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Dear Friends,

We are honored to welcome you to our 65th season of live, professional theatre. As we celebrate this landmark year, it is our pleasure to introduce you to the work of Tony Award nominee Chet Walker and the stars of the 2014 season.

Throughout his illustrious career, Chet has earned an amazing reputation throughout Broadway and educational communities. Chet originally conceived "Fosse," the 1999 Tony Award-winning tribute to the Broadway legend Bob Fosse, and received a Tony Award nomination last year for his choreography of Stephen Schwartz's "Pippin."

As an extra special touch, we are rolling out the red carpet for some real rock 'n roll royalty – The Coasters! Dubbed the "clown princes of rock 'n roll," this group's smooth harmonies and hilarious antics established the sound & culture of the 50s and 60s with songs like *Yakety Yak*, *Love Potion #9*, and *Stand By Me*. We are so happy to have them with us for Smokey Joe's Cafe, singing the very Leiber and Stoller songs that they made famous.

These are just a few of the amazing people who will share their talents with us during this anniversary season. Recently, we had the pleasure of hearing from two more during a pre-season press event.

Shannon O'Bryan (*42nd Street's* Peggy Sawyer) & Gail Bennett (*Mary Poppins*) have acted on our stage before, and have each rose to the top of their profession, having played these roles hundreds of times in national Broadway tours.

During the event, both Shannon & Gail were kind enough to discuss the shows, their characters and each actor's successes. Towards the end of the conversation, a different question arose: "Why return to Gateway?" Without hesitating, these professionals enthusiastically described their love for our region... the bay, the beaches, and – above all else – a warm and welcoming audience.

This appreciation has been shared by all of us since our doors first opened 65 years ago, and this is why we are so happy to bring you a new year of Broadway-quality theatre. Thank you so much for your continued support - here's to the coming years!

Sincerely,



Paul Allan,
Managing Producer



Presents

SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ THE SONGS OF LEIBER AND STOLLER

Words & Music By
JERRY LEIBER & MIKE STOLLER

Featuring
THE COASTERS

With

NIK ALEXZANDER, MALCOLM ARMWOOD, YVETTE CLARK,
SETH DANNER, ROBERT FOWLER, KATHLEEN MCCANN,
ERIN MCGRATH, MARLA MCREYNOLDS & JODY REYNARD

Managing Producer
PAUL ALLAN

Production Manager
BRIAN LOESCH

Associate Producer
JEFF BELLANTE

Company Manager
& Casting Director
MICHAEL BAKER

Scenic Design
STEVE PALADIE

Production Stage
Manager
JACK MCLEOD

Lighting Design
BRIAN LOESCH

Costume Designer
MARTIN T. LOPEZ

Music Director
DAVID TRUSKINOFF

Assistant to the Director
NICHOLAS KATEN

Direction & Original Choreography by
CHET WALKER

Originally produced on Broadway by Richard Frankel, Thomas Viertel, Steven Baruch, Jujamcyn Theatres/Jack Viertel, Rick Steiner, Frederic H. Mayerson and Center Theatre Group/ Ahmanson Theatre/ Gordon Davidson.

All of the songs in *Smokey Joe's Café* were written by Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller (alone or with others) except "Spanish Harlem," by Phil Spector and Jerry Leiber. Messrs. Leiber and Stoller wish to acknowledge and thank the following writers who collaborated with them on various songs in the show: Ben E. King, Doc Pomus, Barry Mann & Cynthia Weil, Kent Harris, Ralph Dino & John Sembello, and Carlo Donida & "Mogol."

SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ: THE SONGS OF LEIBER AND STOLLER is presented through special arrangement with R & H Theatricals: www.rnh.com.

