

WORDS WITHOUT MUSIC

The Ira Gershwin Newsletter



No. 8, Fall 2013

Announcing the U.S. Tour of



See back page
for dates and venues

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On the cover: Original Cast in the Tony Award®-winning Broadway Revival of *The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess*. Photo by Michael J. Lutch.

Dear readers,

I am not a copyright lawyer. But I am the trustee and executor of the Ira Gershwin musical estate and am vigilant as to the effects of copyright law on the continued financial and uniqueness issues of Ira's catalog. You could say I know just enough to be dangerous.

Copyright is a legal concept, enacted by most governments, giving the creator of an original work exclusive rights for a limited time. Generally, it is "the right to copy," but the copyright holder also has the right to be credited for the work, to determine who may adapt the work to other forms, who may perform the work, who may financially benefit from it, and other related rights. It is a form of intellectual property, like the patent and the trademark, applicable to any expressible form of an idea or information that is substantive and discrete. The law allows an appointed person to substitute for the creator, if he/she can't perform the duties as listed above. That's me.

Here's where things get complex. American law, for songs written before 1978, provides a copyright term of 95 years after first publication. After that, the song moves into the public domain (PD), which simply means that the rights granted the creator or estate, as noted in the paragraph above, are negated. The song can be used, modified, performed, or copied for free, by anybody in any medium.

In 2019, Ira's first major body of songs, his lyrics to the show *Lady, Be Good*, will have been published for 95 years. On January 1, 2020 these songs will go PD. Oy vey! As Ira's catalog ages, each of his songs will, one by one, also become PD, which means the estate loses income and control. And there is nothing we can do about it.

But all is not lost. We will survive. The Broadway shows we have developed in the last 30 years which use Ira's lyrics – *My One and Only*, *Crazy for You*, and *Nice Work If You Can Get It* – and those we continue to develop, are new properties, and they will remain under copyright for many years to come. Additionally, copyright laws outside the United States will generally protect Ira's interests in foreign countries until about 2053.

Of the big American songwriters of the 20th century, Ira and Irving Berlin were among the earliest with large catalogs; therefore they are among the first to face significant PD issues. Many things we do, from encouraging the musical theater version of *Porgy and Bess* (see page three for details on the show's post-Broadway national tour) to developing a relationship with the University of Michigan to create a Gershwin critical edition (see page five), will help us keep Ira's work played, enjoyed, and remembered.

—Michael Strunsky

GETTING *THE GERSHWINS' PORGY AND BESS* ON THE ROAD

The Gershwins' *Porgy and Bess*, winner of the 2012 Tony Award for Best Revival of a Musical, begins a national tour this fall. The show will open on November 10 at San Francisco's Golden Gate Theatre and then crisscross the country over an eight-month period, playing at theaters and performing arts centers from Buffalo and West Palm Beach to Seattle and Las Vegas.

Directed by Diane Paulus, the production started at the American Repertory Theater (A.R.T.) in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in August 2011. Under the auspices of lead producer Jeffrey Richards, it transferred the following January to Broadway, where it ran for 28 previews and 293 performances. Adapted by Suzan-Lori Parks from the 1935 opera by George and Ira Gershwin and DuBose Heyward, this new musical theater version was authorized by the George and Ira Gershwin families and the DuBose and Dorothy Heyward estate with the goal of making a seminal American masterpiece accessible to audiences outside of opera houses.

The editors of Words Without Music have asked Will Trice, one of the show's producers, to elaborate on the complexities of taking a Broadway production on the road.



The Editors (WWM): How does one begin to plan a tour of a Broadway show? What comes first? Finding the cast? Finding the theatrical venues?

Will Trice (WT): I think every show has its own specific characteristics but, generally speaking, a commercial tour begins with finding the venues. I'm sure any producer would love for his/her show to be seen and heard across the country but first sufficient engagements must be secured to make sure that the production has a good enough chance to at least break even financially.

WWM: How did you go about finding the venues for the tour? Were you trying to strike a balance between regions of the country, sizes of venues?

WT: The process – and it is quite a process – is led by a booking specialist who dialogues with the production's general management/budget team as well as each of the presenters at the local venues.

WWM: When casting the *Porgy and Bess* touring production, how did you go about finding the right actors for the parts? What were you looking for in these actors?



