

What's a Party Without Arthur? The Music of Arthur Siegel

By Jerry Osterberg

On the evening of Arthur Siegel's birth, New Year's Eve 1923, Eddie Cantor was enjoying the latest in a string of hits: "No, No, Nora." Growing up in Asbury Park, New Jersey, a long established and highly successful Summer community, it's entirely likely that Siegel's performing and songwriting during his high school years were inspired by the exciting environment and a cosmic connection to Cantor.

The admittedly stage-struck Siegel attended the American Academy of Dramatic Arts and Julliard. An Academy classmate was Marilyn Cantor, one of Eddie Cantor's five daughters. Following an introduction to her father, Siegel became his accompanist, assuming a role once filled by Jimmy Durante. He toured with Cantor for several years in the 1940's before mounting his first Broadway production in 1946. The play, *Lovely Me*, in which he also appeared, was written by Jacqueline Susann. Siegel contributed two songs, both lyrics by Jeff Bailey. Alas, his Broadway debut ran for just 37 performances.

APSS Board member Michael Lavine, a longtime friend of the late Arthur Siegel, opened the new season

with his usual flair. While not all the brilliant composer's songs are well-known, many of them are memorable, and helped launch the careers of many aspiring stars in the world of entertainment. Lavine got to know Siegel, when the cabaret performer Steve Ross brought Siegel to check out

Lavine's sheet music. Besides being a musical director and vocal coach, Lavine is a prolific sheet music archivist. Having seen Siegel's own music files many times, he offered to purchase the entire collection from the estate, which he did with the assistance of Brian Gari, a grandson of Eddie Cantor, after speaking with the composer's brother Eddie.

After providing interesting background about Siegel's career, Lavine



performed the first song of the afternoon. Although the word "vocalist" does not appear on his resume, Lavine gave a more than credible performance of "I Want You to Be the First One to Know," making for a perfect segue to the program.

T. Oliver Reid, among the brightest stars of cabaret, sang the title song of Siegel's first show "Lovely Me." KT Sullivan sang "Lampoon for Louie" from Siegel's penultimate production *The Last Musical Comedy*, a spoof of Broadway

musicals of the '50s about New York City.

Only days before the opening of *Lovely Me*, another musical, *If the Shoe Fits*, opened and closed within two weeks. The music was by David Raksin, then enjoying acclaim for his score of the film noir *Laura*. The lyrics were by June Carroll, who was the sister of producer Leonard Sillman. The fortuitous pairing of Siegel and Carroll was instrumental in the next stage of Siegel's career. Sillman had produced a radio program a decade earlier called *New Faces*, and now decided to resurrect the concept. He hired the team to create what became *New Faces of 1952*. It opened on May 16 and ran for 365 performances. The successful production not only increased the visibility of Siegel and Carroll, who wrote 8 of the revue's 20 songs, it launched the careers of Paul Lynde, Alice Ghostley, Eartha Kitt, Robert Clary, Carol Lawrence, Ronny Graham, Mel Brooks and a 28-year-old Sheldon Harnick.

Jon Peterson, a Drama Desk Award nominee, contributed one of the show's songs: "Penny Candy," and Tonya Pinkins, whose many accolades include a Tony and two Tony nominations, sang what became a signature song for Eartha Kitt: "Monotonous." Ms. Kitt came to the production with a unique resume which included starring as Helen of Troy in Orson Welles' *Doctor Faustus*. Pinkins, who had once performed "Monotonous" with Kitt at Carnegie Hall, now performed it from Seoul, Korea.

Four years after the first production, Sillman was back with a new presentation: *New Faces of 1956*, again



President's Message...

Linda Amiel Burns, President

Warm Greetings to all of our members, friends, and guests:

I cannot thank our Board Member, Michael Lavine, enough for last month's brilliant Program on the late songwriter/pianist/entertainer, Arthur Siegel. It was a great launch for our 2020-2021 season. You can read all about it in this issue of our APSS Newsletter. Additionally, if you were unable to attend via Zoom, Michael has made a corrected version that you can watch either on Youtube or on our website.

