



CENTER REPERTORY COMPANY OF WALNUT CREEK

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Present



adapted by

Peter Glazer

original concept by

Harold Thau

with

Jennifer Allen* Terry Burrell* Valisia Lekae Little*

Lee Morgan* Jim Newman* Nicholas Rodriguez*

Brian Yates Sharber *

Scenic Designer

Kelly Tighe

Costume Designer

Tobin Ost

Lighting Designer

Don Darnutzer

Sound Designer

Lewis Mead

Projection Designer

Jan Hartley

Music Director

Charlie Alterman

Orchestrations/Vocal Arrangements

Jeff Waxman

Casting by

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Production Stage Manager

Jeff Collister*

Bay Area Casting

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Director

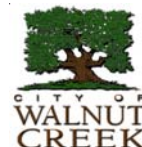
Randal Myler

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* Members of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States
The Scenic, Costume, and Lighting Designers in this production are members of United States Artists
The Director in this production is a member of Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers

Almost Heaven

Producer's Notes - Harold Thau

In many ways, he was the brother I never had. We were close for more than 30 years. In 1965, I was an accountant from the Bronx just beginning to establish myself as a business manager for some promising young comedians and jazz artists. Through the latter I met Milt Okun, a major folk music figure who produced records for Peter, Paul and Mary and The Chad Mitchell Trio and others.

From time to time, Milt and I would meet in his studio and discuss the music business. It was during one of those cracker-barrel sessions that Milt first mentioned John Denver. He had been searching for a lead singer to replace Chad Mitchell who was leaving to do a Broadway show. Among the 250 demo tapes Milt had received was a not very good one from John, who had been trying to establish himself as a singer on the West Coast. Anyone other than Milt would have rejected it.

Instead, Milt invited John to audition in New York. As luck would have it, John had a terrible cold and the audition was unimpressive. When he left for a singing engagement in Phoenix, it was with Milt's quietly modulated "don't call us, we'll call you," in his ear. For the next ten days John wouldn't leave his Phoenix hotel room other than to perform, for fear of missing Milt's call. It came ten days later and informed him he was the new lead singer.

For three years (1965-68), the Trio withstood a rigorous touring schedule. John, who had been an army brat, born Henry John Deutschendorf Jr. on New Year's Eve 1943, lived the itinerant lonely life of most children who move around a lot. Music was a refuge from the time he was in his teens. In 1963 he made a lame attempt to go to Texas Tech, chiefly to please his father, but dropped out after a year, moving to Los Angeles to try his luck as a singer. He sang at Ledbetter's, a club in Westwood Village, owned by Randy and Diane Sparks who also recognized a special charisma in this downhome, boyish lad. "The people just love him," Diane told her husband. It was Randy Sparks who suggested the name change from Deutschendorf to Denver. John lived with them, made \$5 a week and played music nights--until his audition for Milt Okun.

Milt's and my enthusiasm for the Trio was unshaken until we realized that the more dates the Trio played the more indebted it became. The only practical solution was to disband the group. John, however, refused to allow the Trio to declare bankruptcy and determined to pay off all debts himself. It was a staggering load for a budding performer to take on, especially since he had just married Annie Martell, a young woman he'd met in Minneapolis 18 months before.

But good things were starting to happen. Peter, Paul and Mary took John's composition "Leavin' on a Jet Plane" and had their first -- and only-- number one hit. It was also John's first breakthrough as a songwriter. In those early years, John frequently turned to Milt for direction.

Milt worked hard to land him a record deal. He was rejected by 16 record companies before finally scoring at RCA with a four-- album guarantee. The first three albums were moderately successful, but his fourth -- *Poems, Prayers and Promises* -- became a real hit.

When "Take Me Home, Country Roads" hit second place on the charts in 1971 and became the Country Music Association's Song of the Year, John's career took off. In 1973 he released his *Greatest Hits* album and in 1974 *Back Home Again* set a record as the best-selling album in the world. By 1975 John was the country's biggest selling recording artist.

Mostly due to his travel schedule and career pressures, John and Annie's marriage had its ups and downs. They needed a fresh start and moved to Aspen where John was the happiest he'd ever been. He loved the outdoors, learned to fly, loved the Colorado mountains. In four very heady years, he had zoomed from Unknown to Superstar. Nobody sold more albums at the time. He and Annie adopted two children, Zak and Anna Kate. But John, who was among the first celebrities to take up environmental causes, became deeply involved in them, often at the expense of his family life.

