

## Jaime deRoy and Friends: Just Another Beautiful Day in NYC

By Jerry Osterberg

Several years ago, this writer was privileged to review an edition of Jaime deRoy & Friends for Cabaret Scenes Magazine. The delightful series had just celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, although it was my first experience. Subsequently, I learned that the evening's show was typical of the format: music and comedy. While the comedy was side-splitting, a bonus for me was to witness a performance of the old standard "Out of Nowhere" by Sean Harkness. Since then, I've attended many performances in which Harkness supported a singer with guitar. Unaware of the fact at the time, his performance would have registered as hard to beat.

Over the last decade, I've been fortunate to attend many renderings of deRoy's exceptional presentations, and I have always come away completely impressed by their quality. Should she ever decide to retire, it would be quite a challenge to fill her shoes. Where does one begin? Jaime deRoy is an actress, comedienne, cabaret performer, songwriter, and theater producer, with seven Tony Awards to her credit, not to mention awards from Drama Desk, Drama League, Broadway World, and MAC. She was among the first women to be admitted as members of the Friars

Club, a small group which included Liza Minelli, Joan Rivers, and Brooke Shields.

On a bright and sunny, chilly Winter Saturday morning, January 9 to be precise, Jaime deRoy, thanks to the magic of Zoom, arrived with a troupe of

jumpstart the show. Martinez, who starred as Emilio Estefan in a semi-autobiographical treatment of the life of Gloria and Emilio Estefan, for a year on the road following his Broadway debut, also performed "The Other Other Woman," written for *Songs from an Unmade Bed*, a revue of songs each written by a different composer and lyricist.

Paula Dione Ingram, her resume containing classical training, opened with a big, bold production number of "Some of These Days," accompanied by the well-regarded musical director Don Rebic for a knockout performance at the Columbia Club in Indianapolis, Indiana. Ingram followed with a dramatic "Believe in Yourself," a much-recorded song from *The Wiz*, again supported by Rebic. The singer had made her stage debut in *Carmen Jones*, having been cast in the lead after auditioning for a lesser role. The production ran at London's West End and

throughout Europe. There's clearly a lot of confidence in her repertoire, especially considering that Ingram dropped out of the music business for several years to raise five children.

Two-time Drama Desk winner and highly praised veteran of *Forbidden Broadway*, Christina Bianco, started her set with "Don't Rain on My Parade," a beloved anthem from *Funny Girl*. Literally, without missing a beat, Bianco segued neatly from the voice and persona



Charles Busch



Karen Mason



David Buskin



Paula Dione Ingram



Mauricio Martinez



Christina Bianco

six performers and longtime Director Barry Kleinbort, and settled into APSS members' living rooms, dens, kitchens, and dining rooms, for a close to two hour program of music and conversation. After a brief welcome and introduction by President Linda Amiel Burns, deRoy jumped right in with a recorded performance of Mauricio Martinez, whose high energy offering of "Quizas, Quizas, Quizas" ("Perhaps, Perhaps, Perhaps"), filmed at the now closed Metropolitan Room, was a perfect way to



## President's Message...

Linda Amiel Burns, President

Hi to our APSS members, friends, family and fans,

I am sitting here writing this message while watching a major snowstorm raging outside my window and covering most of the Northeast. What a way to welcome in the month of February! Most of us who have not been able to run away to warmer climes cannot wait for this winter and the stress of the pandemic to be over. Song titles float across my mind like "Winter Wonderland," "Let It Snow" and "We've Got Our Songs (Love) to Keep Us Warm."

I want to thank the incomparable Jamie DeRoy and Director Barry Kleinbort for the "Jamie DeRoy & Friends" Program last month that featured a sensational cast of performers. It is the lead story in this issue, and you can read all about it. If you missed being there on Zoom on 1/9/21, you can visit our website and click on the link to watch it.