Since October was the first virtual Zoom meeting of the season, some technical difficulties were experienced. We are all learning this new technology, and to ensure that similar problems would not happen again, Sandi Durell, Michael Lavine, Jerry Osterberg, Tom Toce, and I had a meeting with an expert in the field, Jamie Maletz. When we produce and direct acts at clubs, there is always a Technical Director on lights and sound, and there is no reason that our monthly events should not have someone handling this complex position for us. We are happy to announce that we have hired Jamie Maletz as our new "Technical Director/Zoom Expert/Trouble Shooter," to handle the rehearsals and the show each month. We are also hoping that she will be able to answer any questions we may have, and perhaps hold a Zoom seminar for APSS. Jamie is also a fine songwriter and you can read her extensive bio in this issue. We are thrilled to welcome Jamie to the team!

There are always challenges and last minute changes to our schedule, and I want to thank those dedicated members who are producing and hosting our Programs. Be sure to check out the monthly line-up in the Newsletter and on our website. Coming up on Saturday, November 14th from 12-2, Michael Lavine and Tom Toce are co-producing a "Tribute to Composer Lew Spence" on his centennial. In 2004, Lew came to NY from California and was our in-person guest, talking about his life in music. You can read about this great past event in the Archives.

I hope you are all staying safe during this difficult time. Sending you my best wishes for good health, happy times, and lots of music in your life!

Linda

Linda with her father Jack Amiel and famed composer Irving Caesar (Tea For Two) celebrating his July 4th at The Singing Experience as we all sang his songs to him.



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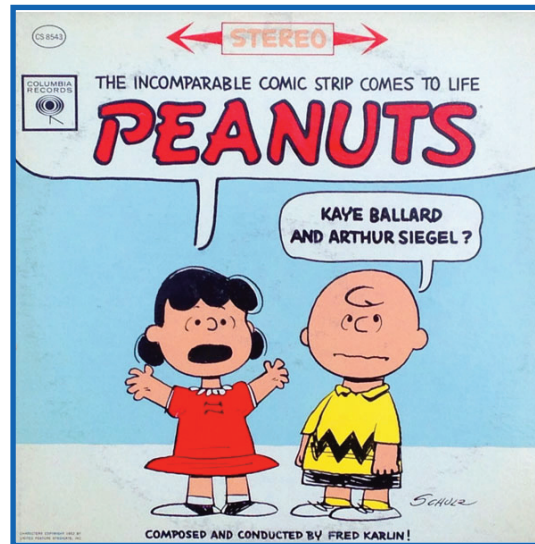
with Siegel's participation. Many of the show's performers would likewise go on to stardom: Jane Connell, Billie Hayes, Tiger Haynes, Virginia Martin, Inga Swenson and Maggie Smith.

Jay Aubrey Jones performed "Tell Her" and singer/songwriter/recording artist Sara Zahn, accompanied by composer/arranger Allan Kashkin, sang "Don't Wait," both songs from *New Faces of 1956*. More than twenty years after the second production, Siegel collaborated with lyricist/librettist Tony Lang and director Miriam Fond in a play called *Corkscrews*, which featured "Psychotic Overtures," a send-up of the film *Psycho*. Presented in the manner of *Sweeney Todd*, it incorporated parodies of songs from *Company* and *Follies*. From this came a relatively tame "Make it Another," delightfully rendered by Steve Ross. From *New Faces of 1956* was also "The White Witch," performed by Jay Aubrey Jones.

New Faces of 1962 introduced Patty Karr, Marian Mercer and the writer of homey humor Jean Shepherd, still years away from his cult classic *A Christmas Story*. Natalie Douglas, always a welcome presence, sang "Depends Upon How You Look at Things." Robert Clary, one of the best-loved performers to emerge from the *New Faces* series, not to mention TV's *Hogan's Heroes*, was unable to join the cast this day. The 94-year-old actor, who lives in Los Angeles, spoke some kind words about Arthur Siegel, who he referred to as his best friend.

Sandy Stewart, one of several iconic cabaret artists with whom Siegel worked, joined the festivities with her pianist son, Bill Charlap, from Steinway Hall. Stewart met Siegel in 1961 through Kaye Ballard, while they were appearing on the Perry Como Show. Siegel had also backed Ballard for many years. Stewart referred to him as a "walking encyclopedia" of theater and

composers. She went on to say that "... he knew every song, every verse..." For several years, Stewart and Siegel performed together at Michael's Pub and



Wolf Trap. Like most of the shows he did solo during his later years, their sets were always focused on a specific composer and/or lyricist. Stewart added "He was a dear, gentle soul who loved music and brownies with real whipped cream." Stewart and Charlap presented "Where is Me," which Siegel wrote for *New Faces of 1968*, the last of the *New Faces* revues.



