

Celebrating Twenty Years of Creative Songwriting Talent

By Marilyn Lester



Tracy Stark

In 2002 the first annual Songwriter Showcase debuted at what was then the Sheet Music Society, now the American Popular Songbook Society, hosted by Board member Sandi Durell. Twenty years on, Sandi is still at the helm of this popular event, traditionally held at the May meeting. This year, the program included a wide range of creative and award-winning songwriters who ply their craft in a variety of musical genres. To honor all of this rich collection of talent properly, here is a rundown of what each participant had to offer.

As harrowing as the covid pandemic has been, it did bring together multi-award-winning ASCAP writer **Bob Levy** and multi-award winner **Tracy Stark**. Levy's most recent CD, "While I'm Still Here," features 17 tracks of his songs, composed with a variety of artists sung by a variety of performers. Music director-composer Stark was such a contributor, and on hand to sing one of their tunes, "When We Sing Again" was cabaret favorite, Marcus Simeone. He also

sang "Let There Be Peace," dedicated to the Ukraine. A note, the pair also created "Don't Follow Me," which can be heard on the album.

Billboard charting, NEO Award Winner **Billy Reece** humorously followed Sandi's introduction of him with the observation that "that can also be my obituary." He's one of the most prolific young musical theatre writers of his generation, with a career that began with the award-winning and international headline making *Balloon Boy: The Musical*, at age 17. He's cut a wide swath since. Will Harden offered a tune from Reece's new musical *Fowl Play*, which follows two queer musical theatre writers who are commissioned to write an apology musical for a certain homophobic fried chicken corporation. Two songs followed, sung by Lauren Robinson and Harden, from his *Little Black Book*, a musical/rock concert hybrid as sung by "Heidi Fleiss" and her pet macaws. Reece explained that once a 26-year-old Hollywood Madam in the early '90s, Heidi now resides in the middle of the deserts of Nevada with 40 parrots.

The multi-faceted **John Primerano** is an actor, singer, pianist and songwriter whose repertoire consists of a wide variety of standard, easy listening and original songs. He began performing professionally at age 15, has worked with such performers as Peggy King, Vaughn



John Primerano

Monroe, Woody Herman, Jimmy Durante and Guy Marks. He remarked that he'd been a guest at the very first Songwriter Showcase and making reference to "those days" of yore sang and played "You'll Never Know (Just How Much I Love You)" (Harry Warren, Mack Gordon). From his own songbook he offered "Saloon Song."

Musical storytellers **Bela Konstancja** and **Janey Miles** are recent alumni of the Graduate Musical Theater Writing Program at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts ('21). Before attending NYU, Bela worked professionally as a songwriter in Nashville where her performances could be heard at the BlueBird Cafe and on the local radio. Janey worked professionally as a writer and director in Los Angeles. At NYU the duo began their collaboration on *Real People Things*, an original pop musical love story about finding a real connection over the internet, in which we eavesdrop on the intimate conversations between Rosie Peters and Theo Goldberg. These two match on a dating app and fall in love over



President's Message...

Linda Amiel Burns, President

Dear Members, Friends, Family and Fans,

I am proud that we have been able to keep this valuable organization going through these difficult and challenging times. Our 2021-2022 season at Don't Tell Mama has been amazing, and after two years of Zoom Programs, we were able to go back to live programming.

We began in October with Jerry Osterberg's magnificently produced and performed tribute to the late jazz singer, Susannah McCorkle. Then in November, a delightful program on songs in Public Domain, produced by Andrew Poretz. In December we celebrated the holidays with an Andy Williams-Style Christmas produced by Mark William, enhanced with video clips from Will Friedwald. However, due to Covid, we had to cancel January but resumed in February with James Gavin's long-postponed Peggy Lee Centennial program. Produced by Will Friedwald, it was well worth the wait. In March, the great songwriter John Forster was celebrated and interviewed by Tom Toce. The enjoyable program was co-produced by Tom and Michael Lavine. April is Jazz Month and the famous Bobby Sanabria and his quartet were featured in Marilyn Lester's exciting program. In May, Sandi Durell brought her highly anticipated 20th Annual Songwriter Series to us. This program, as with all her previous showcases, certainly did not disappoint! You can visit our website (www.apssinc.org) and watch the video of each of these programs if you missed any.

We will be closing this season on Sunday, June 12th with our first Gala Benefit at The Cutting Room with a star-studded tribute to Broadway Legend Lee Roy Reams. You can read all about it elsewhere in this issue. There is still time to buy your tickets, support APSS, and help us fulfill our mission to keep good music alive!

The Board has made a very difficult decision. This will be our last formal Newsletter and President's Message. Times have changed, and the work involved has become very stressful to the editing team. We plan on publishing and sending out a monthly BULLETIN throughout each season to let you know what the next program will be, and to tell you about the programs you may have missed.

I am looking forward to seeing you on June 12th at The Cutting Room (44 East 32nd Street) for our Gala. We begin at 4:30-5:30 for cocktails, canapes, and schmoozing. Our show begins at 5:30-7:30 with Michael Lavine as Music Director. I know you won't want to miss this ONE NIGHT ONLY event!