Zanzibar (1944-1949) - 1619 Broadway (The Brill Building) at the Northwest corner of 49th Street.

I am excited about our next Program on Saturday, February 13th from 12-2 hosted by the incredible Will Friedwald who will tell you about his new book, "Straighten Up and Fly Right: The Life and Music of Nat King Cole" and where to purchase it. I once saw a documentary on Mr. Cole in which he recalled that he met his wife Maria at the Cafe Zanzibar, located in the Brill Building, above my Dad's famed Restaurant, The Turf.

We are fortunate to have Will as a Board Member and are thankful that he was able to jump in when our February Program presenter cancelled. He will also be co-hosting the closing program with Bill Boggs in June which will celebrate the birthday of the fabulous Dean Martin.

Looking forward to seeing you on the day before Valentine's Day, 2/13/21. The Zoom link is in this mailing and we will celebrate by listening to the many love songs of Nat King Cole!

Best wishes, stay warm and stay safe.

♥ Linda

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of Barbra Streisand, Bernadette Peters, Patti LuPone, Liza Minelli, Julie Andrews, Kristin Chenoweth, Alice Ripley, Judy Garland, and Bette Midler, before easing into her own voice, which is well within the respectability range of her virtual colleagues. A career highlight for Bianco is that she starred in a West End production of *Funny Girl*, followed by a wildly popular production in Paris, in English with French subtitles.

With a long list of accolades and awards behind him, Charles Busch, appeared at Lincoln Center in a touching performance of "Bill," one of the iconic numbers from *Showboat*. While Busch was dressed in his characteristic drag costume, there was nothing camp about his presentation. With lyrics designed to tug at the heart strings, his incredible emotional delivery was nothing less than a tour de force. The second number by Busch, "Whistling Away the Dark," had equal poignancy, especially imbued with its association with Julie Andrews, who performed it in the film *Darling Lily*. Similarly, Busch was more than equal to the Mancini & Mercer Oscar nominated song. Originally known for funny satires such as *Vampire Lesbians of Sodom* and *The Allergist's Wife*, Busch is just as likely to perform out of drag than in nowadays. He is currently involved in post-production for a film made in Fishkill, New York.

Chicago born Karen Mason, performed "Better Days," written by her

late musical director, Brian Lasser. It's a lovely song filled with loss but hope as well. There's a gentleness and longing in



Jamie deRoy

both the words and music, beautifully underscored by Sean Harkness on guitar. Having worked with Lasser for sixteen years, Mason is faithful to his music and memory, creating a cabaret act of his songs and a well-regarded album, *Better Days*, which has been called "emotion laden." Known as a superb actress as well as a brilliant singer, Mason has appeared on Broadway in *Mama Mia*, *Torch Song Trilogy*, and *Sunset Boulevard*, in which

she appeared for either Glenn Close or Betty Buckley a total of 150 times. Mason also performed "Hey There Good Times," which eased into "Happy Days Are Here Again."

The final performer of the afternoon was the singer-songwriter David Buskin, whose hilarious "Jews Don't Camp," written with Robin Batteau, was performed by de Roy and Buskin live, just as it was at the show I attended so many years ago. Finally, the program included a recorded duet by Buskin and his daughter Sophie at the Friars Club. Buskin, who has worked often with Judy Collins, accompanied his daughter and harmonized for the country genre song: "We Got Nothing to Answer For." Ms. Buskin has a powerful voice which was perfectly suited to underscoring the tag: "Love don't answer to no one!"

The well-paced program sparkled! In spite-of the fact that all but one of the performances were recorded, deRoy's engaging spontaneity brought more than enough kinetic energy to connect the performers, all of whom were live and visible on-screen for the interviews, scattered throughout. I find myself circling back to my original assessment of Jaime deRoy and Friends in characterizing this latest show: "...deRoy has a bright presence and comedic bent which set the tone for a lively gathering of singers, songwriters, musicians, and comedy." Aren't we all lucky that nothing much has changed!