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SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ

THE CAST

NIK ALEXZANDER*
MALCOLM ARMWOOD*
YVETTE CLARK*
SETH DANNER*
ROBERT FOWLER*
KATHLEEN MCCANN*
ERIN MCGRATH*
MARLA MCREYNOLDS*
JODY REYNARD*

THE COASTERS

DENNIS ANDERSON
PRIMO CANDELARIA
EDDIE WHITFIELD
JOE LANCE WILLIAMS

THE BAND

CONDUCTOR/KEYS: DAVID TRUSKINOFF
KEYS: TODD OLSON
BASS: CHARLES LEECH
DRUMS JEFF POTTER
GUITAR: RAY SABATELLO
SAX: MARK GATZ

WARNING: The photographing or sound recording of any performance is strictly prohibited.

FIRE NOTICE: The exit indicated by a red light and sign nearest to the seat you occupy, is the shortest route to the outside. In the event of fire or other emergency, please do NOT run. WALK to that Exit. However, under normal circumstances, when leaving the Theatre, use the center rear exits. SMOKING is prohibited in the BUILDING, as required by the Suffolk County NO SMOKING Ordinance. Smoking in any area designated "No Smoking" renders the offenders subject to a fine, or imprisonment, or both.



The Musicians employed in this production are members of the American Federation of Musicians.



*Actors employed in this production are members of Actors' Equity Association, the union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.



The Director/Choreographer is a member of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers, Inc., an independent national labor union.



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SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ

MUSICAL NUMBERS

ACT I

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Neighborhood | The Company with The Coasters |
| Young Blood | Malcolm with Nik, Jody, Robert |
| Falling | Erin |
| Ruby Baby | Seth with Nik, Malcolm, Jody, Robert |
| Dance With Me | The Coasters and Yvette |
| Neighborhood (Reprise) | Yvette, Erin, Kate, Marla |
| Keep on Rollin' | Nik, Malcolm, Jody, Robert |
| Searchin' | The Coasters |
| Kansas City | Yvette, Seth, Kate |
| Trouble | Erin and Marla |
| Love Me/Don't | Malcolm and Kate |
| Fools Fall in Love | Yvette |
| Poison Ivy | Jody, Malcolm, Nik, Robert |
| Don Juan | Marla |
| Shoppin' for Clothes | Nik and Robert, with Malcolm, Seth, Jody |
| I Keep Forgettin' | Kate |
| On Broadway | Jody, Malcolm, Nik, Robert |
| DW Washburn | Seth, Erin, Kate, Marla |
| Saved | Yvette and The Company |

ACT II

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Baby, That Is Rock & Roll | The Company |
| Yakety Yak | The Coasters |
| Charlie Brown | The Coasters |
| Stay A While | Robert and Jody |
| Pearl's A Singer | Kate |
| Teach Me How to Shimmy | Seth and Erin with Jody, Malcolm, Nik |
| You're the Boss | Robert and Marla |
| Loving You | Jody with the Company |
| Treat Me Nice | Nik |
| Hound Dog | Yvette |
| Little Egypt | Robert with Jody, Nik, Malcolm, Seth |
| I'm A Woman | Marla, Yvette, Erin, Kate |
| There Goes My Baby | Malcolm with Nik, Jody, Robert, Seth |
| Love Potion #9 | Malcolm with Nik, Jody, Robert, Seth |
| Smokey Joe's Café | The Coasters |
| Some Cats Know | Marla |
| Jailhouse Rock | Seth and The Company |
| Fools Fall in Love (Reprise) | Yvette |
| Spanish Harlem | Jody with Marla |
| I (Who Have Nothing) | Nik |
| Neighborhood (Reprise) | Kate |
| Stand By Me | Malcolm with The Company and The Coasters |
| Bows/Baby, That Is Rock & Roll | The Company and The Coasters |

"Spanish Harlem" by Phil Spector and Jerry Leiber. Published by Mother Bertha Music, Inc. and Jerry Leiber Music by arrangement with ABKCO Music, Inc.



