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## **Wong, Longbottom, Bogardus, Colella and Lewis Will Take Part in NAMT's Festival of New Musicals**

By Adam Hetrick



Jenn Colella

Stephen Bogardus, Jenn Colella, Norm Lewis, Alli Mauzey, Daniel Reichard, Jason Tam and Tony Yazbeck will appear in the 2008 NAMT Festival of New Musicals in New York.

The industry-only Festival, presented by the National Alliance for Musical Theatre, takes place Oct. 20-21 at New World Stages.

In addition to populating the eight new productions with notable Broadway show folk, NAMT has announced a line-up of accomplished directors, including Tony Award winners B.D. Wong and David Zippel as well as Robert Longbottom, Jerry Dixon and Christopher Gatelli.

Details on the 2008 NAMT selections and casts follow:

□ ***Barnstormer***, featuring book and lyrics by Cheryl L. Davis and music by Douglas J. Cohen (*The Big Time*). "Before Amelia Earhart, there was Bessie Coleman — the first Black aviatrix who rose from the cotton fields of Texas and the barbershops of Chicago to finally conquer the skies of France. Her brief but dynamic life inspired the disenfranchised to pursue their dreams, including her own nephew who became a Tuskegee Airman."

Jerry Dixon (*Laugh Whore, Once on This Island*) directs a cast including Kenita Miller (*Xanadu*), Norm Lewis (*The Little Mermaid*), Tina Fabrique (*Ella*), Stu James (*The Color Purple*), C.E. Smith (*The Full Monty*), Glenn Turner (*Five Guys Named Moe*) and Rema Webb (*The Lion King*).

□ ***Beatsville***, with music and lyrics by Wendy Leigh Wilf and a book by Glenn Slater (*The Little Mermaid*). Based on the film "A Bucket of Blood," the musical takes place in 1959 Greenwich Village, where "tragically square Walter Paisley finds that his clay figures, sculpted nudes, and papier-mâché busts bring him the acceptance he desperately yearns for. But what if the world discovered that Walter's body of work consists of actual bodies?"

Todd Buonopane (*The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*) and Alli Mauzey (*Cry-Baby*) star in *Beatsville*, under the direction of Tony nominee Robert Longbottom (*Side Show, Flower Drum Song*).

□ ***The Cuban and the Redhead***, penned by *Broadway Backwards* creators Robert Bartley and Danny Whitman. The work explores the relationship of television sweethearts Desi and Lucy Arnaz, who "put their money, their trust and their dreams on the line in a gamble to save one thing— their marriage. They risk it all on an untested medium called television. Can these two star crossed lovers blaze a path that defies Hollywood and history to be together?"

Bartley directs *High Fidelity* star Jenn Colella as Lucy, opposite *Gypsy*'s Tony Yazbeck as Desi in a cast that also features Eileen Galindo, Adinah Alexander (*Urban Cowboy*), Michelle Blakely (*Annie Get Your Gun*), Jessica Carter, Hattie Davis, Morgan James, Jay Russell (*The Play What I Wrote*), Tim Salamandyk and Kirsten Wyatt (*Grease*).

□ ***The Legend of Stagecoach Mary***, created by Thomas Mizer and Curtis Moore. "Ex-slave Mary Fields turns the idea of the real Wild West hero on its head when she travels to 1880's Montana to find freedom, adventure and her long-lost best friend. Along the way, she discovers a gaggle of square-dancing nuns and a town full of cowboys in need of a little lesson in the American Dream."

Tony nominee Christopher Gatelli (*South Pacific*) directs Danielle Lee Greaves (*Rent*) in the title role. *Stagecoach Mary* also features Sara Chase, Madeleine Doherty (*The Producers*), J. Austin Eyer (*The Secret Garden*), Josh Henry (*In The Heights*), Steve Kazee (*110 in the Shade*), Telly Leung (*Rent*), J. Elaine Marcos (*A Chorus Line*), Jason Patrick Sands (*A Chorus Line*) and Nick Wyman (*A Tale of Two Cities*).

□ ***Ordinary Days***, written by Adam Gwon, begins when "Deb loses her most precious possession — the notes to her graduate thesis — [and] she unwittingly starts a chain of events that turns the ordinary days of four New Yorkers into something extraordinary. Told through a series of intricately connected songs and vignettes, *Ordinary Days* is an original musical about growing up and enjoying the view."

*Legally Blonde*'s Kate Shindle and Kate Wetherhead join Jared Gertner (*The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*) for *Ordinary Days*, under the direction of Matt Toronto.

□ ***Pamela's First Musical***, created by the Tony-winning trio of Wendy Wasserstein (book), David Zippel (lyrics) and Cy Coleman (music), tells of a young girl named Pamela, whose Aunt Louise "sweeps [her] off to New York City and her first Broadway musical. She meets producers, writers, actors, directors and choreographers and discovers the off-stage and on-stage magic of Broadway Theater. As Aunt Louise says, 'A Broadway musical can cure anything.' Pamela's trip to New York inspires her to write and direct her own musical and to 'collaborate' with her blended family, which, ultimately, brings them all together."

Lyricist David Zippel directs *Mary Poppins'* Lila Coogan as Pamela in a cast that also features Daniel Reichard (*Jersey Boys*) and Tony nominee Steven Bogardus (*Irving Berlin's White Christmas, Falsettos*).

□ ***See Rock City & Other Destinations***, with book and lyrics by Adam Mathias and music by Brad Alexander. The Richard Rodgers Award-winning musical "ventures to tourist destinations across America, mapping out stories of sightseers who need to get a little lost in order to find themselves. From Coney Island to Mt. McKinley, the Alamo to Niagara Falls—get ready to take the leap!"

*Altar Boyz* book writer Kevin Del Aguila directs the musical that will feature Jill Abramovitz (*Fame Becomes Me*), John Jellison (*All Shook Up*) and Cassie Wooley.

□ ***The Yellow Wood***, with a book by Michelle Elliot, music by Danny Larsen and lyrics by both, follows a boy named Adam who cannot memorize Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken" because he didn't take his Ritalin. "He can't get much farther than the 'Two roads diverged in a yellow wood...' before a fantastic wood begins coming to life in his school. Desperate to prove he can turn his life around, Adam struggles to get beyond his ADD, his cultural heritage and his unique but unruly imagination."

Tony Award-winning actor B.D. Wong returns to direct *Yellow Wood*, which features Jason Tam (*A Chorus Line*) in the central role he created as part of the 2007 New York Musical Theatre Festival. The cast also features *Yellow Wood* veterans Randy Blair (*Adding Machine*) and MaryAnn Hu (*South Pacific*) as well as Melinda Bass, Bob De Dea, and Diana Huey.

Musicals previously presented in NAMT's Festival of New Musicals include *Vanities*, *Dangerous Beauty*, *Emma*, *The Gypsy King*, *The Story of My Life*, *Tinyard Hill*, *The Drowsy Chaperone*, *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, *I Love You Because*, *Songs for A New World*, *Striking 12*, *Summer of '42*, *Ace*, *Children of Eden*, *Harold and Maude*, *Honk!* and *Meet John Doe*.

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