

 The
Tabard Theatre Company

Presents



The Duke,



The Count,



and Me

*James Creer
as Sketch Hopkins*

*World
Premiere!*

...Dixie to Swing, when Jazz was King!

November 1 - 23, 2013

Theatre on San Pedro Square
29 N. San Pedro Street • Downtown San Jose

from Cathy Spielberger Cassetta, Executive Director

Welcome to the first of three new works Tabard is producing in this season of Twists and Turns.

The idea for this show came from a conversation I had with James Creer last February, after his success in the one-man play *Looking Over the President's Shoulder*. We explored various ideas and settled on telling the story of jazz through the lives and music of some of its greatest innovators and stylists that was sparked by a story Gus Kambeitz had told me about how Ella Fitzgerald got her start. I LOVED that story and figured there surely were other fabulous tales surrounding jazz greats. At the end of our initial meeting, James said, "If Gus is in, let's do it." I immediately contacted Gus — he was in! Then he brought into the mix Tina Paulson to assist with song and artist selection.

Bob Sunshine joined us at the beginning of rehearsals as production pianist. Having his keen ear and piano talent was hugely helpful as we explored underscoring, for example. It was fun to watch James and Bob figure out what key a song should be performed in.

Early in October I brought in Doug Baird, who had offered to put together the images. It was an offer I couldn't refuse. Doug has also been a terrific sounding board for other aspects of the production.

Although I spent countless hours researching and writing the script, this show is the result of the talent and commitment of theatre artists I am grateful to call collaborators *and* friends: James Creer, Gus Kambeitz, Tina Paulson, Bob Sunshine, and Doug Baird.

Throughout the show's shaping process, each person made significant contributions that are evident in the end result. The give-and-take during rehearsals revealed everyone's desire to make the best choices for the show, devoid of anyone's ego. This collaborative spirit fueled our work, making it a joy. We've become a close-knit group, all working toward the same goal. At its core, though, this show would not have happened without Gus, and without James there would be NO show!

Although James and I each have had recent personal challenges that put this project behind schedule, overall it has been an exiting and rewarding journey. It's fun to create a new work that brings to life — often using people's own words — the story of what many consider to be America's greatest gift to the world: Jazz! To watch James develop each of the many characters he plays is to witness an artist at work. And we all love to hear him sing!

To learn more about the process from the other collaborators, please read their bios in this program.

From all of us, sit back now and take the journey of jazz that is *The Duke, The Count, and Me ...Dixie to Swing, when Jazz was King!*

Experience the magic. Tabard.

Presents

The Duke, The Count, and Me

...Dixie to Swing, when Jazz was King!

Written by

Cathy Spielberger Cassetta

In collaboration with

James Creer
Gus Kambeitz
Tina Paulson

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Theatre for All Ages. Tabard.

PRODUCTION STAFF

Producer / Director	Cathy Spielberger Cassetta
Music Director	Gus Kambeitz
Production Accompanist	Bob Sunshine
Technical Director	Joe Cassetta
Assistant Technical Director	John Palmer
Lighting Designer	Brian Wiebe / BWiebe Events
Stage Manager	Jackie Edge
Assistant Stage Manager	Chris Toschi
Image Collector / Sketch Designer	Doug Baird
Program Layout	Barbara Reynolds

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The Tabard Theatre Company is grateful for the support provided, in part, by the Farrington Historical Foundation, a Cultural Affairs grant from the City of San Jose, and a Regional Arts Fund grant from Silicon Valley Creates.

Journey of the heart. Tabard.

THE DUKE, THE COUNT, AND ME

Setting

Los Angeles, 1956, Sketch's Place

Starring

James Creer

as

Sketch Hopkins

Featuring

Piano	Bob Sunshine
Drums	Bruce Campbell or Jerald Birtle
Bass	Gus Kambeitz or James King
Trumpet	Eric Bolvin or Shawn Williams
Trombone	Faris Jarrah or Mark DeSimone
Saxophone	Eric Raeburn, Noel Catura, Antony Pickard, Madison Bohrer, or Nancy Moser

There will be a 15-minute intermission.

A portion of Tabard's concession proceeds from this production will be donated to



Time well spent. Tabard.

MEET THE ARTISTS



James Creer returns after his outstanding performances in *Babes in Hollywood*; *Looking Over the President's Shoulder*; *The Tin Pan Alley Rag*; *Bandstand Beat*; *Driving Miss Daisy*; *Stompin' at the Savoy*; *Lady, Be Good* and *Crowns*. James also has starred in *Mack & Mabel*, *Ain't Misbehavin'*, *Ragtime*, and *Finian's Rainbow* for South Bay Musical Theatre, as well as many productions with Campbell United Methodist Church. He received his musical education at Sam Houston State University. Hobbies include event planning, interior design, travel, and Thursday night karaoke.

Doug Baird (Image Collector, Sketch Designer) is a Tabard associate artistic director who previously directed Tabard's productions of *Making God Laugh*, *Looking Over the President's Shoulder*, *Driving Miss Daisy*, and *Hold On to Love*. *"Doing photo research for the slides has been a rewarding experience. I have enjoyed discovering and studying early photos of these musical greats. Many names now have faces to go with them. Each discovery leads to another find. Collaborating with Cathy has been creatively exciting. I think it's the old saying 'two heads are better than one.' Sharing ideas, listening to ideas, discovering another point of view, going in a different direction, and drinking wine with a friend."*

Cathy Spielberger Cassetta (Producer, Director, Collaborator) is a theatre/television veteran and entrepreneur who created/produced/co-hosted the weekly TV program *Theatre This Week* in the 1990s before founding Tabard in 2001. For Tabard, her recent credits include *Bandstand Beat* (also created and wrote), *It's a Wonderful Life*, *Crossing Delancey*, *Babes in Hollywood*, and the award-winning production of *Trying*. Later this season she is also directing and writing *Love, Laughter and Linguine*.