Still those were halcyon years. Everything he touched turned to gold. He teamed with Frank Sinatra in Tahoe and made the movie *Oh, God!* with George Burns (1977), another success. But his intense activism also was beginning to swallow him up. Later records did not sell as well. He slipped into a mid-life crisis of sorts, became short-tempered and defensive, a situation made worse by his father's sudden death of a heart attack. After 15 years of marriage, he and Annie divorced. And after 17 years of another kind of marriage, RCA, for whom John had made huge sums of money, dropped him as a recording artist, leaving his life and career in limbo. And

yet John went on trucking. Not long after, on a performing tour of Australia, he met and married Cassandra Delaney, but the marriage was short-lived. His life continued to be somewhat rocky. In the mid 1990s, he rented a house in the Monterey area and tried California living. He was killed when a new plane went down in the waters off the Monterey coast.

John was only 53. On the day he died he was doing the two things he loved best outside of performing: playing golf and flying. His ashes were scattered in his beloved mountains above Aspen. His death was not without its quotient of irony. John Denver's career had just begun to show signs of picking up again. Four months after his death, he won his only Grammy for an album of songs written for children.

"My music and all my work stem from the conviction that people everywhere are intrinsically the same," John had said about the universal appeal of his music. "When I write a song, I want to take the personal experience or observation that inspired it and express it in as universal a way as possible. I'm a global citizen. I think we all are - at least we've got to start thinking that way. I want to work in whatever I do - my music, my writing, my performing, my commitments, my home and personal life - in a way that is directed towards a world in balance, a world that creates a better quality of life for all people".

John Denver was an extraordinary man - warm, caring, an uncommon friend and a rare human being. I feel privileged to have shared so much of the journey with him.

Harold Thau was John Denver's partner, business manager, personal manager and one of his closest friends.

Musical Numbers

ACT I

All Of My Memories.....	Jim, Lee & Company
For Bobbie.....	Nicholas, Lee, Jim
Rhymes and Reasons.....	Valisia
Draft Dodger Rag.....	Lee
I Wish I Could Have Been There (Woodstock).....	Jim & Company
Take Me Home, Country Roads.....	Jennifer & Company
Fly Away.....	Terry
I Guess He'd Rather Be in Colorado.....	Terry, Jennifer, Valisia
Rocky Mountain High.....	Lee & Company
Matthew.....	Jim
Let Us Begin (What Are We Making Weapons For?).....	Nicholas & Terry
Eagles and Horses.....	Lee & Jennifer
Calypto.....	Nicholas & Company

Act II

This Old Guitar.....	Lee & Jim
Thank God I'm A Country Boy.....	Jim
Grandma's Feather Bed.....	Company
Annie's Song.....	Jennifer
Goodbye Again.....	Jim & Jennifer
How Can I Leave You Again.....	Lee & Terry
Back Home Again.....	Nicholas & Valisia
Leaving On A Jet Plane.....	Terry & Company
For You.....	Nicholas
I'm Sorry.....	Jennifer
Sunshine On My Shoulders.....	Valisia & Company
Looking For Space.....	Jim
Wild Montana Skies.....	Jennifer, Terry, Valisia
Songs Of.....	Lee & Company
Poems, Prayers, and Promises.....	Terry, Jim & Company
Yellowstone.....	Company
Encore.....	Company

Cast Biographies



Jennifer Allen* Jennifer's Broadway credits include starring roles in *Cats* (Grizabella), *Little Me* (Belle understudy), *Guys and Dolls* (Adelaide) and *City of Angels* (Oolie/Donna). On tour, she played leading roles in *Jerome Robbins' Broadway*, Sally Bowles in *Cabaret* opposite Joel Grey; and she understudied Emma Goldman in the American Premiere of *Ragtime* in Los Angeles. Regional Credits include *Smokey Joe's Cafe* at Theatre Works in Northern California and the title role in *Victor/Victoria* at the American Musical Theatre of San Jose. Other New York credits include Mrs. Santa Claus in the *Radio City Music Hall Christmas Spectacular* and the starring role in *Martha and Me*, a musical about a housewife obsessed with Martha Stewart in last season's N.Y Fringe Festival. Currently, Jennifer is co-writing two musicals

titled *The Old Dead 5* and *Vegas Organic* with composer/actor Michael Gruber. They have presented several readings of these new works under auspices of the York Theatre Company. Originally from San Diego, Jennifer makes her home in New York with her husband Rob Hills, son Cedric, and daughter Frances.