Lavine mentioned that he's "... always been a fan of Arthur's haunting melody..." for "The Other One," here performed by long-time Broadway veteran Fay DeWitt and Carol Weiss. Jon Peterson returned to sing "Don't Hang Up," written by Siegel with Charlotte

Kent, who first started working on Broadway in the 1920s. Presumably, the song is one of his earliest. T. Oliver Reid returned to perform "America is a Beautiful Word." Another song from 1962, the lyrics are by the poet Ada Greenfield Morley. Lavine commented "I think that Arthur would be moved at how prescient the song is."

Amanda Gari the daughter of Janet Gari, and Eddie Cantor's granddaughter, contributed a deliciously funny: "A Peppermint Kiss From a Navy Blue Bear," which she wrote with Siegel. The song has special significance for her: "He accompanied me on my very first cabaret, and I still treasure his scribbled lead sheets!" One of several songs written by Janet Gari with Siegel is "It's Great to Have Mellowed at Last" here performed by Steve Ross. Her son Brian, who was very close to him, sang his own composition "What's a Party Without Arthur?"

Steven Brinberg sang the finale: "Love is a Simple Thing," arguably Siegel's most famous song. It came from *New Faces of 1952* and has been a favorite of many vocalists. One must listen carefully to hear the many spot-on voices sown into Brinberg's presentation. I managed to find only two, the obligatory Barbra Streisand and perhaps a bit of Bette Davis. It's a great song and easy to like.

There's much more which could be said about Siegel, but space doesn't allow. Michael Lavine provided us with a good sense of the man and countless examples of his talent. Clearly, Michael had excellent material to work with and many wonderful singers to convey the stories. Apparently, Arthur Siegel wasn't prone to tooting his own horn. Indeed, according to Michael Lavine, "I sum up Arthur's humility and modesty with the three words or phrases I most associate with him:

Me? Really? and You liked it? 🎵

"If You Knew Susie"--She Might Be Playing a Banjo

By Marilyn Lester

The subject of this month's meeting, songwriter Lou Spence, was born in 1920, on the threshold of the Jazz Age. Spence, like many of the great writers who built the American Songbook, grew up with the music of Tin Pan Alley and the earliest days of jazz. This was a period of musical evolution and an explosion of new sounds, made more exciting with the development of radio and advances in technology. The question is, then, what were these young people of that era experiencing musically? What was the sound like? What instruments most defined the music of their time? To answer these question, let's explore.



Duke Ellington's Washingtonians 1925

The first two decades of the 20th century were seminal in the growth of American popular music. It was a time when Black (African) rhythms began heavily influencing European-based musical styles. Ragtime and the blues were morphing into the developing genre of jazz, played on a core of instruments that defined the sound. Even the Tin Pan Alley sound and the so-called "symphonic" bands, such as Paul Whiteman's, played with the same basic style and instrumentation of the jazzmen. Early jazz and popular music was not only defined by the instruments played, but by the way the sound was delivered. Basically, musicians played as a unit, all the time. Solos were inserted into a set piece to give other musicians a rest. In the beginning of jazz, improvisation was minimal, and generally based on the melody, which meant pieces became set after a collective agreement arrived at how they should be played. Part of the

reason this was so is that many players then didn't read music; tunes were learned by ear.

The melody lines in compositions were the provenance of the trumpets (or cornets). Early on, around the turn of the 20th century, legendary New Orleans cornetist, Buddy Bolden, had brought that instrument to ascendancy. He was deemed a "king" of the instrument, with the title passed down next to Freddie Keppard and then Joe Oliver, with whom Louis Armstrong got his start. Some jazz bands had a violin that was part of this "front line." A violin in jazz may seem an oddity, but considering that New Orleans was the birthplace of jazz and the rhythms that influenced American popular music, this fact isn't a stretch. New Orleans was also a city of divergent cultural influences in which violins (or fiddles) were prominently used. W.C. Handy was especially fond of violins and had three of them in his orchestra. Embellishing the melody were the "second voices," clarinets, and as the music developed, saxophones, which provided melodic counterpoint and provided the greatest opportunity to improvise. Trombones were also responsible for the melody, but their function was primarily to add texture to it with slides, smears, trills and other similar embellishments.