Joe Cassetta (Technical Director) continues to lead Tabard's technical team, which he has done since the company was founded in 2001. With a BS in mechanical engineering and an MBA from Santa Clara University, Joe's steady and skilled leadership has led to Tabard's increased ability to explore and expand what we do technically.

Jackie Edge (Stage Manager) returns to Tabard after working on *Making God Laugh* and *The World Goes 'Round*, bringing a wealth of musical experience. A Central Valley native and graduate of CSU Stanislaus with a Bachelor of Music, she worked as assistant director of Summer Music @ Stanislaus and also traveled to Spain and Portugal on musical tours. Jackie is a cellist who also plays viola, trombone, and says "guitar is fun to play for kids, holidays, or just to mess around while hanging out with people."

Gus Kambeitz (Music Director, Collaborator), a native of San Jose, graduated from Andrew Hill High School and San Jose State University and earned a masters degree in jazz composition from Washington State University. As a professional bassist, he has played and toured extensively, with credits including Beach Blanket Babylon and "Legends in Concert." Gus is currently Director of Instrumental Studies at West Valley College. His compositions for big band are available through Walrus Music. *"Working*

MEET THE ARTISTS

on an original musical has been daunting and exciting — challenging in different ways beyond musical. And it's been much harder than I thought it was going to be... but exciting in a way as well. Hopefully someone else will choose to mount this production so I can see it with fresh eyes. Working with Cathy and James (and Bob) has been a delight. The positive energy and willingness to solve problems has been an inspiration! I have learned that coming up with a new idea and seeing it through to production is truly a labor of love! Working on this show has meant a lot to me personally, as I teach a course in jazz history. More Americans need to know this great story."

John Palmer (Assistant Technical Director) has been one of Tabard's "Three Musketeers" since the first season. He is Tabard's Radar O'Reilly, our go-to guy for so many things. An active member of the singing group Stoctet, his personal joy is singing.

Tina Paulson (Collaborator) is Performing Arts Department Chair and choral director at Woodside Priory School. She holds advanced degrees in voice performance and choral conducting from Washington State and San Jose State Universities. Tina has vocal- and music-directed musicals for Children's Musical Theater San Jose, Priory, and Sunnyvale Community Players, as well as performed with Broadway by the Bay and Opera San Jose. She loves living (and supporting local events) in downtown San Jose with her husband Gus and daughter Michaela. *"Working on a new show is a bit like walking forward in a fog — you can't see the road ahead of you, and you're not quite sure how you got to where you presently are. But it's thrilling all the same. This has been a fantastic education for me as a musician, as a creative person, and as a teacher. I didn't know much about the chronology of jazz, nor how interconnected it really was at the beginning. Collaborating on this new work has taught me a lot about American history through the eyes of the jazz age. And I learned not to get married to any idea in creating a show — it will probably change, and for the better! I was surprised how fun it is to work together with my husband, Gus, on a project like this. We are a good team in the theater realm, too! Most fun was watching James talk about what he's discovered about the show — how the music makes him feel personally and through the eyes of the character. His total investment is inspiring."*

Bob Sunshine (Production Accompanist) is happy as long as he is playing the piano. This is his fourth Tabard production, following *The World Goes 'Round*; *I Left My Heart*; and *Lady, Be Good*. He doubles as a Silicon Valley software developer and in his spare time plays for a singing group and a chamber music group. *"Since I joined the development process relatively late in the game, I expected the script to be more locked down than it was. I was surprised how much it continued to evolve. Until now, my creative talents have been channeled toward the development of computer software in my day job, so it was exciting and educational to help out with an artistic endeavor. I would like to thank the creative team for including me. My ideas were always considered, never brushed aside. As a lifetime musician myself, I tried to imagine how it felt to be one of the pioneers of the American jazz era. Like me, they just loved to play."*

MEET THE ARTISTS

Chris Toschi (Assistant Stage Manager) returns for his second Tabard show after serving as both house and backstage staff for *Making God Laugh*. Born and raised in California's Central Valley, Chris played trumpet in grade school, then tuba in middle school through college at California State University Fresno. A volunteer with the De Anza Chamber Orchestra, Chris has a background in telecommunications/networking and currently works as a network maintenance tech for Apple Computer.

Brian Wiebe / BWiebe Events (Lighting Designer) has over 10 years' experience designing events; his specialty is in event lighting with a theatrical feel, and in completely transforming spaces. He has been lighting designer for over a dozen shows; this is the first with Tabard. He has a background in IT and networking, including systems integration. Outside of work, he is an active duty volunteer with San Jose Search and Rescue.

A big Thank You to our "Kickstarter Donors" who helped make this production possible:

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Through this production, we honor the recent and sudden passing of those dear to the Tabard family:

Donald and Donna Creer (James' brother and sister-in-law)
Rick Spielberger (Cathy's brother)
Marisa Cassetta (Joe's sister)
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The Tabard Theatre Company

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Executive Director: Cathy Spielberger Cassetta

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