

**Merkin Concert Hall**

Thursday, October 11, 2012 at 7:30 pm

The Johnny Mercer Foundation and Kaufman Center  
present

**Celebrate!**

**Songs from the Johnny Mercer Foundation**

Featuring

Craig Carnelia

Andrew Lippa

Lari White

With Appearances by

Kellen Blair & Joe Kinosian

Adam Gwon

Michael Kooman & Christopher Dimond

Phoebe Kreutz

Peter Lerman

Benj Pasek & Justin Paul

Benjamin Scheuer

Alina Smith

Shaina Taub

Special Guest

Marilyn Maye

with Mike Renzi

John D. Marshall, Chair of the Johnny Mercer Foundation

Jonathan Brielle and Michael A. Kerker, Executive Producers

Sean Hartley, Producing Director

## About The Johnny Mercer Songwriting Project at Northwestern University

The Johnny Mercer Foundation is dedicated to supporting the discipline of songwriting in the tradition of the great American songbook as exemplified by the life and work of Johnny Mercer: lyricist, composer, performer, collaborator and producer. The Foundation continues Johnny's legacy by partnering with individuals and organizations dedicated to celebrating and nourishing the disciplines he mastered and the causes he and Ginger Mercer championed.

To that end, The Johnny Mercer Songwriting Project at Northwestern University has become one of the most sought after programs for emerging songwriters in the country. Now in its eighth year, Mercer alumni have earned leading awards in the songwriting fields including the Fred Ebb Award, the Jonathan Larson Grant, the Kleban Award and many others. The one-week intensive offers a unique and once-in-a-lifetime experience for young writers, offering them a rich, supportive environment in which they can explore, collaborate and hone their craft while being mentored by working professionals.

In celebration of Johnny Mercer's legacy, we partner tonight with Kaufman Center to present a few of the writers from the past seven years and showcase Mr. Mercer's continued commitment to young writers through the Foundation's ongoing support.

Jonathan Brielle  
Michael A. Kerker  
Songwriting Project Co-Chair  
Johnny Mercer Foundation

## About the Artists

**Kellen Blair** is the co-creator of *Murder For Two*, the two-person murder mystery musical comedy that recently ran for over six months at Chicago Shakespeare Theatre (following productions at 42nd Street Moon Theater and the Adirondack Theatre Festival). Kellen also wrote lyrics for *Pirates Don't Change Diapers* (Theatreworks, USA) and took part in the 2010 Johnny Mercer Songwriting Project. In 2011, Kellen and collaborator Joe Kinosian won the Joseph Jefferson Award for Best New Musical Work (*Murder For Two*). They were also recently featured in the York Theatre's NEO Concert, an annual benefit that showcases the work of emerging musical theatre writers. Kellen is an advanced member at the BMI Musical Theatre Writing Workshop and a proud member of the Dramatists' Guild.

**Craig Carnelia** has had four shows produced on Broadway. Working with composer Marvin Hamlisch, he wrote lyrics for *Sweet Smell of Success*, written with John Guare, and *Imaginary Friends*, written with Nora Ephron. Hamlisch and Carnelia received Drama Desk and Tony Award nominations for their score for *Sweet Smell of Success*, and Carnelia received a Drama Desk nomination for his lyrics for *Imaginary Friends*. As both composer and lyricist, Craig wrote the score for *Is There Life After High School?* and contributed four songs to Studs Terkel's *Working*, for which he received his first Tony nomination. Regional premieres include the musical *Actor, Lawyer, Indian Chief* at Goodspeed's Norma Terris Theatre and a new Studs Terkel musical at Northlight Theatre in Chicago, *The Good War*. Awards include the Johnny Mercer Award, the first annual Gilman and Gonzalez-Falla Musical Theatre Award and the prestigious Kleban Award. He is currently writing a new musical with playwright Joe Tracz. Craig has been on the council of the Dramatists Guild since 1995 and is married to Broadway actress Lisa Brescia.