Terry Burrell* Terry's Broadway credits include starring roles in *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, *Swingin' On A Star*, *Into the Woods*, *Dreamgirls*, *Honky Tonk Nights* and *Eubie*, which she also filmed for television. Off-Broadway Terry appeared in *And the World Goes Round*, *Just So* and *Taking a Chance on Love*. Terry toured the U.S. as Julie in the Hal Prince production of *Showboat* and reprised the role in the London revival. Other tours include *Copacabana*, *Thunder Knocking on the Door*, *A Grand Night for Singing*, *The Wiz* and *Bubbling Brown Sugar*. Terry was nominated for a Helen Hayes Award for Best Actress in a musical for her portrayal of Queenie in *Queenie Pie* at the Kennedy Center. Other regional credits include *Time and Again*, *Of Thee I Sing*, *Sweet and Hot*, *Man of La Mancha*, Arthur Miller's *Up From Paradise* and *Cinderella*. Terry has performed her night club act for audiences around the world.



Valisia Lekae Little* Valisia is proud to be joining the cast of *Almost Heaven*. Some of her work includes: International Tours: *USO Salute to America*, Jean Ann Ryan Productions/NCL. National Tour: 1st National Tour *Mamma Mia* -- final cast (Lisa). Las Vegas: *Mamma Mia* (Lisa). NYC Theatre: *The Sixties Project* (Workshop) with Richard Maltby, Jr. Regional Theatre: *Smokey Joe's Cafe*, *Godspell*, & *Mama Said They'll be Days Like This* (World Premiere Chicago). Television: *The Ryan Seacrest Show*, *Girls Behaving Badly*, *The Today Show*, *Pure Oxygen*, and *Fox & Friends*. Valisia would like to thank God, her mom, grandparents, family & friends! And also David (m.o.a.o) Proverbs 16:3.



Lee Morgan* On Broadway performed as Taylor Collins in *Brooklyn The Musical*, and *The Who's Tommy*. Off-Broadway and Regionally as Taylor Collins in *Brooklyn The Musical* (Denver), *The Who's Tommy* (La Jolla Playhouse), Hamlet in *Hamlet* (Texas Shakespeare Festival), Quincey in *Dracula* (La Jolla Playhouse), and Seth in *Heat Lightning* (Theatre Row). Lee is a singer-songwriter with a new CD, *Basic*. Check it out at www.joeandlee.com



Jim Newman* Broadway: Original companies of *Minnelli on Minnelli* (cast album) and *Happy in Steel Pier* (cast album), also *Sunset Boulevard* and *The Who's Tommy*, as well as the workshops of *Footloose* and *Urban Cowboy*. 1st National Tours: Originated the starring roles of Bill Calhoun in *Kiss Me Kate* and Josh Baskin in *Big!* Also played Levi in *Joseph...Dreamcoat* with Donny Osmond. Off-Broadway: George Bush in

NEWSICAL, Millard in *On a Clear Day You Can See Forever* (Encores), Destry in *Destry Rides Again* (York) as well as *A Good Swift Kick* (Variety Arts) and *Up Against It* (NYSF/Public). Regionally: John Denver in *Almost Heaven* (DCTC), the Leading Player in *Pippin* (Papermill Playhouse) and Henry in Kander and Ebb's *Over and Over* (Signature Theatre) as well as *Cole!* (Theatre on the Square-Dramalogue award for best actor). Television: Guest appearances on *Hope and Faith*, *All My Children*, *One Life to Live*, *The Rosie O'Donnell Show*, and *The Magic of Music* on NBC. Film: *Out of Sync* with L.L. Cool J.



Nicholas Rodriguez* originated the role of Aaron, starring opposite Val Kilmer's Moses in the U.S. Premiere of *The Ten Commandments* at the Kodak Theatre in Los Angeles. Nicholas also had the pleasure of playing Moses at several performances. Following that, he originated the role of Akhenaten in the pre-Broadway run of *Nefertiti* at Parker Playhouse. Tours include: *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Jesus), *Evita* (Che), and *Hair* (Claude). Regional credits include: *Cinderella* (Prince Charming), at North Shore Music Theatre, *Last 5 Years* (with Kate Shindle) at the Kennedy Theatre, *Candide* with Harrisburg Opera, *Footloose* (Ren), *Love, Valour, Compassion!* (Ramon), and *Master Class* (Tony). He can be heard on the cast albums of *The Ten Commandments*, and *Evita* as well as *Voices of Light: A Collection of Inspirational Songs*, and several recordings for Disney. A native Texan, he holds a BM and MM in Vocal Performance from the University of Texas at Austin. www.nicholasrodriguez-fanclub.com



Brian Yates Sharber* (*Understudy*) Brian Yates Sharber is a proud member of Actor's Equity Association and Theatre Bay Area. Off Broadway: *Up Jumped Springtime* (Lincoln Center/H.E.R.E). Local favorites include (but certainly are not limited to): *Memphis*, *Ragtime*, *Raisin* (Theatre Works); *The Wiz*, *Dreamgirls* (Willows Theatre) and *Comedy of Errors* (Aurora Theatre); *Minnie's Boys* (42nd Street Moon). Other Bay Area companies include Marin Theatre Company, Afro Solo Festival, Thick Description and Theatre Rhinoceros - where it all began.

