

We Open with A Tribute to Susannah McCorkle— So Good to Be Back Home Where We Belong

By Marilyn Lester

As we all know too well, the lockdown of the Covid-19 pandemic caused an end to live performance everywhere in New York City for 18 months. For the 2020-2021 season of the American Popular Song Society in particular, that meant a transition into Zoomed programs. How exhilarating then, to be back live and home in our new venue, Don't Tell Mama (courtesy of the amazing Sidney Myer). And what a dazzling return it was. Board member, newsletter editor and producer of *Skylark: Remembering Susannah*, Jerry Osterberg, served up an immense platter of A-list talent to honor the late performer. It was a show (with a printed program, no less) that could have transferred directly to Feinstein's/54 Below without a single change. It was purely boffo, and our applause and gratitude fall squarely on J.O.'s shoulders.

Heading the cast were Danny Bacher, Aisha de Haas, Mark Nadler, Gabrielle Stravelli and Lucy Wijnands. Wonderfully, accompanying the vocalists was McCorkle's pianist and musical director Allen Farnham, who once said of her, "Few contemporary singers tell stories with the same intensity as Susannah McCorkle." McCorkle was primarily a jazz singer, but her repertoire and stylistic abilities were vast. At the time of her death in 2001 she was among the most popular performers in New

York, playing cabaret and jazz venues such as The Cookery, Michael's Pub, the Oak Room and more. In *Skylark: Remembering Susannah*, all of the song

favorite, Johnny Mercer. Adding a bossa beat to "You Go to My Head" (Haven Gillespie, Fred Coots) underscored for this writer that adding a samba rhythm to any song is a Very Good Thing.

Therein followed three hugely talented distaff jazz vocalists. Gabrielle Stravelli has become, in the last decade, a jazz artist of renown. There's a saying among jazz folk that there's a very tangible thing called a "feel for jazz." Stravelli has that feel in her bones, from head to toe. Her sense of rhythm and timing is superb, plus she's ever-growing in her

interpretive skills. Her "Skylark" (Hoagy Carmichael, Johnny Mercer) was profoundly moving; McCorkle in spirit must surely have been smiling broadly. For humor, she delivered "My Attorney Bernie" (Dave Frishberg) with a delightful wry twist and excellent phrasing.

When it comes to the blues, a go-to is Broadway's Aisha de Haas, also a jazz artist when she's not on a theatrical stage. Her "Lover Man" (Jimmy Davis, Roger Ramirez, James Sherman) and then Cole Porter's "Every Time We Say Goodbye," both vocalized with blues sensibilities, showcased de Haas' powerful delivery and rich vocal tone. For contrast she applied serious swing to another Porter tune, "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To." A "discovery" for most of us in the



L-R...Aisha de Haas, Danny Bacher, Lucy Wijnands, Mark Nadler, Jerry Osterberg, Gabrielle Stravelli

Photo by Andrew Poretz

choices directly related to McCorkle, making the program rich in variety as well as a memorable tribute.

Osterberg, introducing the program, got us off to a terrific start with a little humor. Danny Bacher, first up, is a multi-talented entertainer who sings, tells jokes and happens to be a master of an instrument that has gotten a lot of flack thrown its way, courtesy of Kenny G. We speak, of course, of the soprano saxophone, which Osterberg called a "flute" and yours truly corrected by announcing it's actually a "gold clarinet." When Bacher got down to business, though, the most glorious tone came out of that venerable instrument—it's not an easy one to master. Among the several tunes Bacher sang, was a delightful "Accentuate the Positive" with melody by Harold Arlen and lyric by a Bacher



President's Message...

Linda Amiel Burns, President

Greetings to APSS Members, Friends and Fans,

Our first live Program of the 2021-2022 Season on October 9 at our new home, Don't Tell Mama, was a great success. Many thanks to Producer (and Newsletter Editor-In-Chief) Jerry Osterberg for his remarkable "Tribute to the Late Jazz Singer, Suzannah McCorkle."