Smokey Joe's Café is brought to you, in part, by support from Suffolk County and New York State Council on the Arts, with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

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Who's Who

SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ



NIK ALEXZANDER is so overjoyed to be joining this cast of *Smokey Joe's Café!!!* He was last seen on tour with *Priscilla Queen Of The Desert* as Miss

Understanding. Other credits include *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Tour), *Dreamgirls*, *The Wiz*, *Hairspray* and *Working the Musical*. Nik would like to thank Chet Walker, Devon Sims, Jerral Young, Trista Doll, Angela Birchett, Carla Stewart, Meg Pantera, Matthew James and his PARENTS for NAILING IT. This is my Story.....NOW LETS SING DOWN FOR THE GODDDSSSSSSSSSS.



DENNIS ANDERSON (*The Coasters*) born under the sign of Libra, started playing bass guitar for many groups including the *Broadways* and *Escorts* as well as

many more. In 1979, Dennis played the role of Judas in *Jesus Christ Super Star* and in 1982 *Ain't Misbehavin'*. Dennis has performed with many performers and acts in his career.



MALCOLM ARMWOOD is beyond thrilled to be performing *Smokey Joe's Café* for the first time at Gateway! He traveled the Mediterranean Sea

working on Norwegian Cruise Line. Favorite Credits: *PC Spelling Bee* (Mitch), *Bat Boy* (Rev. Hightower) *Ragtime*, *Hairspray*, *Kiss Me Kate*. Proud East Carolina University graduate. Much love to Mom, Dad, McKenzie, supporting family and friends.



PRIMO CANDELARIA (*The Coasters*) joined *The Coasters* in October 2008 after an audition for Carl Sr. He lives in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He has

been singing since he was 10 years old. He teaches choreography and also has produced many shows. He was also with the group *Chapter One* for several years, and sang with *The Intruders* and many other professional groups. He has a very beautiful smooth tenor voice and has been a great asset to the continuation of *The Coasters*. While touring with *The Coasters*, he sings lead on, among others, *Baby That Is Rock & Roll* and *Down In Mexico*.



YVETTE MONIQUE CLARK is excited to be working at the Gateway and doing *Smokey Joe's Café*. Her favorite roles to date are the international tour of

Ain't Misbehavin' (Nell), *Hairspray* (Motormouth Maybelle), and *Chicago* (Mama Morton). She will be appearing in season 2 of *Orange Is The New Black*. She thanks God and her family, for without them she would be nothing. She would like to dedicate this run to her Aunt Garnetta.



SETH DANNER is thrilled to be making his Gateway Playhouse debut in *Smokey Joe's Café!* Favorite credits include: Greg in *A Chorus Line* (National & Japanese Tours), Duke in *The Great*

Who's Who

American Trailer Park Musical (Merry-Go-Round Playhouse), *The Most Happy Fella* (Goodspeed), *South Pacific* (Riverside Theatre), among others. TV/Film: *Other Plans*, *One Life to Live*. Thank you to Chet, Michael, Craig & Bernadette/Avalon Artists, and the entire creative team for this wonderful opportunity. Thanks and love to family & friends for their constant love and support, especially Mom & Dad for never missing a show. Love to Anthony and Boo Radley.



ROBERT H. FOWLER is thrilled and grateful to be a part of *Smokey Joe's Café!* His credits include Broadway: *The Producers*, *Beauty and The Beast*, *Steel Pier* and *Dreamgirls*;

Regional: *Les Miserables* (Javert), *Race* (Henry Brown), *Ragtime* (Coalhouse), *La Cage* (Jacob) and *Spelling Bee* (Mitch); Television/Film: *The Good Wife*, *Cupid*, *All*

My Children, as well as, *Malcolm X* and *The Producers Movie*, He's a proud member of Broadway Inspirational Voices. Thank you Bohemia and Carson-Kolker. God Bless!!