## REMAINING 2020-2021 SEASON SCHEDULE



**February 13-**  
**Nat King Cole & Will Friedwald's** latest book. 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-**  
**Dean Martin Birthday tribute** Bill Boggs & Will Friedwald

## Just the Contrafacts, M'am!

By Marilyn Lester

When a popular tune is composed we may marvel at its creation. Those compositions that are deemed worthy go on to become classics and American Songbook standards. But very often the creative process doesn't stop there.



Beboppers Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, John Coltrane

Musicians, or even other composers, may take that number and make something else of it, resulting in a new work, termed a contrafact. The practice goes back centuries to classical music periods and became very widespread in modern times. Jazz musicians especially became adept at creating contrafacts, particularly the bebop players of the 1940s and 50s, such as Thelonius Monk, Wayne Shorter, Miles Davis, Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie.

The term "contrafact" actually dates back to the 16th century. It was originally defined both as the creation of a mass, chorale or hymn produced by replacing the text of a secular song with religious poetry, as well as taking the text of the mass and replacing the original text of an existing work, notably a motet or madrigal (called a parody mass). Jazz improvisation is full of contrafacts. Whereas in straight improvisation the original melody is evident, when a contrafact is created, the original melody may be hinted at or not be recognizable at all. Writing contrafacts began in earnest in the early 20th century. What makes a contrafact possible is that in US copyright law protects lyrics and the melody, but not titles and the composition's chord progression. Thus, a new musical work can be freely created based on a prior composition, allowing the contrafact creator to explore new harmonic, melodic, or rhythmic concepts.

The 1917 hit "Tiger Rag," for instance, became a much-recorded number in its own right and was also reworked into many notable derivative

tunes. Prolific composer and American musical genius, Duke Ellington, recorded Tiger Rag several times and wrote contrafacts of it that included "Whispering Tiger," "Daybreak Express" and "Braggin' in Brass." Louis Armstrong also recorded "Tiger Rag" and created a contrafact in his "Hotter Than That." Some songbook standards seem to lend themselves particularly to contrafacts. Some that have been much-favored are "How High the Moon," "All the Things You Are," "Back Home Again in Indiana" and especially "I Got Rhythm." The many variations on this latter tune include Duke Ellington's "Cottontail," Benny Goodman's "Don't Be That Way," Django Reinhardt's "Daphne" and Lester Young's "Lester Leaps In."

Chord progressions are the foundation of most Western music styles, including pop, jazz, rock and blues. Most of the Tin Pan Alley and songbook standard compositions were written in a



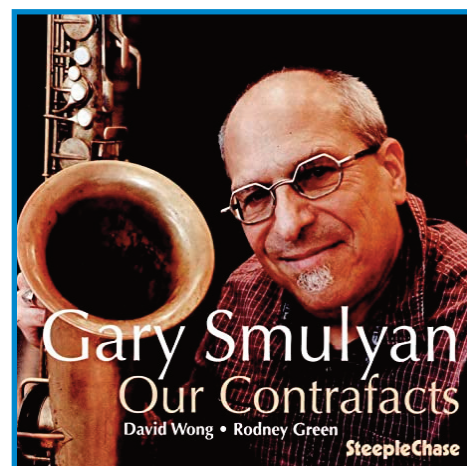
Duke Ellington and Dizzy Gillespie

fairly consistent 32-bar form (also known as AABA song form). Each work consists of four sections: two succeeding 8-bar sections, where the core melody line is retained; the 8-bar B section (the bridge), which offers contrasting harmony; and the final A section, which returns to the core melody, but often with slight variations added. One of the reasons "I Got Rhythm" is a prime candidate for becoming a contrafact is that its B section is radically in contrast to the A sections, which are written in B $\flat$ ; the B section of "I Got Rhythm" contains a circle of fifths and a series of dominant seventh chords in four different keys. Many songbook standards also have an introductory verse of generally 16 bars that precedes the main tune, setting the mood of the number in a free musical structure. Introductions and codas can also extend the form.