He assembled a brilliant and talented cast, and you can read all about it in this newsletter issue. However, there were technical difficulties in our attempt to both stream and video the show. I was told before the show began that the Zoom was not working properly but was assured that the show was being videotaped.

Unfortunately, this was not the case, and you can imagine our disappointment when we realized there was no taped version of this superb program for inclusion in our Archives and for viewing by those who were unable to attend in person. However, we do think that we have the problem solved from here on in, and we will be doing both live and streamed Programs each month. Just to be extra-safe, I have hired the wonderful Maryann Lopinto to video the November program for us.

There are a lot of exciting things going on with the American Popular Song Society, which I will tell you about next month. We hope to begin our fund-raising efforts to bring this amazing organization to the next level, increase our membership, gain more exposure, and continue our mission of preserving the American Popular Songs of the past, present and future.

Hope to see you on November 13th at Don't Tell Mama from 12-2 for another great afternoon, as we learn about songs that are in Public Domain, and enjoy performances by a terrific cast.

Please remember to have your vaccine information and photo ID with you!

With warmest regards to you all,

Linda

Linda Amiel Burns, President
American Popular Song Society



Linda Amiel Burns and Glen Charlow

MEETING LOCATION: starting October 9, 2021



(343 W. 46th St.)
12:00pm - 2:00pm

Come early to look thru Sheet Music & CD's & stuff, all FREE.

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Popular Song
Society*

President:
Linda Amiel Burns
(212) 315-3500

Vice Presidents:
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Mark William

NEWSLETTER

Editor-in-Chief: Jerry Osterberg
osterbergg@aol.com
Co-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
rosethphoto18@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

Memberships can
be paid with:



via Paypal

at www.APSSinc.org

 GLEN CHARLOW
DESKTOP PUBLISHING
DTP Creative Graphics
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Susannah McCorkle cont...

APSS/cabaret world, Lucy Wijnands proved she too can swing with the best of 'em on "I'll Take Romance" (Ben Oakland, Oscar Hammerstein II). With Danny Bacher, the pair offered a sweet and at the same time poignant "Thanks for the Memory" (Ralph Rainger, Leo Robin). More than that, they breathed new life into an old tune, giving real meaning to the several verses that tell of a love affair that didn't work out to expectation.

Because Allen Farnham has been playing in the pit orchestra of *The Lion King*, he said his farewells, leaving singer-pianist Mark Nadler to wrap up *Skylark: Remembering Susannah*. It turns out this position at the end of the program was as perfect as it could be. Nadler and McCorkle were the best of friends. His remembrance of how he met her—at a party during which he threw out her back swing dancing—was truly priceless. More so because McCorkle, far from being angry or annoyed, bought Nadler dancing lessons. It was the start of a deep

friendship. Nadler is truly one-of-a-kind, with a verve and zest for performing that's in the stratosphere. He also



Mark Nadler

possesses a sensitivity that's the other side of his humorous, clowning self. It's this former ability that he demonstrated in speaking of McCorkle and singing Billy Strayhorn's "Something to Live For." Conversely, humor was let loose in a duet with Stravelli on "Two Sleepy People" (Hoagy Carmichael, Frank Loesser). Both sides of the Nadler coin were in perfect balance in honoring McCorkle.

In a big, beautiful finish, Nadler recreated McCorkle's arrangement of Irving Berlin's "There's No Business Like Show Business." Not the rousing anthem so often heard, this version was delivered as a story song, with layers of meaning that express, despite any tragedy, there's also joy—and hope, so "let's go on with the show." We were reminded in Nadler's personal tribute to Susannah McCorkle that she lives on in recordings... and by virtue of programs such as *Skylark: Remembering Susannah*, she's kept very much alive one more day.

