

No Derbies, No Cigars, No Sawdust: The Singing Pianist of the 21st Century

By Jerry Osterberg

Will Friedwald appears to be everywhere nowadays, although how do we know it's really him? With Zoom, he could be anywhere in the world, using a backdrop screen of his apartment, and none of us would be the wiser. Still, we all need something to believe in, so let's imagine that it was Will who hosted the magnificent season closer on June 13.

With at least 80 attendees in their living rooms and dens, Will had assembled a striking assortment of talent beginning with Champain Fulton, who's got a two-year residency at Birdland to her credit, and twelve albums to date. The daughter of trumpeter Stephen Fulton, she's toured all over the world – from London to Morocco and from Paris to Bulgaria. Having been mentored by Clark Terry, a friend of her dad, Champain played her first paid gig at Terry's 75th birthday party. She was ten at the time and brought her own band.

Always a welcome guest at APSS was Daryl Sherman. With a long resume of cabaret performances, a 14 year run at the Waldorf-Astoria, and many appearances at Midtown Jazz and the Mabel Mercer Cabaret Convention, she's always found time to tour throughout the UK, performing not only in the big cities and well-known clubs, but in smaller venues as far from London as Wavendon and Wigam. Daryl is the daughter of a jazz trombonist and cites Mildred Bailey,

Sylvia Syms, and Blossom Dearie as role models.

After making her first recording "I'm a Dreamer, Aren't We All?" she was hired by the Artie Shaw Band.

Among Daryl's multiple MAC awards one for *Best Major Recording*, a delightful album she made for Johnny Mercer's centennial. Perhaps the best performance of her set was "Guess Who I Saw Today," a standard from 1952, first recorded by both Eydie Gorme and Carmen McRae.

Another cherished pianist/vocalist to



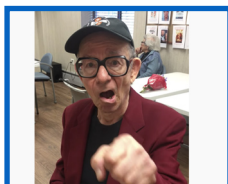
Daryl Sherman



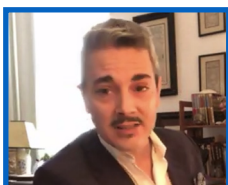
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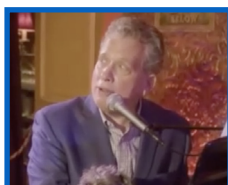
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John Meyer



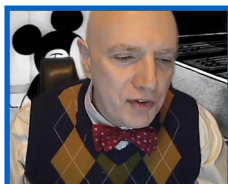
Eric Yves Garcia



Billy Stritch



Steve Ross



Will Friedwald

appear was Eric Yves Garcia. Since Eric began to perform more widely, his repertoire has similarly expanded to include songs with a European flair. For

this occasion, he performed a Bobby Troup '50s favorite "You're Looking At Me," "I'll Be Easy to Find" (Bart Howard), a hit for Johnny Mathis, and "Once Upon a Summertime," the music by Michel LeGrand, the English words by Johnny Mercer. The song was adapted from a French song and became popular in the US after Blossom Dearie persuaded Mercer to write the English lyrics and she made it a hit recording.

Steve Ross was on hand to perform a funny 1928 song introduced by Eddie Cantor, "Hungry Women," written by Yellen and Milton Ager, who also penned "Ain't She Sweet" and "Happy Days are Here Again." Steve also performed Cole Porter's (You'd Be) "So Easy to Love" for Broadway's 1934 *Anything Goes*, but cut because the leading man didn't have the range to sing it. Porter re-wrote it and the song was inserted into the 1936 film *Born to Dance*, which starred Eleanor Powell, Frances Langford, and Jimmy Stewart, who wasn't much known for being a singer either. Adding to the impressive array of talent were Eric Comstock, John Meyer, and Billy Stritch.

Although Zoom programs are far removed from what APSS members are accustomed to, they have been live, and our guests have been performing with the same gusto and pizzazz as much as ever. While those of us who have attended other Zoom meetings since the onset of the pandemic, found them a bit artificial and stiff, it's not been evident in the APSS shows. We all need to express our gratitude to the two board members, Sandi Durell and Will Friedwald, who, with some assistance from Glen Charlow, have ushered us into a new era of communication, hopefully one which will be short-lived.





President's Message...