**Adam Gwon** appeared in *Ordinary Days* in both New York (Roundabout Theatre Company) and the West End in London (Trafalgar Studios). Regional theater credits include *The Boy Detective Fails* (with Joe Meno, Signature Theatre), *Ordinary Days* (South Coast Repertory, Adirondack Theatre Festival, Human Race Theatre Company and others.) Also *Cloudlands* (with Octavio Solis, world premiere, South Coast Repertory, spring 2012) and *Bernice Bobs Her Hair* (with Julia Jordan; NAMT 2011). He has recorded the CD for *Ordinary Days* (Ghostlight Records). Gwon's awards include Kleban, Ebb and Loewe awards for excellence in musical theater writing, ASCAP Harold Adamson Lyric Writing award and MAC John Wallowitch

Award for outstanding songwriter under 35. Gwon has received commissions from Signature Theatre, South Coast Repertory, Broadway Across America and EST/Sloan Project, and fellowships from the MacDowell Colony and Dramatists Guild. He is a graduate of NYU's Tisch School of the Arts.

**Michael A. Kerker** has been Director of Musical Theatre for ASCAP (American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers) since 1990. In addition to coordinating ASCAP's Musical Theatre Workshop in New York, he works with DreamWorks Animation SKG to produce the ASCAP/DreamWorks Musical Theatre Workshop in Los Angeles, (both of which are led by composer/lyricist Stephen Schwartz). Together with Michael Feinstein, Kerker produces a regular series of concerts at Carnegie Hall highlighting the catalogue of both legendary and contemporary songwriters. He is also producing a regular series of interview programs entitled *Broadway: Up Close and Personal* for the Kennedy Center. His onstage conversations with some of our nation's most prominent songwriters have included evenings with Jerry Herman, Stephen Sondheim, Alan and Marilyn Bergman, Charles Strouse, Sheldon Harnick, Marvin Hamlisch and Stephen Schwartz. He produces an annual songwriter's cabaret as part of the Chicago Humanities Festival and has produced the ASCAP Foundation Jerry Herman Legacy Program, which is a series of seminars, master classes and concerts featuring the legendary composer/lyricist. The program has been presented nationwide in such cities as Chicago, Sundance, San Francisco, Savannah, Miami and Pittsburgh. Michael is proud to be a member of the Boards of the American Theatre Wing, the Johnny Mercer Foundation and the Songwriters Hall of Fame.

**Joe Kinosian** with Kellen Blair created the musical *Murder For Two*, which, after developmental productions at the Adirondack Theatre Festival and 42nd St. Moon in San Francisco, went on to a record-breaking run of 171 performances at the Chicago Shakespeare Theater. *Murder For Two* received the Joseph Jefferson Award for Best New Musical, and Joe was honored with a nomination for Best Leading Actor. Joe and Kellen recently performed a solo show at the Kennedy Center, as well as being featured in the most recent *Broadway Close Up: Bound for Broadway* concert here at Merkin Concert Hall. Joe has received an ASCAP Plus Award, and, through the BMI Foundation, the Jerry Harrington Award for Outstanding Creative Achievement. In New York he appeared in *Dear Edwina* (DR2), *The Hudsucker Proxy* (Manhattan Theater Club) and *Beatsville* (National Alliance for Musical Theatre). Regional: *Dirty Blonde* with Emily Skinner (Hangar Theater) and *Of Mice & Manhattan* (Kennedy Center).

**Michael Kooman** (music) and **Christopher Dimond** (book & lyrics) received the 2010 Jonathan Larson Grant and are the first recipients of the Lorenz Hart Award. Between them, they have received the Burton Lane Award, the Harold Adamson Award, the KC/ACTF Musical Theatre Award and an Anna Sosenko Grant. Their musical *Dani Girl* has been workshopped at the Kennedy Center, American Conservatory Theatre, Cherry Lane Theatre, the ASCAP/Disney Musical Theater Workshop and the Festival of New American Musicals and was featured in the 2011 NAMT Festival of New Musicals. The duo's other works include *Golden Gate* (Williamstown Theatre Festival), *Homemade Fusion* (London's Ambassadors Theater, Edinburgh Fringe Festival), the Christmas musical *Junior Claus* (Orlando Repertory Theatre) and the short film *Flour Baby*. Currently, they are working on a commission from the Kennedy Center. Their debut album, *Out of Our Heads*, featuring an all-star lineup of Broadway performers, is now available on iTunes.