Song Facts You May Not Know

By Stephen Vratto

Blue Star: Written by Victor Young and Edward Heyman, the same songwriting team who created "When I Fall in Love," this tune was the theme for the 1954–56 television drama, "The Medic." Starring Richard Boone, Mary Stewart and Robert Stevenson, the show was groundbreaking in its realistic portrayal of the medical profession and heralded at the time for its sometimes unflinching look at the operations and procedures performed by doctors, setting the foundation for all medical dramas thereafter. Young initially copywrote the music on February 17, 1955, under the title "The Medic Theme." Heyman set lyrics to the lovely tune immediately thereafter and the completed composition was copywritten under a new title, "Blue Star," a few months later on May 5, 1955.

Come Fly with Me: The adage "Write what you know" could not be more suitable to this catchy tune written in 1957 for Frank Sinatra by lyricist by Sammy Cahn, with music by Jimmy Van Heusen. The latter of the legendary songwriting duo, who also penned such iconic Ol' Blue Eyes songs as "Love and Marriage," "High Hopes" and "All the Way," had a passion for flying and moonlighted part-time as a test pilot during World War II. The song was the title track of Sinatra's 1958 album. A precursor to later concept albums, the LP was a panoply of travel-inspired tunes, including "Moonlight in Vermont," "I Love Paris" and "Chicago (That Toddlin' Town).

Meet Me Tonight in Dreamland: Songs My Grandmother Taught Me

By Jerry Osterberg

At the risk of giving my age away, I'll admit that my grandmother Louisa was married in 1910. I don't know what her wedding song might have been, but I clearly remember that she would often break out in song for no apparent reason. The song was almost always "Meet Me Tonight in Dreamland," a hit song from the year that Louisa became a housewife. Written by Beth Slater Whitson and Leo Friedman, the song's sheet music cover featured Reine Davies, a vaudeville actress who introduced it to the American public. It sold 2 million copies in its first year.

The first quarter of the twentieth century was an exciting era for popular music in America. Following the invention of the phonograph by Thomas Edison, the music business began a gradual shift from sheet music to recorded sound. Still, there was such a huge demand for music in the home, that the songwriters, singers, and publishing houses had more than enough work to keep them all busy. Around 1880, song publishers moved to Union Square to be

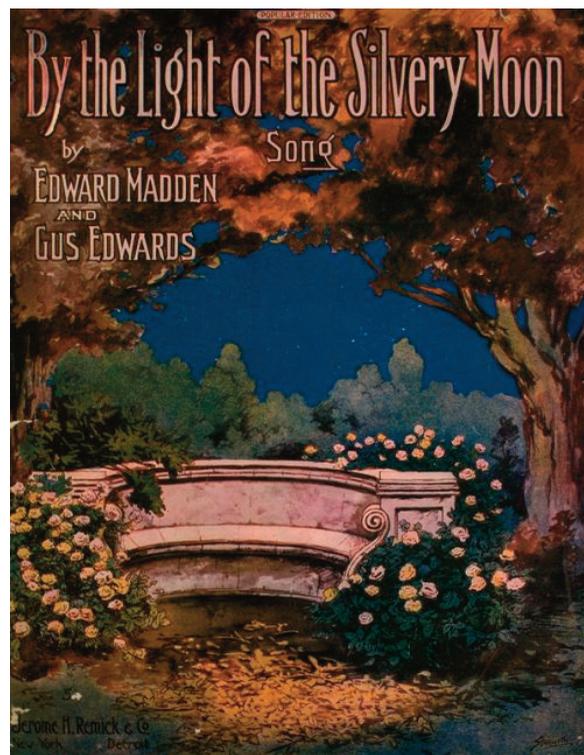
close to Burlesque and Vaudeville houses. It was here that song-pluggers pitched their songs to performers and music publishers. Gradually, there was a shift further uptown and the music community began to center around Broadway. A group of buildings on 28th Street, between Broadway and Sixth Avenue, came to be known as "Tin Pan Alley."