JOE LANCE WILLIAMS (*The Coasters*), better known as J.W., has performed live on stage with Carl Gardner Sr. for several years, personally hand-picked by Carl in

July 2001. He grew up in Ponchatoula, Louisiana just 60 miles from the music capital of the south, his birthplace New Orleans, Louisiana, known as "The Big Easy." He grew to love the musical sound of country western music. At the early age of nine years he was encouraged to develop his talent of singing and playing the guitar when he realized he could play the rubber band box and finally the guitar in New Zion Baptist Church of his hometown. This was the true spiritual foundation of his musical career. In 2001 Mr. Carl Gardner, the original lead singer

and founder was introduced to JW and immediately hired him to be a part of his group *The Coasters*. JW is a very versatile and talented singer/song writer and has continued to be an asset to the continuation of Carl's group *The Coasters*.



KATHLEEN (KATE) MCCANN Gateway debut! Credits: *Jesus Christ Superstar* (European tour) *Mary Magdalene/Soul-Girl*; *Smokey Joe's Café* (nat'l

tour); Regional: *RENT*, *Avenue Q*, *Blues in the Night*, *Swing!*, *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change*, *Pump Boys and Dinettes*, *Jekyll and Hyde*, *Music Man*, *Grand Night*. Recently toured Japan as a soloist with the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra. Big love to her beautiful family and friends!



ERIN MCGRATH is so excited to be performing for the very first time at Gateway Playhouse! Erin has appeared on the National Tour of *Hairspray* (Tammy) as

well as around the country and the world in *Smokey Joe's Café* (Delee), *And the World Goes Round*, *Shout!*, and *White Noise*. She has also been seen on TV in shows such as *Boardwalk Empire* and *Royal Pains* as well as in numerous commercials. Proud University of Michigan graduate! Go Blue!



MARLA MCREYNOLDS is thrilled to join the Gateway family in *Smokey Joe's Café!* Marla has performed on Broadway in *The Color Purple* (Older Olivia), and *Chicago* (Mona). She has also toured nationally and internationally with *Anything Goes* (Charity), *West Side Story* and *Chicago* (Swing/US Roxie). Other favorite credits include *Cirque du Soleil's Viva Elvis* in Las Vegas, HBO's *Boardwalk Empire*, and *OZ*

and founder was introduced to JW and immediately hired him to be a part of his group *The Coasters*. JW is a very versatile and talented singer/song writer and has continued to be an asset to the continuation of Carl's group *The Coasters*.

Who's Who

the Great and Powerful. Many thanks to Chet and Michael! For MW.



JODY REYNARD has appeared on Broadway in *Legally Blonde*, *Taboo*, *Saturday Night Fever* and has toured with *Memphis*, *Kiss Me Kate*, *Camelot* and *My*

Fair Lady. Regionally, Jody's played Mitch Mahoney (*Spelling Bee*), Phaedra (*La Cage aux Folles*) and Darren Lemming (*Take Me Out*). Film and TV credits include *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, *Rosie Live*, *One Life to Live*, *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* and *Show Business: The Road to Broadway*. Jody has also performed in concerts with the Omaha Symphony and the New York Philharmonic Orchestras.




EDDIE WHITFIELD (*The Coasters*) joined *The Coasters* in November 2009 after auditioning for Carl Sr. He lives in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Nicknamed "Fast Eddie", Whitfield started singing when he was a teenager and can sing both bass and baritone. He toured with a group by the name of *Neighbors Complaint* for four years. They recorded *Piece of Mind*. His great bass really impresses on *Charlie Brown*, *Zing With The Strings Of My Heart* and *Yakety Yak*.

CHET WALKER (*Director/Choreographer*) Forty years in 120 words or less: Broadway: Choreography: *Fosse* (Co-conceiver/co-choreographer), *Tony*, *Best Musical*, *Outer Critics' Circle* award, *Drama Desk* award and *Toronto Theater Alliance* awards for *Best Choreography*. *PIPPIN* *Tony*, *Best Revival of a Musical*, *Best Choreography* (Nominated), *Fred and Adele Astaire* award, *Outer Critics Circle* award and *Drama Desk* awards for *Best Choreography*. Broadway performer:

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Who's Who

On The Town, Lorelei, Ambassadors, Pajama Game, Dancin', Sweet Charity, Pippin. Other director/choreographer: *The Jack Cole Project* (Queens Theatre), *Sweet Charity* (West End), *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* (Tel Aviv). Awards: Joseph Jefferson Award, co-choreography, Pal Joey (Goodman). Upcoming: *Valentino* (conceiver and director), *Feelin' in the Mood* (co-choreographer)

JACK MCLEOD (*Production Stage Manager*) is thrilled to be making his Gateway Playhouse Debut! Seven Broadway productions and eighteen years of touring (USA, Canada, Mexico, South America, Europe, Asia) partial credits include *Kinky Boots, Jersey Boys, Avenue Q, White Christmas, Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, Porgy & Bess, Cats, Grease, The King & I, Godspell, Hedwig and the Angry Inch, Boeing-Boeing, Camelot, Lone*

Star Love, Cabaret, The Goodbye Girl and South Pacific. www.jack-mcleod.com

DAVID TRUSKINOFF (*Music Director*) conducted the Broadway productions of *Rent, Hair* (2011 revival), and *End of the Rainbow*. On DVD, he conducted *Rent-The Final Broadway Performance* (Sony/Radical Media). He produced and did arrangements for the CD, *Rachel Bay Jones-ShowFolk* (Plum Song Records). David has served on the faculties of NYU (Tisch), Yale School of Drama, and the Eugene O'Neill Center's National Theatre Institute. He graduated (BFA, Musical Theatre) from the University of Cincinnati- College Conservatory of Music.

NICHOLAS KATEN (*Assistant to the Director*) from Portland, Oregon, is a graduate of New York University. Additionally, Katen has trained at the Arts Academy in Prague, Czech Republic, Arts and Communications Magnet Academy, and The Juilliard School. He's performed works by choreographers Joshua Bergasse, Chase Brock, Michael Clark, Barak Marshall, Austin McCormick, Mark Morris, Eleanor Powell, and Chet Walker. Katen has been assisting Chet Walker since 2013. He works for The Metropolitan Opera, the Staten Island Ballet, and Company XIV.

BRIAN LOESCH (*Lighting Designer*) is proud to be part of the Gateway Family for his seventeenth season. Gateway Playhouse lighting design credits include: *Beauty and The Beast* (2013), *Sweeney Todd* (2011), *A Christmas Carol* (2006 & 2010), *Avenue Q, Sophisticated Ladies, Forbidden Broadway* (2008), *Forbidden Broadway Holiday Edition* (2011), *The Full Monty, A Holiday Spectacular On Ice* (2004 & 2009), *South Pacific, Footloose, Jesus Christ Superstar, Kiss Me Kate, Holiday Hop, Cirque La Masque - Noel, Urinetown, Mooseltoe* (2007 & 2008), *Cabaret* and numerous children's theatre productions including *Peter Pan* (2004) and *Jungle Book* (2005).

Brian graduated with a Degree in Technical Theatre from Suffolk County Community College. Other design credits include *Language of Angels* (Henry Street Experimental Theatre, NYC), *Paraffin Touch* (World Premiere at Suffolk County Community College), *The Man Who Would Be King* (World Premiere at the Antrim Playhouse), and *Kiss Me Kate* (Cape Fear Regional Theatre). National Tour credits include *George M!* (2003 Candlewood Int./ Mainstage Productions), *Titanic* (2004 Candlewood Int.), *A Holiday Spectacular On Ice* (2004 A Gateway / Candlewood Production), *Mame* (2005-06 Candlewood Int.), *Camelot* (2006-07 Candlewood Int.), and the 2007 and 2008 productions of *Mooseltoe* (Sammelman Productions).