MICHAEL J. LUTCH

Alicia Hall Moran and Nathaniel Stampley in the national tour of The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess

WT: Every role in this production, from the title characters through the ensemble, is incredibly demanding. The levels of singing/musicianship, acting, *movement*, are through the roof and those elements are so integrated in this production that it requires all of those skills from everybody. We can't just hire really good singers or really good dancers. These performers have to be able to use those top-notch abilities to tell this story in an engaging way. The initial casting for Broadway was difficult so we were thrilled that many of the members of the original cast were able to join us for the tour. Both Nathaniel Stampley and Alicia Hall Moran performed as Porgy and Bess numerous times in New York. They were fantastic there so we know they'll be fantastic around the country. We've been lucky with our casting process. I am particularly excited about Kingsley Leggs from

Continued on next page

the Broadway productions of *Sister Act* and *The Color Purple* as Sporting Life.

WWM: Is the touring production different from the Broadway version?

WT: Except for a few minor modifications of the set to make it appropriate for all of the different venues we're playing, the production you'll see out there is exactly the same as the one that played on Broadway.

WWM: What size orchestra will you use on the tour? Will this be a difficult score for pick-up orchestras?

WT: Each engagement will have the full 23-piece orchestra, just like New York. We will travel with a permanent conductor, pianist, trumpeter, and percussionist; the rest of the orchestra will be comprised of local musicians. The score is indeed very "involved" and a major challenge for our music director will be preparing for that first performance in each city. The local musicians receive their parts as well as a recording ahead of time so they can practice.

WWM: Will director Diane Paulus be hands-on throughout the tour? How will that work in a practical sense?

WT: Diane will be on hand throughout the entire rehearsal process as well as the first part of our premiere engagement in San Francisco. As with a long-running production in New York, the director tends to not be as hands-on once a show has officially "opened," although a common exception is when there is a major cast change. While directors regularly check in, on a day-to-day basis they rely on the production stage manager and sometimes their associate or assistant directors to make sure that the creative vision of the production remains intact and fresh.

WWM: What's involved in physically getting the production from city to city?


WT: The physical production for the tour will travel in four trucks. These trucks carry the scenery, props, costumes, lighting and sound equipment, and the tools necessary to install the set in each venue/city. In order to load the show in and out of a venue we will have approximately fifty crew members, about ten of whom will travel with the production from city to city. The rest are local crew members. Means of travel is decided based on the mileage from city to city and cost effectiveness.

The performing company sometimes travels via bus instead of flying. As of now, it looks like this tour may be split pretty evenly between flying and busing. The crew, however, almost always flies from one city to the next, as they often start loading in the show the night before performances begin.

WWM: What sort of audiences are you trying to attract with this production? People familiar with the show and/or Gershwin or perhaps people not familiar with either?

WT: We want to attract both – everyone. For the *Porgy* or Gershwin aficionados, we think they will find an excellent companion piece to both the opera and to the great jazz recordings of the 1960s and 1970s – one that fully integrates this gorgeous music into a complete, entertaining musical theater experience, alive with physicality and engaging, immediate storytelling. For new audiences, well, it's an introduction to one of the greatest works of the American performing arts – and a terrific night out at the theater.

WWM: Is the show being marketed in any unique ways? Through social media or partnerships with other organizations?

WT: The marketing for the tour is intensive and multi-pronged and has been going on for months now. Much of the activity happens at the local level. Each presenting organization has a full marketing department which is really tied into the local audiences and knows how to target them. Our job at the national level is to work with each of the presenting organizations on their strategy for this particular show and provide them with all of the materials that they need, including artwork, written copy, video and photography. We also share with them our insights from the New York run – who our key audiences were and what specific strategies worked with them. A significant aspect of this particular show is its wealth of educational content. *Porgy* has such historical, social, and cultural significance. In New York we had a fantastic partnership with the Department of Education that brought approximately 2,500 public school students to the show and provided in-class workshops with teaching artists and with cast and crew members. Now, we are lucky enough to continue this program on the road and we will be training our company members to work with the students across the country. 

GERSHWIN PRIZE BESTOWED ON CAROLE KING

Carole King, the acclaimed singer-songwriter, became the recipient of the fifth Gershwin Prize for Popular Song at ceremonies held on consecutive nights in May at the Library of Congress and the White House.