Between 1900 and 1910, 25,000 songs were being published annually. Sheet music sales reached a peak in 1910, at an estimate of 30 million, which included two six-million sellers "Let Me Call You Sweetheart" and "Down by the Old Mill Stream."

During the five-year period 1914 to 1919, the number of manufacturers of phonographs rose from 18 to 200, and their output went from 500,000 to 2 million. With the engines of production in place, it was inevitable that the creation and availability of popular music would rise to meet the demand, as would performers, many of them from Burlesque and Vaudeville.

Although there wasn't anything such as Billboard magazine and its charting system back then, back then, musicologists, music historians, trade and record company publications, as well as various other sources—experts and writers such as Jim Walsh, David Ewen, Roger Kinkle, Joseph Murrells, and Joel Whitburn, and numerous provided reasonably reliable marketing data and rankings.

The top song in 1900



was "When You Were Sweet Sixteen" (James Thornton), recorded by George J. Gaskin, and a second version by Jere Mahoney. Mahoney had another big hit that year with "Bird in a Gilded Cage" (Arthur Lamb & Harry Von Tilzer), as did Harry MacDonough, who recorded "My Wild Irish Rose" (Chauncey Olcott), yet another winner. MacDonough also produced six additional top 30 hits that year for a total of eight. 1902 was another good year, producing "In the Good Old Summer Time" (George Evans & Ren Shields), recorded by both J.W. Myers and William Redmond. 1902 also gave us "Won't You Come Home Bill Bailey" (Hughie Cannon) with three different versions: Arthur Collins, Dan Quinn, and Silas Leachman.

The year 1904 had "Meet Me In St. Louis, Louis" (Andrew Sterling & Kerry Mills), with no less than four editions: Billy Murray, S.H. Dudley, J.W. Myers, and Arthur Pryor. 1905 contributed "Give My Regards to Broadway" (George M.

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST



GARET GARRETT—MAXIMILIAN FOSTER—THOMAS McMORROW
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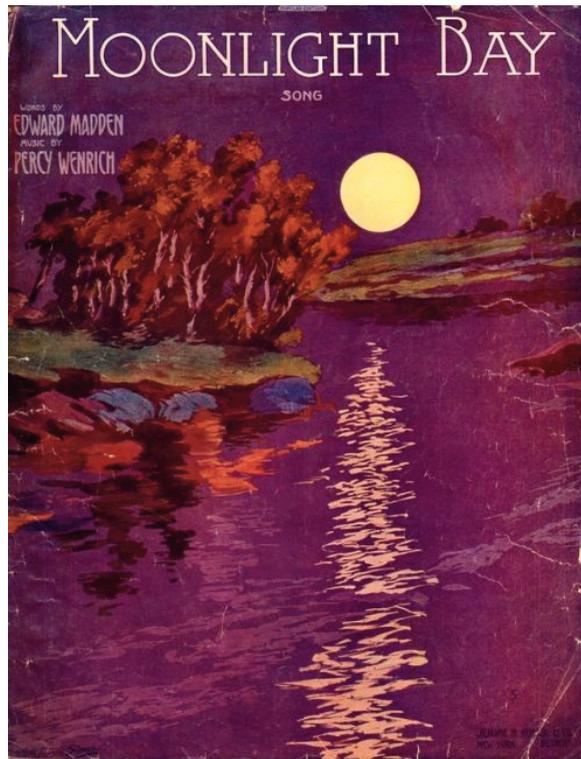
...Dreamland cont...

Cohan), written for the stage musical, *Little Johnny Jones*, and recorded by Billy Murray, who would come to dominate the lists for years. Byron Harlan, another singer who would appear on the charts frequently, recorded the number one hit in 1907 with "School Days" (Will Cobb & Gus Edwards). Recorded by Byron Harlan, in addition to Bill Murray & Ada Jones, it would be recorded many decades later by Tiny Tim, who sang both parts.