Linda Amiel Burns, President

Hi to members, fans, and friends of APSS,

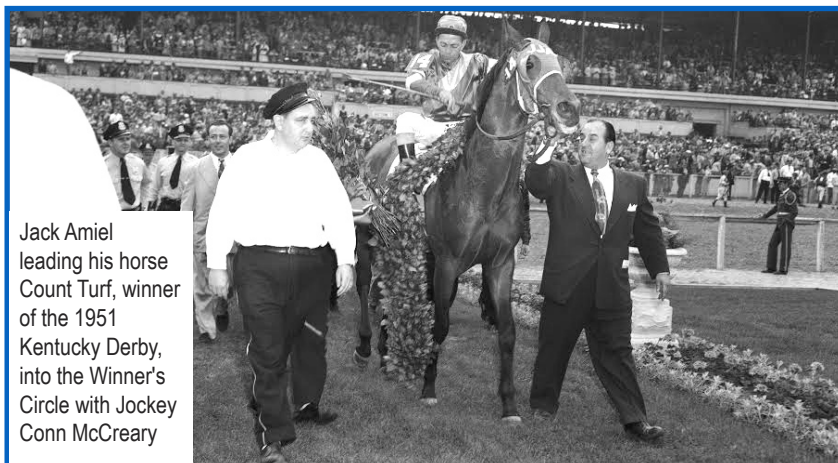
We haven't been in touch since our last Newsletter in June and I hope that all of you are doing well in these trying and difficult times of Covid-19. We have a full season planned on Zoom, and are hopeful that when the pandemic is over we can resume our in-person meetings at the beautiful Green Room 42.

The American Popular Song Society's 2020-2021 season begins on Saturday, October 10th from 12-2 with a delightful program produced by our esteemed Board Member Michael Lavine on the life and works of the great songwriter Arthur Siegel. Most of us are getting used to the new Zoom way of life, but there is nothing like being able to meet and greet each other in person, and my fingers are crossed that one day in the not too distant future, this will be possible again.

In the meantime, I am looking forward to seeing you virtually on 10/10, and I encourage you to spread the word that APSS is still alive and kicking. In this Newsletter, you can read about all the fabulous programs of the season that we have planned for you. So join, rejoin and tell your friends about APSS and that just like the Postal Service, "neither snow nor rain nor heat nor a pandemic" shall keep us from bringing you entertaining, and informative Programs!

See you on October 10th and throughout the season.

Linda



Jack Amiel leading his horse Count Turf, winner of the 1951 Kentucky Derby, into the Winner's Circle with Jockey Conn McCreary

American Popular Song Society

President:
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(212) 315-3500

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NEWSLETTER

Editor/Publisher: Jerry Osterberg
osterbergg@aol.com
Contributing Editor: Marilyn Lester
mlester@marilynlester.com
Associate Editor: Joan Adams
joan.adams@corcoran.com
Graphic Designer: Glen Charlow
APSSinc.org@gmail.com
Photographer: Rose Billings
rosephoto18@gmail.com

Membership Mailing Address:
American Popular Song Society
P.O. Box 5856

Pikesville, MD 21282

Why is that the mailing address?

Because the treasurer lives in Baltimore, Maryland.

APSSinc.org@gmail.com

This email address goes to Glen Charlow

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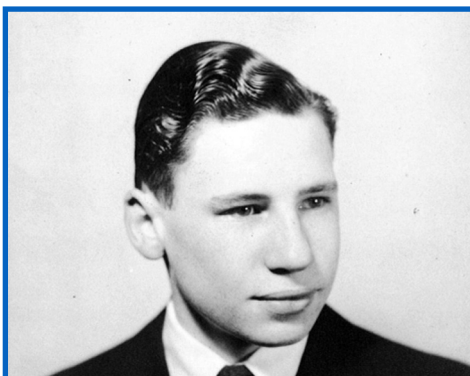


Eartha Kitt

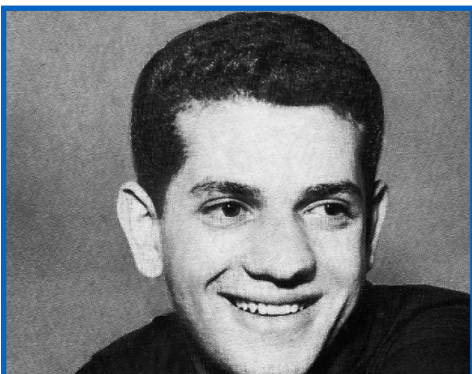
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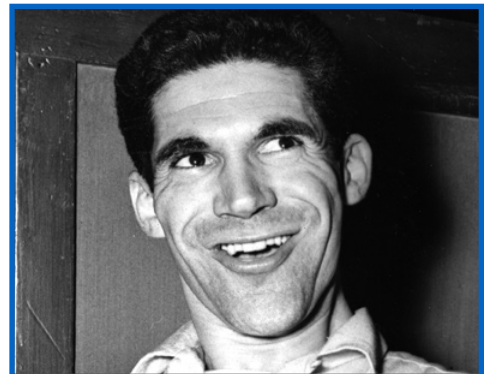
Sheldon Harnick