From her days as a songwriter at New York's famed Brill Building beginning in the late 1950s, working with then-husband Gerry Goffin, to her rebirth as a singer-songwriter in the 1970s with the massive appeal of her album *Tapestry*, and her more recent success performing with James Taylor, among others, Carole King has continuously broken through barriers facing women in the music business.

Since her first #1 song, "Will You Love Me Tomorrow," written at 17, King can claim more than 100 hit singles, including such classics as "You've Got a Friend," "Chains," "(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman," "Pleasant Valley Sunday," "Take Good Care of My Baby," "It's Too Late," "I Feel the Earth Move," "So Far Away," "The Loco-Motion," "One Fine Day," "Crying in the Rain," "Up on the Roof," and "I'm Into Something Good."

In addition to her own chart-topping renditions, King's songs have been recorded by James Taylor, The Beatles, Aretha Franklin, The Drifters, The Shirelles, Little Eva, The Monkees, Bobby Vee, and The Everly Brothers, to name just a few.

This year's Gershwin Prize events featured two sets of performers. On the evening of May 21, the audience at the Library of Congress' Coolidge Auditorium was entertained by singers Patti Austin, Colbie Caillat, Michael Feinstein, Siedah Garrett, Louise Goffin, Shelby Lynne, and Gian Marco, trumpeter Arturo Sandoval, and King herself, who concluded the program with "You've Got a Friend," surrounded by the entire cast.

The following night's performance in the East Room of the White House was broadcast on PBS in late May. While some of the songs were repeats from the previous evening's concert, the cast, except for the honoree herself, was new: Gloria Estefan, Billy Joel, Jesse McCartney, Emili Sandé, James Taylor, and Trisha Yearwood.

King's acceptance speech included a thank you to the Librarian of Congress, Dr. James Billington, "for acknowledging that popular songs are part of American history and part of who we are, not just as Americans, but as citizens of a world cultural community." 



OFFICIAL WHITE HOUSE PHOTO BY PETE SOUZA

President Barack Obama presents Carole King with the 2013 Library of Congress Gershwin Prize for Popular Song during a concert honoring the singer-songwriter in the East Room of the White House, May 22, 2013

Gershwin Critical Edition Launched

The George and Ira Gershwin families are pleased to announce their agreement with the University of Michigan's School of Music, Theatre & Dance to produce a critical edition of the works of George and Ira Gershwin. The project, officially inaugurated on September 15 during the intermission of Audra McDonald's concert at the university's Hill Auditorium, will result in a projected 35-to-45 volume Critical Edition series, while the Gershwin Initiative will provide U-M students and scholars with the opportunity to incorporate Gershwin studies and performances into the academic curriculum.

A panel discussion on the legacy of the Gershwins was held earlier that day. Speakers included George and Ira's nephew Marc Gershwin; Library of Congress Senior Musicologist and conductor Loras Schissel; U-M Professor Emeritus Richard Crawford, currently at work on a new Gershwin biography; Wayne Shirley, whose already-completed edition of *Porgy and Bess* will launch the series; U-M Associate Dean of Faculty and Multi-Cultural Affairs Daniel Washington, who has sung the role of Porgy on numerous occasions; and *Words Without Music* Managing Editor Michael Owen. Video from the event can be seen at www.youtube.com.

THE GERSHWINS IN THE NEWS

WORDS BY...

Words by: Ira Gershwin and the Great American Songbook bowed at the North Coast Repertory Theater in Solana Beach, California, in October 2012. A musical play about the lyricist, it was conceived by Minnesota writer and musician Joseph Vass and features an actor portraying Ira, two singers, and a four-piece band. The next run opens at the Park Square Theatre in St. Paul, on December 6 (Ira's birthday), to be followed by performances at Portland Stage in Portland, Maine, beginning January 21. Vass, who also serves as the music director, explains his inspiration for the piece.

"It's a funny thing..."

I was 15, sitting at my piano, playing through a book of Gershwin songs. That opening line – of the refrain to "Isn't It a Pity" – caught my imagination. It was just a mundane phrase one might hear in a mundane American conversation. I had no idea something that seemed so ordinary could sound so good.