Billy Murray scored again in 1908 with "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" (Jack Norworth & Albert Von Tilzer), another number one hit. "Shine On, Harvest Moon" (Nora Bayes & Jack Norworth) was a huge success for Harry MacDonough in 1909. A version by Ada Jones & Billy Murray also did well. Gus Edwards and Edward Madden reached #2 in 1910 with "By the Light of the Silvery Moon," as recorded by Billy Murray and the Hadyn Quartet. "Down by the Old Mill Stream" (Tell Taylor) sold 4 million copies of sheet music in 1911. It was recorded by Arthur Clough & the Brunswick Quartet.

"Let Me Call You Sweetheart" (Leo

Friedman & Beth Slater Whitson) was a hit for the Columbia Quartet in 1911, and "Alexander's Ragtime Band" was the number one song for three months. The most popular recording was by Arthur



Collins and Byron Harlan. Billy Murray also had a hit version. The American Quartet recorded "Moonlight Bay" (Percy Wenrich & Edward Madden) in 1912, in addition to "Oh, You Beautiful Doll" (Seymour Brown & Nat Ayer), this

time fronted by Billy Murray.

From 1912 through 1918 there were many releases that would further establish the Great American Songbook, among them "When Irish Eyes are Smiling" (Chauncey Olcott & George Graff), "They Didn't Believe Me" (Jerome Kern & Herbert Reynolds), "For Me and My Gal" (Edgar Leslie & E. Ray Goetz), and "After You've Gone" (Turner Layton & Henry Creamer). Richard Whiting & Raymond Egan wrote "Till We Meet Again" in 1918, during the Great War. The song tells of the parting of a soldier and his sweetheart and was so popular that sheet music sales were 5 million in the first two years. As of this writing, sheet music sales for "Till We Meet Again" have topped 11 million copies.

I'm tempted to say that I grew up listening to these beautiful songs and I suppose I did. By the happy combination of family harmonizing, television, radio, stage shows, movie musicals, and the old 78's, the songs remain as fresh to me as if I heard them only yesterday. Little did I know that my grandmother's music would become such an important part of my life.

If you enjoy our programs, please say so in the guestbook on our website:

www.APSSinc.org

It's membership time again.

It might be a good idea to...

Come to the program on November 13th prepared with your vaccination card in hand when you arrive at DTM so you don't hold up people in line at the check point. Then also have your membership money or member card ready for when you reach the membership table before entering the performance room.

Has Lucille Ball ever won an Oscar?

By Glen Charlow

No. Lucy has never been nominated for an Academy Award. She was nominated for an Emmy Award thirteen times, and won four times. In 1977 she was among the first recipients of the Women in Film Crystal Award. She was the recipient of the Golden Globe Cecil B. DeMille Award in 1979, the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Kennedy Center Honors in 1986 and the Governors Award from the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences in 1989.

Lucille Ball's movie and film career started while she was doing modeling jobs in New York City. She was discovered when she appeared as the Chesterfield Girl and her face was posted on billboards throughout the city. Coincidentally, it was not her modeling that got her discovered, but her determination to succeed in New York.