Mel Brooks



Robert Clary



Graham Ronny

“A Bar on the Piccola Marina”—A Very Short History of Comedy in Song

By Marilyn Lester

Comedy in music is probably as old as music itself. Medieval court jesters entertained with novelty material, just as bawdy tavern songs got laughs up through the 18th century. Even composers of “serious music” couldn’t resist the urge. Many of Haydn’s Symphonies are comedic, most famously 1791’s the “Surprise” Symphony (No.94). Mozart wrote a piece called “A Musical Joke,” while Beethoven’s 6th (Pastoral) Symphony includes jokes such as a parody of a village band wherein the bassoon can only play a limited number of notes. In later years Gilbert and Sullivan were at the top of the tree of comic opera. In English Music Hall, novelty numbers such as “Boiled Beef and Carrots” with its Cockney rhyming slang were a staple.

When vaudeville became popular in the early 1900s, so did novelty songs. Often, these were written at the request of performers, making these numbers into what became known as “special material.” Novelty songs are generally built on humor, or an unusual concept—a gimmick. Unlike comedy songs, they don’t necessarily have to be funny, but often are. Noël Coward, who often wrote special material for himself, was a master at the comedic novelty song, such as “Don’t Put Your Daughter On The Stage, Mrs. Worthington” and “A Bar on the Piccola Marina.” An early example of special material was “Who Paid the Rent for Mrs. Rip Van Winkle (When Rip Van

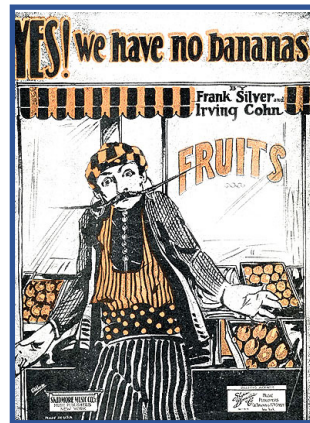
Winkle Was Asleep)” by Fred Fischer and Alfred Bryan, written for Al Jolson in 1914. One of the earliest authors of special material was lyricist Blanche Merrill, who began by writing for Eva Tanguay in the 1910s. These works,



including “Egotistical Eva,” led to a one-song partnership with the young Irving Berlin and the resultant “Jake, the Yiddisher Ball Player.” From 1915 to 1925, Merrill famously wrote for Fanny Brice, including “The Yiddish Bride” and “Becky Is Back in the Ballet.” Eddie Cantor and Sophie Tucker were two other vaudevillians who were noted for singing novelty songs.

Novelty songs became especially popular in the 1920s and 1930s. Tin Pan Alley songwriters had long been adept at writing them, as part of the necessity of writing in many styles and genres. Three hits of the Jazz Age were “Pardon Me (While I Laugh),” a commentary on prohibition, “Barney Google” and “Yes! We Have No Bananas.” In the 1930’s, English star, Gracie Fields, a master of the novelty song, notably sang “Turn Erbert’s Face to the Wall Mother.” The


great Ella Fitzgerald’s first hit was the novelty song “A-Tisket, A-Tasket.” The 1950s saw a very big resurgence of popular novelty songs, such as “Purple People Eater” and “The Witch Doctor”—and of course there were The Chipmunks. On a more sophisticated note, songwriters such as Arthur Siegel—the subject of this month’s meeting—were creating special material for nightclub and cabaret performers. Siegel began his career in the 1940s writing for celebrities such as Georgia



Gibbs, Hermione Gingold, Imogene Coca, Gypsy Rose Lee, Beatrice Lillie and Kaye Ballard. In his salad days Charles Strouse wrote such special material for stars such as Kaye Ballard, Carol Burnett, Jane Morgan and Dick Shawn. When he was starting out, Sheldon Harnick wrote a fair amount of special material, such as “Merry Minuet,” made famous by the Kingston Trio, and “Boston Beguine,” which Alice Ghostly sang in an early 1950s revue.