Best,
Linda

Linda Amiel Burns, President
American Popular Song Society

MEETING LOCATION: starting with 2021 - 2022 Season



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

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

*American
Popular Song
Society*

President:

Linda Amiel Burns
(212) 315-3500

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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
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

Memberships can
be paid with:



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Songwriters... cont...

text messages, phone calls and facetimes, all leading up to the moment they have to put down their phones and risk it all to meet in person. Konstancia and Miles, with singer Parker Gandy, presented several selections from the musical, including “Here We Go Again” and “Hindsight.”



Jaime Lozano

Lin-Manuel Miranda called him “the next big thing.” **Jaime Lozano** was brought to Sandi’s attention at the American Songbook series at Lincoln Center a short while ago. He is a musical theatre composer and native of Monterrey, Mexico. Jaime earned his BFA in Music and Composition from the School of Music at the Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León and was the recipient of a full scholarship to New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts. His credits are already voluminous and include works featured at venues all over the world. He is currently working on a musical about two Cuban sisters separated for 40 years—one in Cuba and the other in Miami—who meet again via Facetime. From his *Songs*



Joey Contreras

By an Immigrant show, Florencia Cuenca (Jamie’s spouse) sang “The Other Side.”

Originally from California, **Joey Contreras** is a musical theatre and pop songwriter especially known for his first album *Love Me, Love Me Not*, which featured an all-star lineup of Broadway talent. He is a 2018 Jonathan Larson Grant Finalist. He has written the music and lyrics for the song-cycle, *In Pieces* (originally presented at Lincoln Center). His musicals with bookwriter/lyricist, Kate Thomas, include *All The Kids Are Doing It* and *Elements*. Additionally he is working on *Heartbreakers in Hell* with bookwriter/lyricist Benjamin Halstead. Singers Mia Gerachis and Brian Russel Carey presented several of Contreras’ works from *In Pieces*, including “In Pieces” and “The First Sign of Forever.”



Peter Kellogg and David Friedman

The award-winning composer/songwriter team of **Peter Kellogg** and **David Friedman** recently had a hit with *Desperate Measures* at the York Theatre Company, followed by an Off-Broadway run. Kellogg is a book writer and lyricist whose credits include the 1992 production of the Broadway musical *Anna Karenina*, for which he received two Tony nominations. His credits also include *Lincoln In Love*, *Stunt Girl*, *Money Talks* and *The Rivals*. Friedman is a songwriter and film and theater

composer, as well as a lyricist, whose work includes *King Island Christmas*, *Saving Aimee* and *Stunt Girl* with Kellogg. Another collaboration, and the source for their segment of the Songwriter Showcase is *Chasing Nicolette*, based on an anonymous medieval fictional French *chante-fable* titled *Nicolette and Aucassin*. As they explained the rather elaborate plot machinations, singers Maria Wirries, Philippe Arroyo and Jacob Simon offered highlights from that musical.

As Sandi noted in her introductory remarks, it’s thrilling to observe how the American songbook has grown and continues to do so in each passing year. “This is the music of tomorrow,” she said, leaving a musically sated audience confident that our heritage is in good hands.



Sandi Durell by Stephen Sorokoff



Discovering Tin Pan Alley: Now and Then

By Jerry Osterberg

In 2019, the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission designated 47 – 55 West 28th Street, between Broadway and Sixth Avenue, as *Tin Pan Alley*, based on the street's cultural significance as the birthplace of American popular music in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. On April 2, 2022, a new street sign was unveiled, officially giving the street a second name, *Tin Pan Alley*.

George Calderaro, the Director of the Tin Pan Alley American Popular Music Project, with the support of several others, spearheaded a campaign to have the block formally acknowledged as the longtime home of sheet music publishers, songwriters, and performers who worked there, notably East European Jewish immigrants and African Americans.

Many music publishers, songwriters, and song pluggers flocked to the area which would become known as *Tin Pan Alley*. In its early days of the 1890s, it was located near what was then New York's theater district. The first publisher to open an office on West 28th Street was M. Whitmark & Son in 1893. Some of the pioneers included Harry Von Tilzer, Huey

Cannon, Gus Edwards, George M. Cohan, Ren Shields, and Charles B. Ward, responsible respectively for “A

pieces of sheet music in its first year, and ultimately became one of the most successful sellers of all time, eventually reaching five million in sales. Long before commercial radio and recordings, many citizens owned pianos and purchased sheet music. From 1890 to 1900, the number of pianos in American homes increased fivefold to one million. This produced an insatiable demand for new music, which songwriters were eager to supply.



Bird in a Gilded Cage,” “Bill Bailey, Won’t You Please Come Home,” “By the Light of the Silvery Moon,” “Give My Regards to Broadway,” “In the Good Old Summertime,” and “The Band Played On.”

During the decades to follow, they were joined by additional creators of American popular music, much of it finding its way into the repertoires of countless singers during the next fifty years. The identities of the songwriters of “standards” became as familiar to Americans as those of their

favorite baseball heroes: Irving Berlin, Cole Porter, Johnny Mercer, Hoagy Carmichael, Sammy Cahn, Harold Arlen, Harry Ruby, Jerome Kern, George Gershwin, and a multitude of others whose names remain fresh.