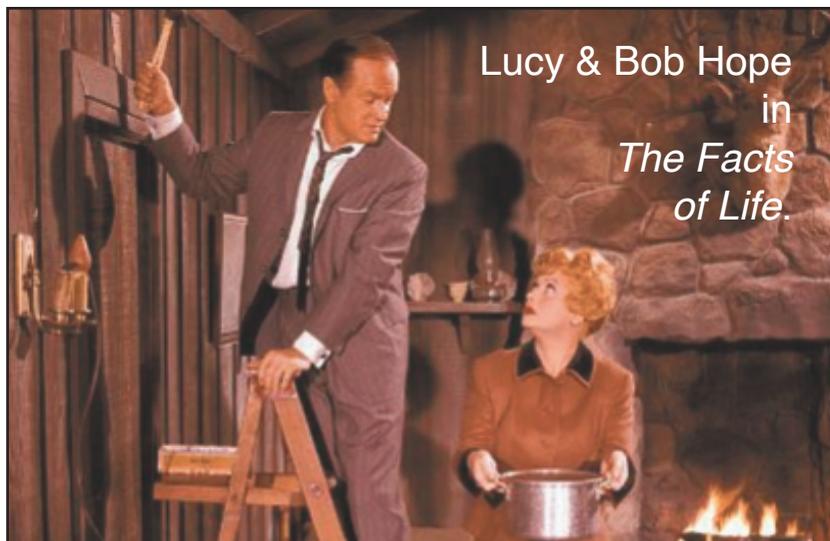
To earn extra money, Lucy posed at nights and weekends for commercial illustrators. One of these paintings was sold to Chesterfield cigarettes, and overnight, her face was all over New York City where a theatrical agent took notice. Sylvia Hahlo told Lucy that Sam Goldwyn needed a dozen well-known poster girls for a new Eddie Cantor movie, *Roman Scandals*.

Lucy signed on as one of the Goldwyn Girls and her movie career had begun. She went on to star in approximately 81 films and became known as "Queen of the B's". It was while at RKO in 1942 that she went to her vibrant shade of Technicolor "Tango Red," the hair color she became known for.

The list of movies with Lucy is extensive but I'd like to pay tribute to Lucy by bringing a bit more attention to one of her better but lesser-known big-screen vehicles, the best she ever made *after* the world had come to know her as Mrs. Ricardo. *The Facts of Life* (1960), directed by Melvin Frank and written by Mr. Frank and Norman

Panama, is also the best of the four films that Lucy made with Bob Hope. The first two, *Sorrowful Jones* (1949) and *Fancy Pants* (1950), came pre-*Love Lucy* (1951-57), at a time when it looked as though true stardom had eluded Lucy once and for all; the final one, *Critics' Choice*, came in 1963. Though *The Facts of Life* won five Oscar nominations (and won in the

shot. Pushing fifty, she is still a knockout, but the beauty of her performance comes in its softness, its yearning, its maturity. Yes, there are big laughs, notably a drive-in fiasco when the stars won't unlock their lips out of fear of being seen together, or when Bob drives all over town because he can't remember at which motel he deposited Lucy for their rendezvous.



Lucy & Bob Hope
in
*The Facts
of Life.*

black-and-white costumes category), it isn't a movie that is much talked about today.

The fresh and funny premise here is that it can be damned hard to commit adultery, even when both parties are willing. Lucy is married to Don DeFore; Bob is married to Ruth Hussey. Can Lucy and Bob get their "affair" in motion, or will the challenging mechanics of arranging adultery simply wear them out? One of the pleasures of this grown-up picture is that it never feels like a Bob Hope movie or a Lucille Ball movie, just a strong middle-aged romantic comedy with two very good roles for two very fine comic actors. Both stars are excellent: easygoing, warm, honest, with their laughs arising effortlessly. In fact, it's a consistently relaxed film, relying more on charm and likability than on punchlines or shtick, which comes as a surprise, considering the stars' reputations as treasured clowns.

The Facts of Life delivers more than expected, becoming an unusually smart and bittersweet comedy. Lucy is not Lucy Ricardo here, not by a long

The Facts of Life proved that zany Lucy could still be taken seriously as an actress, a subtle and intelligent player, a seasoned artist who had worked her way up from the chorus and was by now in a class by herself. As much as anyone, I love Lucy in the chocolate factory and stomping on grapes, but I also love the shrewd, knowing, and unexpectedly sensitive actress of films like *Dance, Girl, Dance* (1940), *The Dark Corner* (1946), and, yes, *The Facts of Life*.

Lucy's last public appearance, just one month before her death, was at the 1989 Academy Awards telecast in which she and fellow presenter, Bob Hope, were given a standing ovation.



Lucy arriving at the Oscars on March 29, 1989

Loving
LUCY

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originally
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