MARTIN T. LOPEZ (*Costume Designer*) is a NY based scenic and costume designer. Recent designs: *Handle With Care* and *Witnessed By The World* (Off-Broadway) both directed by Karen Carpenter, and *HMS Pinafore* and *Lucia di Lammermoor* for Opera Saratoga. Martin was a recipient of the NEA/TCG Career Development Program and was one of the first winners of the Opera America Director Designer Showcase. Martin is thrilled to be working with Chet Walker and this fantastic cast. www.MartinTLopezDesign.com

STEVE PALADIE (*Scenic Designer*) is an artist with over 22 years of professional theatrical and entertainment design, production, management and touring experience and currently resides in Las Vegas, NV. Recent design credits include local productions of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, Annie, Hedwig and the Angry Inch, Damn Yankees* and *Peter Pan*. Numerous corporate clients include State Farm Insurance, Hyundai USA, and Caesars Entertainment.

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CHATting WITH CHET

*An Interview with the Director
and Choreographer of Smokey Joe's Café*

By Rachel L. Colson



“They say the neon lights are bright on Broadway. They say there’s always magic in the air.” The music and lyrics of Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller echo in my mind as I watch some of the rehearsals for *Smokey Joe’s Café*. And indeed, there is magic in the air, crackling and sparkling as each performer takes the stage to sing and dance in a revue show that I can only describe as something truly spectacular. But the magic is also due, in part, to Chet Walker, the multi-award winning director and choreographer who has garnered critical acclaim around the world. I sat down with glitter in my eyes and the magic still enveloping me to talk with Mr. Walker about *Smokey Joe’s Café*, directing, theatre, and life.

ME: *Pippin* has a lot of circus themes in the show, and your concept for *Smokey Joe’s Café* is a la American Idol. How do you come up with and create a concept for a particular show?

CW: The original concepts are always out there, and then for me, I always have to go back to why someone wanted to do the show in the first place. There’s never a show that starts and ends exactly the way the creators created it because, you know, people change, they can’t find the right casting, venues, money, or whatever. Sometimes what we worked out on paper doesn’t look good on stage, so that always changes things. With *Smokey Joe’s Café*, specifically, it’s a catalogue of songs by two really amazing men. So what do you do with something like that? You celebrate it. And what better way to do that in the theatre than as an awards show, or a television show.

ME: When you’re directing and choreographing, especially for a show like this, where there really isn’t a plot or through line, how do you help the actor to find their character and create their journey?

CW: When you look at the songs of Leiber and Stoller, they’re about people. When you look at the songs, and see the people who sing them, you can begin to see

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Photo: Todd Plitt, USA TODAY

that this group of songs, they have this personality or that personality. And these songs, they communicate certain feelings. I look at these songs as being very powerful and very positive. And when you have the actors that we have, they can relate to certain aspects/attributes of these songs, and that's when they start to find their journey. All of a sudden that actor who's singing that particular song, it becomes very personal to them. They're not trying to imitate someone who has sung the song/done the role before, but they're finding their own niche, and the actor and the song intertwine. They say in musical theatre that when you can't talk about something anymore, you sing about it. And that's where we are now. We're at the sing about it stage. The song talks to you and relates to you as a person.

ME: So when the actors are finding that character and making those connections, how do you direct them in a way that doesn't hinder or hurt that organic-ness and those personal feelings?

CW: Most people come in with a preconceived idea of what it's supposed to be or how it's supposed to sound, what with youtube, soundtracks, and all that. But I look at it as, no, that's the way that someone else did it. You may do a really great copy of someone else, but that's certainly not you. And that's my job. My job is to push you to a place where your understanding of it far exceeds anything that you've ever heard or seen before and then being able to communicate that in what you say, what you dance, and what you sing. You understand that the audience understands what you understand. They don't have to understand it, they have to understand you. When you do the show for, what is it, like 25 performances, there should be those 25 different conversations, and then multiply that by how many songs there

are. I think like 42. So that's different each time. I'm not saying change it, but have that conversation and really feel it that many times. (The audience) is right there with the actor in that moment. And these songs are set up that way. (As an audience), they can make you think. They can make you feel. They can break your heart.

ME: In my research of your career, I noticed that you have done a lot of revivals. How do you direct and choreograph these classic shows and make them unique and your own?