The 32-bar formula was often used in rock n' roll music in the 1950s into the 1960s. The Beatles, for example, used and extended the form with an instrumental section, second bridge, break or reprise of the introduction and another return to the main theme. Another type of chord progression, the 12-bar blues, also influenced much of 20th century music. It was a form that Duke Ellington was especially fond of, and which used an elongated, three-line arrangement of the I-IV-V progression within the structure of the total composition.

These forms and structures proved fertile ground for musicians and composers alike to write contrafacts. But as popular music evolved, chord progressions and musical forms became less complex. Beginning in the 1960s, many composers of popular music began using a simpler verse-chorus structure and were also exploring harmonizing with different types of chord progressions, notably modal. The older, standard forms of Tin Pan Alley and the American Songbook in their complexity and musical sophistication allowed intricate stories to be told in lyric and in music. The structure provided fertile ground for a vocalist's interpretative skills of the narrative, a musician's skill at improvising and the creation of contrafacts. Musicians today—mostly from the jazz world—still create contrafacts, but their focus still remains mainly on the great works of the 20th century's American Songbook.

For those of you who want to explore more about contrafacts, go to [www.garysmulyan.com](http://www.garysmulyan.com); he's a baritone sax player who loves contrafacts and has created many of them.



## Inside a Master Class with the Masterful Steve Ross

By Marilyn Lester

With a promise of a relaxed and collaborative atmosphere—the Master of the piano and of a vast repertoire of song, “the Crown Prince of New York Cabaret,” Steve Ross, recently has been sharing decades worth of wisdom in a Master Class entitled *The Song in You and You in the Song* – an intimate song study and performance workshop. Although Ross has been teaching for years, this venture over the last few weeks is the first time he’s been working in a group setting to guide singers, professional and amateur, to a deeper understanding of the material they choose to perform. With a little guidance on the types of music Ross knows best, namely the Great American Songbook and Broadway, plus classics from the 1960s and 1970s, participants choose two songs to work on, and then enjoy individual attention as well as collective support from enthusiastic and encouraging classmates.

The intimate and informal setting of the class, Ross’s cozy living room with its charming decor and memorabilia, plus, the limited size of the group (under a dozen souls) works well within the intent to awaken the singers’ inner actor. For ultimately, this is what this workshop is about. Like Ross, what many great singers know is that a song lyric is a play in miniature, with a plot and dramatic arc. It’s one thing to sing the words. It’s another to be able to interpret them, feel them and deliver them to listening ears with authenticity. This Master Class is as much about the actor’s craft as it is about the vocalist’s technique. And so the Master engages his students in tried-and-true thespian exercises, such as role playing, speed reading lines (or conversely, slow-reading them) and silent singing (mouthing the words of a song). In role playing, the student becomes the lyricist explaining what she/he’s just written to the tunesmith partner, played by Ross. Imagine Fred Ebb explaining his lyrics to John Kander, or Marcy Heisler to Zina Goldrich, or Ira to brother George Gershwin. In some instances Ross asks the singer to read the lyric as a

poem or speak it as a monologue or say the words as if writing a letter. The revelations that come forth are often quite amazing and profound.

For good measure there’s a little method acting thrown in—the linking of moments from the student’s own emotional life to the lyric. “We’re looking for honesty here,” Ross notes. “This is what makes the song you.” Lyrics, like any effective piece of writing,



have a hook to bring the listener into the song. “The first line is a statement,” he notes. (There’s an exception to the rule Ross advises, some songs being internal monologues.) Generally, though, he says, the task is to reach out to bring the audience in. He encourages having a personal back story in the process. “If you don’t have one, make it up,” he states emphatically. “Apply mood in your song. Remember your feelings,” he coaches.