Moving further into the modern era, humorous material continues to be

popular in novelty songs, comedy songs and special material. The fictional P.D.Q. Bach, son of Johann Sebastian Bach—the comic invention of Peter Schickele—has given us, among many others, such delights as “Iphigenia in Brooklyn,” “Singalonga Meloir Cave Canem” and “A Little Nightmare Music.” In the “classical” realm, cartoon character Elmer Fudd sang “Kill the Wabbit” to the tune of Richard Wagner’s “Ride of the Valkyrie.” In the 1980s and still going strong, Weird Al Yanovic has created parody songs at a prolific clip. More recently, there’s Randy Rainbow, who has been a balm for many listeners suffering through the uncertain times we currently live in.

In our own backyard, versatile songwriter, Larry Kerchner, has written not only show tunes, ballads, country, popular and much more, but is a master of puns, comedy and special material. Anyone who’s ever heard Melissa Mulder sing “You’re Getting to Me,” Jeff Harnar with “My Dinner With Mrs. Farnsworth” or Mark Nadler have his comic way with “Iowa!” or “A Jewish Christmas,” will not soon forget the wit and the laughs. To Larry and to all other songwriters of comedy, novelty and special material, we tip our hat. These musical forays into humor and eccentric territories are good for the soul. As the old *Reader’s Digest* column suggested, laughter is the best medicine. 

Apples: From Granny Smith to Glenn Miller

By Mia Berman

October is many things: autumn leaves, pumpkin patches, and Halloween. But for me, it's all about apples. From that first whiff of warm green apple pie bubbling in my Mom's sweet oven in Bayside, Queens, I was hooked. Not to mention the huge, plump Rome baked apples she lovingly drizzled with brown sugar and cinnamon.

Then there were the annual childhood "pick your own apples" treks to upstate farmers' markets. Ah, the memories of baskets, ladders and laughter, finalized by heavy bags overstuffed with Macouns, Empires, Granny Smiths, Staymans and Pink Ladies. I was never a sweet apple pie girl — so if it's not tart, no go. Give me a Winesap over a Gala any day. Guess it's that smidgen of zing and grit that's always carried me through — call it Apple Zen.

Flash forward to my freshman year at Cornell — naturally I signed up to host a weekly one-minute radio spot on NYS apples, sponsored by Cornell Extension Services. I could tell you varieties you'd think were names of galaxies! There are 7500 varieties grown throughout the world — 100 grown commercially in the U.S. Thomas Jefferson planted apple trees in his Monticello gardens. One of his faves? Aesopus Spitzenburg, discovered in the early 18th century.

Apples have been a core subject of literature from Robert Frost's "After Apple Picking" to Rilke's "The Apple Orchard," from Herman Melville to Thoreau. They are linked to Adam & Eve, William Tell, Snow White and Isaac Newton. Oft known as forbidden fruit, apples are also a symbol of knowledge, hope and healing for the Jewish New Year (apple slices are dipped in honey for Rosh Hashonah sweetness).

October is the annual Mabel Mercer NY Cabaret Convention — this year will be # 31. So why not honor the spirit of song, cabaret and apples in one fell swoop munch?

Apples have been referenced in song titles and lyrics sung by everyone from Cher to Nat King Cole. Who can forget Bing Crosby crooning "little green apples" with that luscious Count Basie band behind him and Bobby Russell's ingenious lyric: "God didn't make little green apples and it don't rain in Indianapolis..." "Don't Sit

Under the Apple Tree (With Anyone Else But Me") was memorialized by the Andrews Sisters and Glenn Miller's lush big band during WWII in the 1942 film *Private Buckaroo*. As a notable sidebar, Bette Davis made her on-screen singing debut, referencing those lyrics in the 1943 Warner Brothers' *Thank Your Lucky Stars*. It's a must-see performance of Frank Loesser and Arthur Schwartz's "They're Either Too Young or Too Old," with Davis pining away to her overseas lover that "I can't sit under the apple tree with anyone else but me," simply because all the other eligible men were off fighting in the war.

There's an apple a day. Apples and oranges. Apple of my eye. And then there's Apple blossom time. "I'll Be With You in Apple Blossom Time" — written by Albert von Tilzer and Neville Flesson — was recorded by assorted artists including Artie Shaw in 1937, the Andrews Sisters in 1941, Vera Lynn, Nat King Cole, Jo Stafford (1946), Chet Atkins, Louis Prima, Tab Hunter, Wayne Newton and Barry Manilow, just to name a few! In her biography, Patti Andrews charmingly describes how they performed it as a foxtrot in 4/4 time, even though it was written as a waltz. Originally introduced by singer Nora Bayes in 1920, the song is not to be confused with "When it's Apple Blossom Time in Normandy" by Tom Mellor, Harry Gifford & Huntley Trevor. Bayes recorded both.