One of the earliest songs to emerge as a hit in 1892 was “After the Ball” by Charles K. Harris. It sold two million

For more information, contact TinPanAlley.nyc@tinpanalleynyc or gc2212@columbia.edu



Lee Roy Reams — Lucky in Love

By Jerry Osterberg

There are at least two gifts to the world of music which came out of Covington, Kentucky. One of them is “Santa Claus is Coming to Town,” written by Covington native Haven Gillespie with J. Fred Coots in 1934; the second, Lee Roy Reams, who debuted as the newest member of the Reams family in 1942.

Isn't it wonderful that both treasures are still going strong!

Within the past few months, Reams, called “Lee” by his friends, has appeared at the Friars Club to accept its Thespians of the Year Award for Lifetime Achievement, performed a retrospective of his life and career: *Goodbye Kentucky! Hello Broadway!* at 54 Below to rave reviews and is about to accept another Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Popular Song Society, the first in its long history.

Beginning with his Broadway debut in *Sweet Charity* in 1966, Reams has achieved a dazzling collection of theater roles, earning nominations for a Tony Award and Drama Desk Award for *42nd Street*, playing the lead role as Billy Lawlor in 1980. Having heard that Michael Stewart was writing the book for a new musical based on the Warner Brothers musical film, *42nd Street*, and a fan of the movie from late night television, Reams told Stewart that he wanted the role of Billy Lawlor, portrayed by Dick Powell in the movie. A year later, Reams received a call from his agent Bob Donahoe, who would later become his husband of fifty

years, to say that he was not being considered for the part of Lawlor, but for a



smaller part, because the casting director thought that Reams was too old for the part. He was so disappointed that he didn't want

Immediately following the audition, Gower Champion smiled at Reams and said: “You're very right for the role of Billy Lawlor,” about which Reams now says: “And I got the part!”

Sixteen years earlier, armed with a Master's Degree in Theater Arts from the University of Cincinnati, numerous school performances and summer stock: *Annie Get Your Gun*, *Damn Yankees*, *Most Happy Fella*, *Kiss Me Kate*, *South Pacific* and others, experience with well-known actors Rita Moreno, Patricia Morison, Dorothy Dandridge, Dorothy Collins, Jane Powell, and Maureen O'Sullivan, and lots of determination, he came to New York and in his first audition, landed a part in *The Fantasticks* playing opposite Rita Gardner. As the star-crossed young lovers, Matt and Louisa, the duo got to

sing “Soon It's Gonna Rain,” and “They Were You.”



to take the audition. Reams asked Donahoe: “Why should I audition for a role I don't want to do?” Donahoe responded: “Just go in and show them what you can do.”

The American Popular Song Society couldn't be more delighted than to have Lee Roy Reams as its first

honoree at the much-anticipated Gala on June 12. Those who have seen him perform over the past five-decades can fully appreciate what a magnificent showman he is. Lee Roy Reams has consistently maintained a high level of excellence during this entire period. He says: “What we share-in-common is a love of what we do. I've been lucky that most of the people I've worked with all share that.”

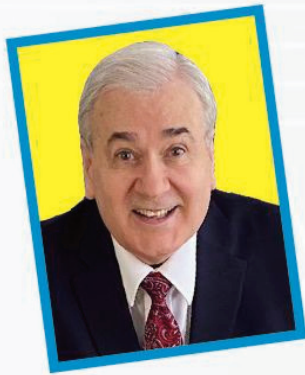


American Popular Song Society

(Formerly New York Sheet Music Society)

You're Invited

As we honor the Legendary **Lee Roy Reams**
with a Lifetime Achievement Award



Sunday,
June 12, 2022

THE CUTTING ROOM

44 E 32nd St, New York, NY 10016

4:30 PM - Mingle - Cocktails - Hors d'oeuvres 5:30-7:30 PM - Powerhouse performances by:

- *Danny Bacher* • *Jim Brochu* • *Charles Busch* • *Michael Denby Cain* • *Len Cariou*
- *Scott Coulter* • *Robert Cuccioli* • *Tony Danza* • *George Dvorsky* • *Melissa Errico*
- *Beth Fowler* • *Penny Fuller* • *Anita Gillette* • *Jeff Harnar* • *Karen Mason*
- *Marilyn Maye* • *Andrea McArdle* • *Sidney Myer* • *Steve Ross* • *Lewis J. Stadlen*
- *KT Sullivan* • *Mark William* • *Walter Willison* • *Karen Ziemba*

**more surprises. (performers subject to availabilities)*

Musical Director: *Michael Lavine* • Producers: *Sandi Durell* and *Marilyn Lester* • President APSS: *Linda Amiel Burns*

Tickets... \$75 and \$125 to benefit APSS, whose long-established and ongoing mission fosters greater awareness, education of American Popular Music and its global impact around the world. Tickets can be purchased at www.apssinc.org/gala2022

COVID protocols in place • ID Cards/proof of VAX