Production Staff

Peter Glazer (*Adaptation*) created the musical *Woody Guthrie's American Song*, his first collaboration with arranger extraordinaire Jeff Waxman. *American Song* has been seen at over 100 theaters around the country since its premiere in 1988, including Berkeley Rep, Seattle Rep, Northlight Theater, San Jose Rep, Goodspeed at Chester, Syracuse Stage, Ford's Theater, and the Melting Pot Theater in New York City. It has received numerous awards, including three Joseph Jefferson Awards in Chicago, two Bay Area Drama Critics Awards in San Francisco, and both Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle nominations in New York City. Glazer adapted Nobel Laureate J.M. Coetzee's novel *Foe* for the stage, and directed its world premiere at the University of California, Berkeley in 2004. Other projects include the musical *Heart of Spain*, co-written with composer Eric Bain Peltoniemi; *Michael, Margaret, Pat & Kate*, a collaboration with Chicago singer/songwriter Michael Smith, also a multi-

Joseph Jefferson Award winner; the Foothill Theater Company this fall. He directed the world premiere of *Almost Heaven* at the Denver Center Theater Company in 2001. He is presently writing a new musical with Irish singer and composer Melanie O'Reilly about Irish women who emigrated to the United States in the 19th century. Glazer is an Associate Professor in the Department of Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, where he will be directing the Howard Baker's *Seven Leaps* this season. He is a member of Actors' Equity Association, the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers, and sits on the Governing Board of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives. His book *Radical Nostalgia* has recently been published by the University of Rochester Press.

Randal Myler (*Director*) Broadway: *It Ain't Nothin' But The Blues* (Tony Award nomination-Director/Co-Author). Off-Broadway: *Hank Williams: Lost Highway* (Director/Co-Author -- Outer Critic's Circle nomination 'Best Director'); *Love, Janis* (Over 750 performances at the Village Theater), *Dream A Little Dream* (Director -- with original Mamas And The Papas lead singer Denny Dougherty), both the musical *The Immigrant* (Director) and the coal mining musical *Fire On The Mountain* (Director/Co-Author). His numerous other directorial credits include most regional theatres in America, among them The Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Denver Center, Mark Taper Forum, Seattle Repertory, The Old Globe, Arena Stage, Cincinnati Playhouse, Royal George Theatre, Northlight Theatre, Geffen Playhouse, Arizona Theatre Company, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Meadowbrook Theatre, Crossroads Theater, The Barter Theater, the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville, B.B. King's, Dodger Stages, Manhattan Ensemble Theater, New Victory Theater in New York City, Cleveland Playhouse, Kansas City Rep and many others.

Jeff Waxman (Orchestrations/Vocal Arrangements) has worked in New York as a musical director, arranger, composer, musician and producer for over 25 years. He owns Dancing Bull Music and Waxtrax Recording where he produces and composes music for television and film (commercials, television themes, documentaries, etc.) and for pop, rock, folk and country artists. Jeff received a Grammy nomination for producing the cast album of the Broadway Musical *Doonesbury*, which he also arranged, conducted and musical directed. Other Broadway work includes *Gorey Stories*, *The Cherry Orchard* at Lincoln Center and *Into The Light*. Jeff received a Drama Desk nomination for his orchestrations for the hit Off-Broadway Musical, *Woody Guthrie's American Song*. For his work in the cabaret field Jeff was honored with a *Back Stage* Bistro Award for outstanding musical direction. For more information please visit www.dancingbullmusic.com.

Kelly Tighe (*Scenic Designer*) has been an Artist in Residence at Center REP since 1993, and has worked with various theatre companies nationwide. REP highlights include: *Summer and Smoke*, *Senior Class*, *Pygmalion*, *The Pavilion*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Suds: The Rockin' 60s Musical Soap Opera*, *Arsenic and Old Lace*, *The Real Thing*, and *Man of the Moment*. Awards include Drama Logue, Shellie, Dean Goodman

and Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle. Mr. Tighe resides in New York City.