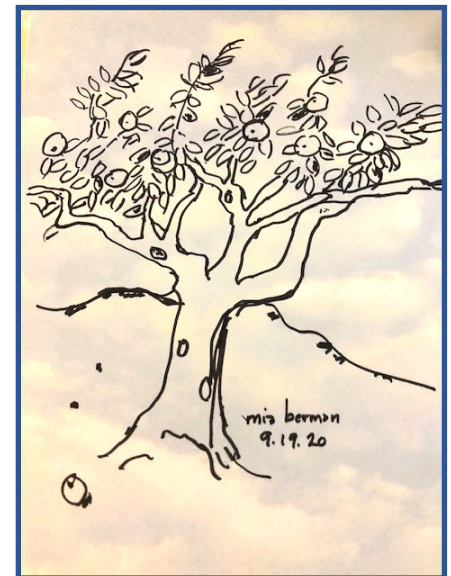
And then there's the swoon-worthy Frank Sinatra, singing "When the World Was Young (Ah, the Apple Trees)" recorded in 1962. Other notable "Ah, the Apple Trees" crooners: Anita O'Day, from her *Mello' Day* album, Edith Piaf, Bing Crosby, Peggy Lee, Polly Bergen, June Christie, Eydie Gorme, Dinah Shore, Eartha Kitt, Julie London and Marlene Dietrich, Blossom Dearie, Nancy Wilson, Aretha Franklin, Mel Torme, and Mabel Mercer. Even Bob Dylan chose the haunting song for *Triplicate*, his 3rd album of American standards, released in 2017. The song was originally composed by Philippe-Gerard with English lyrics by Johnny Mercer, who wrote an astounding three verses and three choruses in three

days. Originally titled in French "Le chevalier de Paris," the song is written from the romantic perspective of an aging boulevardier and coquette, looking back nostalgically on life.

There's something elegant and hauntingly evocative about the apple tree — whether in summer or autumn. Perhaps it's best expressed in Mercer's lyrics:

Ah, the apple trees,
Blossoms in the breeze,
That we walked among!
Lying in the hay,
Games we used to play
While the rounds were sung -
Only yesterday,
When the world was young!

Ah, the apple trees,
Sunlit memories,
Where the hammock swung!
On our backs we'd lie,
Looking at the sky
'Til the stars were strung -
Only last July,
When the world was young.



Editor's Note: Mia Berman is a writer/commentator, classical musician, watercolorist, actress, and radio host of the weekly podcast, "Mia's World." She is working on an exhibition of her 100+ sketches of jazz musicians and cannot wait for the crunch of that first October apple. 🎵



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 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 finalized and made available to the membership.

Linda Amiel Burns, APSS President, is celebrating four decades of The Singing Experience. Several 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 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.

Member David Tane is available to play the piano at your next party or other event. David specializes in classic American standards. Rates are reasonable. Call or text 914-714-2489 for more information.

Steve Ross reports that the classic radio interview show *New York Cabaret Nights*, which was broadcast on WNYC, can be accessed anew by going to <https://www.wnyc.org/series/new-york-cabaret-nights>.

Sandi Durell, Publisher-Editor of TheaterPizzazz.com, a vital website that presents up-to-date theater reviews, news, interviews and previews, along with cabaret reviews and video. 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.

Do you seek an elusive song? If you do, write APSS 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! 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.

In November 2009, to celebrate the centennial of songwriter/singer Johnny Mercer, Minneapolis radio personalities David Cummings and Les Block produced and broadcast a 100th birthday tribute to Mr. Mercer. The show features original interviews with a distinguished roster of Mercer-connected performers and writers, showcasing recordings of Mercer songs sung by the guests and presenting valuable comments on the songs and on the man. Among the more than twenty celebrities interviewed were Tony Bennett, Johnny Mathis, Andy Williams, Kay Starr, Nancy Wilson, Robert Kimball, Barry Manilow and Margaret Whiting. Sadly, our interview with Miss Whiting was her last. The show is being archived by the Library of Congress which acknowledged that "...it would be impossible to produce a work of this quality on Johnny Mercer today." The entire show can be heard online at the following URL/web address: <https://archive.org/details/mercer100/ksav-mercer-1.mp3> OR <johnnymercer100:davidcummingsandlesblock>

Dues are due at this time as always.
 Reduced price special due to the pandemic-
\$50 individual or **\$70** for couples.
 You can submit them via Paypal at
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