CW: That's funny, because, you know, I don't want to make them my own. I come from a different generation, and I believe that the actual written word, whether it is lyrics, or the actual dialogue, are the most important. I believe that as a director, I need to take what is on the page and put in on the stage. And then once it is on stage, I need to make sure that what was written on the page makes sense. Because if you have to explain it to audience members, you're done, forget it. You've failed as a director. You also have to have the knowledge of why someone created it in the first place. What was the writer or director trying to say then? I want to preserve what was there and show why it worked then, and when I direct/choreograph, I make it so that the audience understands what it was and is about and how it fits into the culture and the world of today.

ME: You began your career onstage at the age of 16. At Gateway, we have an acting school for kids who range in age from 5 to 18, and we also produce several children's theatre shows each season. What advice would you give to these kids about future careers in the theatre industry?



Photo: Todd Plitt, USA TODAY



Photo: Todd Plitt, USA TODAY

CW: Be open to everything, and have real passion. There's a difference between real passion for theatre and fake passion. The fake passion is having your parents want you to want to do it, or thinking that you're going to be the next big star. These reality shows like *American Idol* or *So You Think You Can Dance* aren't about real passion. They're about making it and being the next big thing. You have to think about it as a profession, not a gig. Just think about how many of those *American Idol* and *So You Think You Can Dance* winners have careers today. After the first album, there's not really much after that. You have to create and shape your own career. That's where parents and teachers come in. Help them to see their potential and all the possibilities. Also, I'd say that you have to know the history of it. The history is so important. Know why you want to do it and those people that did it before you. Everything is always evolving, and in this business, no one can stay in a cocoon. And another thing: everyone says you have to get used to rejection. I don't think of it as rejection. It should be thought of as why should you do something that you're not right for? Move on to the next thing, whatever that may be.

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One of the front-runners of this style of music is a group known as *The Coasters*. *The Coasters* began their career in 1955. The original members were the musical talents of Carl Gardner, Bobby Nunn, Billy Guy and Leon Hughes. Prior to the formation of *The Coasters*, Carl Gardner and Bobby Nunn sang with a rhythm and blues group called *The Robins*, which was a group based out of Los Angeles, California. At the time Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller had begun Spark records and had produced "Smokey Joe's Cafe" with *The Robins*. Due to the popularity of the record, it came to the attention of Atlantic Records who offered the team an independent production contract. In 1957 Bobby Nunn and Leon Hughes were replaced with Will Jones and Cornell Gunter, thus sparking the beginning of the legacy of *The Coasters*.

The partnership between *The Coasters* and Leiber and Stoller was an instant success. Such hits as "Down in Mexico", "Searchin'", "Young Blood", "Yakety Yak", and "Charlie Brown" topped the charts and launched *The Coasters* into infamy. They quickly became known as "The Clown Princes of Rock and Roll" due to the humorous storytelling nature of their songs.

Carl Gardner always owned the legal right to *The Coasters* name and it was passed down to his widow Veta Gardner after his death in 2011. The current group members are, Joe Lance Williams, Primotivo Candelaria, Eddie Whitefield, all personally handpicked by Carl Gardner before his passing. Dennis Anderson joined the group after his death.

The Coasters were the very first group inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1987, and with good reason. They were a huge influence on several rock and roll groups in the 60's and 70's including *The Beatles*, *The Grateful Dead*, *The Monkeys*, *Leon Russell*, and *Elvis Presley* who rerecorded several of *The Coasters'* songs and helped to keep their hits alive and well. Members inducted included Carl Gardner, Billy Guy, Will Jones and Cornell Gunter.

These are the hits you will see and hear today, the songs that you remember listening to on the radio and the records that you put on the turntable. Close your eyes and listen to the harmonies and melodies of the past and let them stir in you the memories of decades long ago, but never forgotten.

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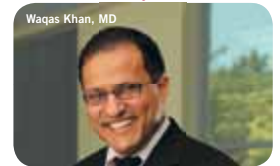
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