Storm, Rodney Dangerfield, and we would have a strong girl singer to close. Since we didn't have a cover charge, people would come to the first show...stay for the second show...and stay for the third. You could spend a whole evening out for \$5 and a tip."

Wallman ran Upstairs at the Duplex from 1959 to 1962, and again from 1964 to 1968. During the two-year interval, she moved to Jim Paul Eilers' Showcase on West 4th Street. Later she managed a small restaurant and piano bar at 28 Cornelia Street until the rent became unreasonably high. Of that experience she said: "I didn't think of it as a cabaret, but friends started asking me to let them perform."

Near the end of Scott Barbarino's 2007 interview, he asked Jan Wallman what she foresaw for the future, to which she responded: "It was a totally different kind of business when I started. No matter how dim things get in cabaret, there are always people with talent coming along. They just need a place where they can perform. I would like to see clubs going back to presenting more than one act a night (and allowing acts to work a whole week or four to five nights). Maintaining quality of what the rooms present, would go a long way towards building new audiences."

Edith Drake...

During the thirty years Edith was married to Norman Berman, she raised three sons, created a course in self-empowerment for women, taught adult education, continued to model, and still found the time to form Bermane Cosmetics in 1958, a successful institution for over thirty-five years. Edith's husband died in 1974, and Ervin's wife in 1975. Although both couples lived in Great Neck, New York for more than thirty years, they met by chance only once. Soon after Ervin became a widower, Edith called to commiserate. They met for lunch one afternoon and before long began to "date" again, forty years after they had parted. Edith said: "All the attraction we had as young people was just as active. Every day is a wonderful day for us."

The fated romance became permanent in 1982. As husband and wife, the truly blessed couple stayed together for more than thirty years. It would be nice to think that on last New Year's Eve, Edith and Ervin Drake raised their glasses in one final toast, and, as if a marriage vow, whispered softly to the other "*And now I think of my life as vintage wine, from fine old kegs, from the brim to the dregs, and it poured sweet and clear; it was a very good year.*"

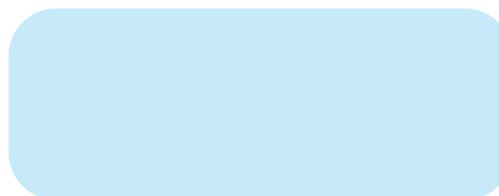
American Popular Song Society

P.O. Box 5856
PIKESVILLE, MD 21282



OCT - NOV - DEC RENEWAL TIME

Time to renew your Membership. If you're a RENEWING member, just send your check in as long as it has your name and address on it. If you know of anyone interested in joining, have them go to our website, www.AmericanPopularSongSociety.org, click on the "membership" tab, fill out the form to pay online or at the top of the page, click to download the application. It's that easy. Remember we are now the **American Popular Song Society**. You may make your checks out to this new name.

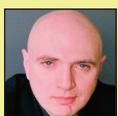


Did you know every issue of this newsletter is in **COLOR** online at www.NYSMS.org

Our 2015-16 Season



October 10, 2015: Lush popular ballads, swing, latin beat, all with lyricists such as Berlin, Porter, Lerner/Lowe, Hal David, Leonard Cohen and even **Todd Murray** himself. With the support of piano, bass, jazz guitar, drums, and back-up vocals, CROON is not merely a concert, it's an experience. Todd connects with conversational lyrics set to heartfelt tunes, and even though it is a public setting, he sings to you, and only you.



November 14, 2015: **Will Friedwald** A program of songwriters performing their own works, from the twenties to the sixties (maybe something more contemporary as well) Richard Rodgers, Harold Arlen, Sammy Fain, Harry Warren, Cy Coleman, Johnny Mercer (lots of Mercer), Hoagy Carmichael (lots of Hoagy).



December 12, 2015: Focus is on the 1947-'55 period in pop music, post-Great American Songbook, pre-Rock and Roll. Presentation revolves around Mitch Miller as the personification of the era. **Ben Yagoda** will illuminate this transitional period between the Great American Songbook days that preceded it and the rock 'n roll era that followed, with its superb American writers such as Carole King, Willie Nelson, Burt Bacharach...etc.



January 9, 2016: **Julie Budd** is considered to be one of the most exciting singers today. Winner of "The Broadway World Award" for Best Show "They Wrote The Songs", she has enjoyed a multi-faceted career that ranges from television to film, along with the NY stage & symphonies all over the country. "The NY Times" raved in a glowing retrospect of Julie's career, declaring Ms. Budd "The Consummate Performer"



February 13, 2016: **Peter Filicia** in Conversation with Richard Skipper celebrating Peter's "The Great Parade: Broadway's Astonishing Never-to-be-Forgotten 1962-1964 Season" Those of you who attended Richard's celebration of Hello, Dolly! know what an outstanding afternoon that was. This afternoon we will celebrate Peter's book with performances of the songs that came from Broadway that season. Books will be for sale after presentation.



March 12, 2016: Called "the Groucho of the violin" by Tony Bennett and "a perfect musician" by jazz guitar legend, Bucky Pizzarelli, **Aaron Weinstein** "is rapidly establishing himself as one of his instrument's rare jazz masters." Aaron is the recipient of a New York City Nightlife Award and New York City Bistro Award. He is a graduate of the Berklee College of Music where he was awarded a full four-year talent-based scholarship.



April 9, 2016: Sarah Vaughan was one of the greatest artists ever known in music. Respected by musicians across the globe, she was known as the "opera star of the jazz world." Join **La Tanya Hall** as she celebrates the life of this legitimate diva. From her earliest hits to some of her more adventurous musical forays, Ms. Hall plumbs the depths of Sarah Vaughan's musical legacy in this thrilling exploration of the Divine One.



May 14, 2016: A jam packed program filled with new material. CDs will be for sale from many of the participants. Singers / musicians TBA. Arrive early to assure seating.....we sometimes get as many as 150 people to this event!

June 11, 2016: TBA