**Phoebe Kreutz** is a songwriter, lyricist and performer. A native of the East Village, she has released three albums and toured extensively throughout Europe and the U.S. She has written for The Rockettes, Alex Timbers's *Dance Dance Revolution*, Disney's *Johnny and the Sprites* and *The Watercoolers*. Her musicals include *The Dirty Hippie Jam Band Project* (with Daniel Israel) and *Thanks!* (with Gary Adler). A member of the BMI Lehman Engel Musical Theater Workshop, Phoebe received the Harrington Award for lyrics. Her revue *Awesomer & Awesomer* was just staged at the Triad Theater.

**Peter Lerman** is currently writing the music and lyrics for *The Brooklyn Superhero Supply Company*, an original musical with Simon Rich directed by Michael Mayer. He is the recipient of several theater awards including the 2011 Stephen Sondheim Young Artist Citation Award, a 2010-11 Dramatists Guild Fellowship, a 2010 Jonathan Larson Grant and the 2005 Kennedy Center-ACTF Musical Theater Award. Lerman has scored episodes of *Modern Family* on ABC and is now writing a movie musical

based on his original concept for MTV Films. He recently composed accompanying music for Michael Chabon's newest novel *Telegraph Avenue*. Peter is a graduate of Columbia University where he wrote music and lyrics for the Columbia Varsity Show.

**Andrew Lipa** (music and lyrics) received a 2010 Tony nomination for Best Original Score and 2010 Drama Desk Award nominations for Outstanding Music and Outstanding Lyrics for *The Addams Family*. New York theatre credits include *The Wild Party* (Manhattan Theatre Club), the score for Aaron Sorkin's *The Farnsworth Invention* (Broadway), new songs for *You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown* (Broadway) and *John & Jen* (co-written with Tom Greenwald). Regional: *A Little Princess* (book/lyrics by Brian Crowley), *Jerry Christmas* (book by Daniel Goldfarb), *Asphalt Beach* (book by T.C. Smith and Peter Spears). Recordings: *The Wild Party*, *John & Jen*, *You're A Good Man Charlie Brown*, *A Little Princess*, *The Addams Family* and *Bat Boy* (Producer). Awards: 2000 Grammy nomination, winner of Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle, ASCAP/Richard Rodgers and Gilman/Gonzalez-Falla Theater Foundation Awards. Andrew will be appearing in *Big Fish* on Broadway in 2013. He is a graduate of the University of Michigan School of Music.

**Marilyn Maye** recorded seven albums and 34 singles for RCA, including her hits "Cabaret" and "Step to the Rear," both of which she recorded prior to the opening of the Broadway shows from which they came. Marilyn first came to national attention performing on *The Steve Allen Show* and later *The Tonight Show*, for the latter of which she holds the distinction of being the most frequently heard singer. She has appeared in such legendary clubs as the Copacabana, The Rainbow Grill, MGM Grand and Feinstein's, where she recently completed an engagement with Michael Feinstein called "Swingin' the Night Away." Leading roles in musicals include *Can-Can*, *Mame* and *Hello, Dolly*. Her CD *Marilyn Maye Sings All of Hello Dolly* included liner notes by Jerry Herman. Marilyn was "re-discovered" after her sensational 2006 appearance at Lincoln Center's Rose Hall for the Mabel Mercer Foundation, and since then she has performed in a series of glowingly-reviewed performances at New York's Metropolitan Room. Ella Fitzgerald once referred to her as "The greatest white female singer in the world."

**Benj Pasek** and **Justin Paul**'s current projects include *A Christmas Story, The Musical!* (Broadway, Lunt Fontanne Theatre, director John Rando, choreographer Warren Carlyle), *Dogfight* (Off-Broadway's Second Stage Theatre, director Joe Mantello, choreographer Christopher Gattelli), *James and the Giant Peach* (Kennedy Center's New Visions/New Voices, Goodspeed Musicals, director Graciela Daniele, choreographer Pilobolus) and a new musical with playwright Steven Levenson. Other works include *Edges* (licensed by Music Theatre International, 200 plus productions worldwide including South Korea, China, Australia, South Africa, the Philippines, Denmark and more), *Sesame Street, Johnny & the Sprites* (Disney TV series), *Duck for President* and *If You Give a Pig a Pancake* (Theatreworks USA). Honors include the 2011 Richard Rodgers Award for Musical Theatre from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, 2011 Sundance Institute Fellowship, 2011 ASCAP Richard Rodgers New Horizons Award, 2011 ASCAP Songwriters Fellowship Award, 2007-2008 Dramatists Guild Fellowship, 2007 Jonathan Larson Award, Johnny Mercer Songwriters Project, *Dramatist Magazine's* 50 to Watch. BFA, University of Michigan, Musical Theatre.