If Ross had not become a singer-

pianist he would certainly have made a crackerjack stage director. His innate intelligence and vast, encyclopedic knowledge of the repertoire not only informs his approach, but gives him a boost in deconstructing and analyzing the lyric to get at the heart of the story. The Master also has the facility to find the story beneath the story and sometimes at the side of it, searching deeply for levels and possible hidden doors. The singer’s friend is contrast,” he says by way of example. The search for key words and connectors, such as “and,” “if,” “though” and especially “but” are gold in finding dramatic tension in a work. He addresses the abstract, noting pauses are important—which are not only brief moments of thought, but also moments of silent singing. With these techniques there’s plenty of interaction between Ross and singer. It’s a dynamic process in which the Master can be frequently heard saying, “I’m learning too.” The sum total of these exercises inevitably raises consciousness about the song as a journey, and the singing of it storytelling. Having been gently drilled, the ability to phrase and modulate come almost naturally to the singer. To put a point on it, he says, “Volume isn’t necessarily connected to intensity.” In a day and age in which many young singers are enthralled with power singing, and where indiscriminate belting at Mach ten is rewarded with applause, Ross’ statement is worth the price of admission alone. At the end of the session, with the group happily singing “I Can’t Give You Anything but Love” in unison, an amazing amount of ground has been covered. Ross had noted that the late and legendary cabaret singer, Julie Wilson, never wasted a word. The same can be said of Steve Ross, who filled three hours of instructional wisdom with nary a wasted moment, and with a great deal of embracing, delightful and joyful learning.

*This story originally appeared in NiteLifeExchange.com. on February 22, 2018. Reprinted with permission*

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Formerly New York Sheet Music Society

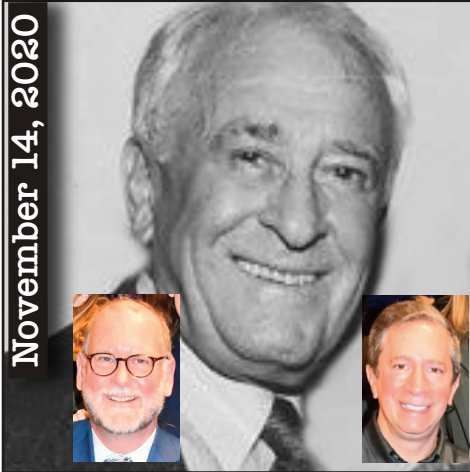
## 2020 - 2021 SEASON

October 10, 2020



MICHAEL LAVINE on ARTHUR SEIGEL

November 14, 2020



TOM TOCE & MICHAEL LAVINE on LEW SPENCE

December 12, 2020



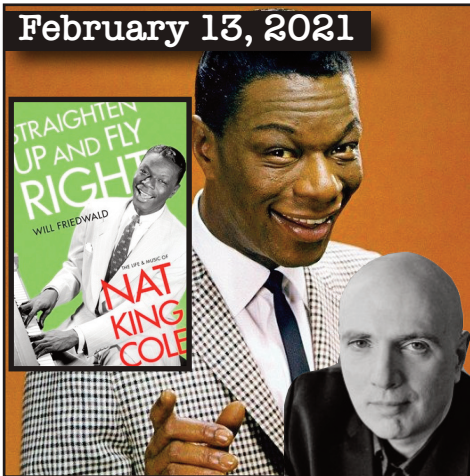
JON WEBER

January 9, 2021



JAMIE deROY AND FRIENDS

February 13, 2021



NAT KING COLE & WILL FRIEDWALD'S LATEST BOOK

March 13, 2021



NANCY MCGRAW'S MERCER SHOW

April 10, 2021



JAZZ MONTH FEATURING DANNY BACHER

May 8, 2021



16th ANNUAL SONGWRITER SERIES II

June 12, 2021



DEAN MARTIN BIRTHDAY TRIBUTE