Ultimately, the play *Words By* began with the question I asked myself at 15: how did Ira Gershwin do that?

With time, I figured out that the line's resonance has something to do with the way Ira Gershwin's words lie perfectly snug on brother George's five-note upward stroke of melody.

Happily, Ira took the time and trouble to write *Lyrics on Several Occasions*. He filled this unique volume with his great lyrics as well as anecdotes, professional songwriter tips, and fascinating tidbits of all sorts, making it an invaluable source book for future

IRA GERSHWIN ASCAP SCHOLARSHIP

Every year the ASCAP Foundation honors Ira Gershwin, who was educated in the New York City public school system, with the presentation of the Ira Gershwin Scholarship to a junior year orchestra member at LaGuardia High School of Music and Art & Performing Arts. Congratulations to the 2012 winner, Adam Ali, a pianist who began taking lessons from his grandmother at age seven. Adam is also a student in the preparatory division of Mannes: The New School for Music. Congratulations as well to double bassist Sam Zagnit, the 2013 recipient of the scholarship. Sam is principal bassist in the New York Youth Symphony Orchestra and a winner of the LaGuardia High School concerto competition.

songwriters, song lovers, and intelligent singers – not to mention me in writing *Words By*.

I hope people who see *Words By* come away dazzled by the erudition, wit, class, and meticulous craftsmanship of Ira Gershwin's amazing body of work – and with an appreciation of the self-effacing lyricist himself. 🌸

FOND FAREWELLS

During the past couple of years, we said farewell to three illustrious gentlemen whose lives intersected with the world of the Gershwins.

Lawrence Stewart (1926-2013)

Lawrence Delbert Stewart, one of the great authorities on the lives and work of George and Ira Gershwin, passed away on March 8, 2013. He was 86.

More than 60 years earlier, young Stewart, then an English professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, wrote a letter to Ira Gershwin proposing himself as the potential author of a Gershwin biography. Struck by Stewart's obvious intellect, Ira invited him to tea at the "Gershwin Plantation," as the lyricist referred to his home in Beverly Hills. From this

meeting, a unique friendship was forged among Ira, his wife, Leonore Strunsky Gershwin, and the erudite scholar.

Stewart initially spent a few afternoons a week at the house, assisting in organizing Ira's vast accumulation of clippings about the Gershwin brothers into scrapbooks. It wasn't long before Stewart became Ira's full-time amanuensis on *Lyrics on Several Occasions* (1959). During the many years of work on the book, Stewart typed and retyped Ira's notes and the manuscript and, more importantly, stimulated Ira's thoughts as he revisited the myriad lyrics which he had written during his long career.

In 1958, Stewart and Edward Jablonski, another noted Gershwin scholar, collaborated on the celebrated joint biography, *The Gershwin Years: George and Ira*. In 1968, Stewart returned

to the world of academia. Following his retirement in 1991, he again became consumed with Gershwin activities, writing the liner notes for the premiere recording of *Ziegfeld Follies of 1936*, and collaborating with the Ira and Leonore Gershwin Trusts' Executive Director, Mark Trent Goldberg, on the creation of an invaluable database for Ira's collection of historic photographs.

Stewart's wide-ranging interests extended well beyond the realm of the Gershwins. His publications included a critical biography of the 18th century English poet John Scott of Amwell (1956) and *Paul Bowles: The Illumination of North Africa*, a study of the acclaimed writer and composer (1974).

Upon Stewart's death, his Gershwin materials – comprising a number of one-of-a-kind items – were left to the Trusts. Among them are numerous holograph lyrics in Ira Gershwin's hand, including the only known version of "Someone to Watch Over Me" (1926); George Gershwin's 1929 oil painting of his friend, conductor Bill Daly; and a previously unknown photograph of George and Ira Gershwin with George S. Kaufman and Morrie Ryskind, their collaborators on the 1930 edition of *Strike Up the Band*, the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Of Thee I Sing*, and its less-successful sequel, *Let 'Em Eat Cake*.

Bob Grimes (1922-2011)

Bob Grimes entertained people during his entire life. Not with his voice – although there was no mistaking that Texas twang – but with his infectious enthusiasm for the Great American Songbook.