**Mike Renzi** is a pianist, arranger and musical director best known for his collaborations with some of the legends of pop-jazz singing, notably Peggy Lee, Mel Torme, Cleo Laine, Blossom Dearie, Jack Jones, Maureen McGovern, Sylvia Syms and Marilyn Maye. He was the pianist in the orchestra that accompanied Lena Horne in her one-woman Broadway concert, *Lena Horne: The Lady And Her Music*, and he continued to accompany Horne until her last public appearance in 2000. Renzi served as musical director for several gala tribute shows at Carnegie Hall, including salutes to Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald, Marilyn and Alan Bergman, Nat King Cole, Alan Jay Lerner and Peggy Lee. He performed the same role in an 80th birthday tribute to Lena Horne in New York's Avery Fisher Hall. He is also a seven-time Daytime Emmy-winning composer of soundtrack music for such TV shows as *Sesame Street* and *All My Children*.

**Benjamin Scheuer** is a songwriter and performer based in New York City. He leads the band Escapist Papers, who recently released their second record, *The Bridge*. Scheuer gave the debut performance of songs from *The Bridge* at Lincoln Center in January 2012. His show *Jihad! The Musical* was staged in Edinburgh and London. His folk operetta, *Nightingale and the Rose*,

was produced in New York by the Metropolis Opera Project. Scheuer is a graduate of Harvard University. *The Bridge* is available for free-download at [www.EscapistPapers.com](http://www.EscapistPapers.com).

**Alina Smith** is a country/pop singer-songwriter with a touch of soul – think Shania Twain meets Adele. Born in Russia, Alina started touring as a child, playing sold-out shows throughout Europe with the children’s group Aurora. As a young teen, she moved to the United States to pursue a solo career, performing coast to coast and amassing many honors, most notably first place in the televised Los Angeles *Battle of the Bands*. She also continued having international success, performing at the Student Olympics in China and writing the No. 1 radio hit in Japan. Having recently relocated to Nashville, Alina is focused on writing songs with top Nashville writers and growing her music online, where she has already garnered millions of views and thousands of followers, that call themselves Alinatics. She is currently releasing a new single and music video every month.

**Shaina Taub** is a Vermont-raised, New York-based songwriter and performer. She is the recipient of a 2012 Macdowell Fellowship and is Ars Nova’s 2012 Composer-in-Residence. She released her debut record, *What Otters Do*, last year and her band has a regular residency at Rockwood Music Hall. Her original folk opera, *The Daughters*, has been produced by the Public Theater’s Joe’s Pub, the Yale Institute of Music Theatre and CAP21 Theatre Company, and will be featured in NYU’s mainstage season this fall. She writes and performs for the hit weekly musical sketch comedy team, Political Subversities. She’s currently writing the score for a new musical commissioned by the Tony-Award-winning Oregon Shakespeare Festival, developing music for Walt Disney Imagineering as well as a new cantata commissioned by Ars Nova. Taub recently performed in the original cast of Karen O’s *Stop the Virgins* at the Sydney Opera House.

**Lari White’s** music has earned three Grammys and RIAA Gold status (Wishes/RCA Records). She made her critically-acclaimed Broadway debut in the Johnny Cash musical *Ring Of Fire* (2006), and received rave reviews for her performances in the Marilyn and Alan Bergman Tribute with Michael Feinstein at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center and the Kennedy Center. She has performed with Marvin Hamlisch, the New York, Boston and Atlanta Pops and the Nashville Symphony, and starred in her solo cabaret show at the Algonquin Oak Room in NYC. Lari made music history by producing Toby Keith’s platinum album *White Trash with Money*, becoming the first female producer of a male superstar. Her songwriting credits include Tammy Wynette, Toby Keith, Lonestar, Danny Gokey and Pat Green. Lari turned heads around the world with her role opposite Tom Hanks in the blockbuster movie *Cast Away* (as the Angel at the Crossroads in the final scene). Most recently she hit the silver screen in *Country Strong*, with Gwyneth Paltrow and Tim McGraw. She has also starred in films for Lifetime TV and CMT. Lari is now writing and producing in her Nashville recording studio, The Holler, with a variety of artists.