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New Music: NAMT Announces Selections for 2008 Festival of New Musicals

By Adam Hetrick



Glenn Slater (above) and Wendy Leigh Wilf's *Beatsville* will be part of the NAMT Festival.

Pamela's First Musical, *The Yellow Wood* and *See Rock City* are among the shows that will be presented during the 2008 NAMT Festival of New Musicals in New York.

The 20th anniversary Festival of New Musicals, presented by the National Alliance for Musical Theatre, takes place Oct. 20-21. The industry-only event provides eight new musicals a platform for greater exposure to potential producers and regional companies seeking to aid in the development of new work.

Founded in 1985 and based in New York City, The National Alliance for Musical Theatre is a national service organization dedicated exclusively to musical theatre. Kathy Evans is the executive director for the organization with members sprinkled throughout 33 states and six countries.

The 2008 NAMT Festival of New Musicals selections include:

- ***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."
- ***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?"
- ***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?"

- ***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."
- ***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."
- ***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 Pamela 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."
- ***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!"
- ***The Yellow Wood***, including 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."

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*.

An official venue and casting for the 2008 Festival of New Musicals will be confirmed shortly.

For more information visit www.namt.org.

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