Grimes, who died in San Francisco on October 8, 2011 at 89, was a sheet music collector extraordinaire. "Uncle Bob," as he was known to friends and family, settled in San Francisco after World War II and eventually filled an entire three-room apartment on Post Street (just half a block east of the building where Dashiell Hammett wrote *The Maltese Falcon*) with the sheet music, recordings, and books he adored.

His vast archive made him the best friend of – and ultimate resource for – cabaret singers around the world since there was nothing that made Bob happier than sharing the fruits of his collecting. By providing copies of what he had amassed, he insured that the songs he loved so much could be performed by new generations of singers.

His connection with the Ira Gershwin estate came about when he met a couple from New York who were waiting for a cable car on a San Francisco street. They were English and Lucy Strunsky, the parents of Mike Strunsky, head of the Ira



GERSHWIN TRUSTS (LAWRENCE STEWART COLLECTION)

Lawrence Stewart and Ira Gershwin, Hollywood Park racetrack, 1957

and Leonore Gershwin Trusts. That meeting led to a close relationship between Bob and the Trusts; through the Trusts he befriended Michael Feinstein, which culminated in the donation of Bob's collection, shortly before his death, to the Michael Feinstein Great American Songbook Initiative in Carmel, Indiana.

Bob once humbly wrote, "I've always liked the title 'curator' and just the other day it dawned on me that I have always been a curator of my own collection."

Alan Farley (1936-2012)

Radio host Alan Farley passed away on October 21, 2012 at age 76. Farley, best known for his broadcasts of Noël Coward songs, had been a fixture at KALW public radio in San Francisco since 1975, and was one of the station's most popular and ubiquitous on-air voices.

In an unusually diverse career, Farley, a graduate in mathematics of the California Institute of Technology and the University of Michigan, served as chairman of the math department at Morehouse College in Atlanta during the 1960s and later as the road manager for comedian Richard Pryor.

One of his final projects at KALW was *I Love to Rhyme: The Lyrics of Ira Gershwin*, a series of programs featuring obscure items from Ira's vast catalog. In addition to playing commercial recordings on the show, which ran for nearly two years, Farley included new ones made especially for the series by singer Wesla Whitfield. 🌸

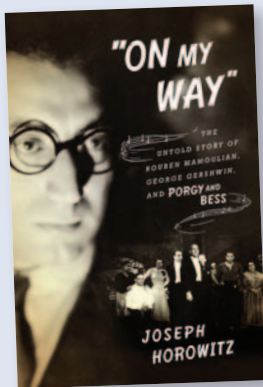


IRA AND LEONORE GERSHWIN TRUSTS

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"On My Way": The Untold Story of Rouben Mamoulian, George Gershwin, and Porgy and Bess

by Joseph Horowitz
W. W. Norton. 282 pages. \$26.95



Joseph Horowitz has written a fascinating, thought-provoking book about the much admired director Rouben Mamoulian and his major contributions to *Porgy and Bess*. While the great opera is Horowitz's focus, he also discusses Mamoulian's direction of the original Broadway productions of Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* and *Carousel* and the magical Rodgers and Hart film musical *Love Me Tonight*.

THE GERSHWINS' PORGY AND BESS U.S. TOUR

2013

San Francisco, CA
Golden Gate Theatre
November 10-December 8

Dallas, TX
Winspear Opera House
December 11-22

Washington, D.C.
National Theatre
December 25-29

2014

West Palm Beach, FL
Kravis Center
January 7-12

Tampa, FL
Straz Center
January 14-19

Naples, FL
Artis-Naples
January 21-26

Greenville, SC
Peace Center
January 28-February 2

Cleveland, OH
Palace Theatre
February 4-16

Philadelphia, PA
Academy of Music
February 18-23

Pittsburgh, PA
Benedum Center
February 25-March 2

Detroit, MI
Opera House
March 4-9

Buffalo, NY
Shea's Performing Arts Center
March 11-16

East Lansing, MI
Wharton Center
March 18-23

St. Paul, MN
Ordway Center
March 25-30

Des Moines, IA
Civic Center
April 1-6

Las Vegas, NV
Smith Center
April 15-20

Los Angeles, CA
Ahmanson Theatre
April 22-June 1

Tempe, AZ
ASU Gammage
June 3-8

Seattle, WA
5th Avenue Theatre
June 11-29

Charlotte, NC
Belk Theatre
July 15-20