Paul Whiteman Orchestra 1922

Harmony—generally very simple—and rhythm, were supplied by the piano and banjo, while tubas and drums (not the complex sets of later periods) kept time. While pianos were often solo instruments showcasing great players, such as Jelly Roll Morton, in a band setting their role was supportive. Before the guitar (mostly acoustic archtop

models) became the stringed instrument of choice in these bands, it was the banjo, known for providing a lot of volume, that was preferred. In the late 1800s, the banjo had become a very popular instrument upon which technical experimentation and advancement was



Fletcher Henderson Orchestra 1924


lavished. The banjo had become so prevalent that it was even taken up by members of high-society. Banjos that found their way into these early jazz bands were five-string models, which were tasked with playing counterpoint to the tuba's bass lines.

As for the tuba, this mighty bass-line timekeeper was used as an extension of music played in marching bands—think John Philip Sousa or James Reese Europe. In the 1920s the upright (or string or double) bass began to replace the tuba as principle timekeeper in the band. The reasons for this change are twofold. First and foremost, the evolution of the beat; there was a shift in two-step composition to four-beat styles—the walking bass line. Additionally, as microphone technology advanced, string basses could be better heard than ever before. The upright bass also offered more room for variation in playing. Many tubists of the era could play both instruments, as well as bass saxophones. Still, even with the tuba's prominence diminishing, many bassists continued to emulate the two-step sound of the tuba. This way of playing soon dissolved into the past when a few players began to explore the instrument's capabilities more fully.

As jazz and American popular music of the 1920s slid into the 1930s and the

beginning of the swing era, the evolution of rhythm and style brought further changes to how the music was played and heard. Listening to Duke Ellington's music over the years is a pretty good tutorial for tracking these changes. From

the early, so-called "jungle music" of "East St. Louis Toodle-Oo" (1927) to "Showboat Shuffle" (1935) and "Caravan" (1936) to "Cottontail" (1940) and beyond, it's easy to hear how much the music had evolved and become more

sophisticated. To get a taste of how the music sounded in the 1920s, though, we have Vince Giordano. He and his Nighthawks are a real-time trip to the magic and excitement of that era gone by—the Jazz Age. 

Welcome - Our New Zoom Techie - Jamie Maletz



Jamie Elizabeth Maletz

is a composer/lyricist, bookwriter, and producer. In New York, her works have been featured at Lincoln Center, Feinstein's/54 Below, Dixon Place, Under St Marks Theater, and Broadway Night at Prohibition. She received her MFA from the Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program at NYU Tisch. Maletz has written 12 full-length original musicals, most of which have received workshops/readings or productions in New York and Arizona. As a composer/lyricist, Jamie has studied with Mindi Dickstein, William Finn, Rachel Sheinkin, Michael John LaChiusa, Steven Lutvak and Sybille Pearson. Jamie is the Administrative Assistant for Maestra Music, and she writes the Women Who Wow Us series for the Maestra blog. She is also the Events Coordinator for Ring of Keys, and has worked as an intern with Tom Viertel/The Commercial Theater Institute and Ken

Davenport. She is a member of The Off-Broadway League, Maestra, ASCAP, The Dramatists Guild of America, and Fractured Atlas. www.jamiemaletzmusicals.com | [@jamiemaletzmusicals](https://twitter.com/jamiemaletzmusicals)

2020-2021 SEASON SCHEDULE



October 10-
Michael Lavine
on Songs of Arthur Siegel



November 14-
Lew Spence
Producers Tom Toce and
Michael Lavine



December 12-
Jon Weber.
Producer Jerry Osterberg



January 9-
Jaime DeRoy and Friends



February 13-
Peggy Lee / James Gavin
Producer Will Friedwald



March 13-
Nancy McGraw: The Lyrics of
Johnny Mercer.
Musically directed by Mark Nadler



April 10-
Jazz Month featuring Danny
Bacher. Producers Marilyn
Lester/Danny Bacher



May 8-
Songwriter Series.
Produced by Sandi Durell



June 12-
Nat King Cole & Will
Friedwald's latest book. Producer
Will Friedwald

"Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination and life to everything." — Plato



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>

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