Tobin Ost (*Costume Designer*) Broadway: *Brooklyn The Musical* (costume design and associate set design). Off-Broadway: *Zanna-Don't!* (set and costume design) and *Fighting Words* for the Underwood Theater Company. Other New York credits: Schiller's *Don Carlos* for Prospect Theater Company and *Little Man* for the Ohio Theater. Regional: *Himself and Nora* for the Old Globe, San Diego (set and costume design); *Gemini - The Musical* for the Prince Music Theater, Philadelphia; *Richard II* for the Shakespeare Theater of New Jersey; *Four Saints in Three Acts* for the Yale School of Music; *Rice Boy* for Yale Repertory Theater; *Breaking Up is Hard to Do* for Capital Repertory Theater, Albany and most recently *Elegies* for Barrington Stage Company. Tobin is a graduate of the Yale School of Drama.

Don Darnutzer (*Lighting Designer*) Mr. Darnutzer designed the lighting for the Tony nominated (Best Musical) Broadway show *It Ain't Nothin' But The Blues* when it performed at the Ambassador Theatre and at the Vivian Beaumont Theater at Lincoln Center. He also designed the Off-Broadway show *Lost Highway* that appeared at the Manhattan Ensemble Theatre and the Little Shubert Theatre in New York City. He also designed the Off-Broadway musical *The Immigrant* that performed at the Dodger Stages Theatre. He has worked for The Denver Center Theatre Company, Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Mark Taper Forum, B.B. King's Blues Club (New York City), The Shakespeare Theatre (Washington DC), The American Conservatory Theatre (San Francisco), The Arena Stage (Washington DC), Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, The Old Globe Theater, The Alley Theater (Houston), Geffen Playhouse (Los Angeles), Seattle Repertory Theatre.

Lewis Mead (*Sound Designer*) Original founder of ProMix Audio had his roots in Community Theater and has now designed the audio for several Broadway Shows. Included are *Wonderful Town*, *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *Reefer Madness* and *Urinetown*. Now as a Director for Syntonic Design Group, he is working in Corporate and Event audio as well as theatrical audio.

Jan Hartley (*Projection Designer*) Ms. Hartley has previously worked with Randal Myler on *Dream A Little Dream* and *1933*. She has just completed *Miracle Brothers* at the Vineyard Theatre with Tina Landau. Recently she has worked with Francesca Zambello on *Die Walkure* at Washington DC Opera and is currently working on the complete *Ring Cycle* with Ms. Zambello for the same company. She has also collaborated with the Theatre

de Complicite on *The Noise of Time*, and has been a member of Ping Chong & Co. since 1983. She has worked on Broadway, off-Broadway and in many Regional theaters. Ms. Hartley has received a Drama Desk for *Bunny, Bunny* and an Obie for sustained excellence in projection design.

Charlie Alterman (*Musical Director*) has worked on the Broadway shows *Brooklyn The Musical* and *Avenue Q*. He musical directed the National Tour of *Grease* (starring Frankie Avalon), and Off-Broadway's *Secrets Every Smart Traveler Should Know* (cast album). Regional work includes Charles Strouse's *You Never Know* (world premiere, Trinity Rep) and eight seasons with the Williamstown Theatre Festival on such shows as Noel Coward's *Tonight at 8:30* (directed by Michael Greif), *Cabaret and Main* (directed by Christopher Ashley), and *The Matchmaker* (directed by Nicholas Martin) and the acclaimed late night cabaret series hosted by Lewis Black. Working in both the theatre and cabaret worlds, his concert appearances include shows with Dana Reeve, Billy Porter, Carol Woods, and Ken Page.

Jeff Collister* (*Production Stage Manager*) This begins Jeff's eleventh season as Production Manager for Center REP. He has Stage Managed 40 productions since starting with the company in 1989. Favorites include *Becoming Memories*, *Suds: The Rockin' 60's Musical Soap Opera*, *Godspell*, *The Mystery Of Edwin Drood*, and the numerous productions of *A Christmas Carol*. Last summer Jeff directed the sold-out run of *Grease* for Contra Costa Musical Theatre. He worked as Production Stage Manager for *Dame Edna-The Royal Tour* in San Francisco. Jeff is a Shellie Award winning actor. He would like to thank his family and friends for their love and support and knows that Mom is still watching out for him.

Harold Thau (*Producer*) has produced theatre in New York, London, Los Angeles, and Aspen. His recent credits include the productions of *Bombay Dreams* and *Tuesdays With Morrie* in New York City, David Mamet's *Glen Garry Glen Ross*, Sam Shephard's *True West*, Stephen Poliakoff's *Breaking The Silence*, *Camille*, *Beirut*, *Love Letters*, *Swim Visit*, *The Flying Brothers Karamazov*, and Sid Caesar & Company, *Does Anybody Know What I'm Talking About*. Mr. Thau was Executive Producer of the television production of A.J. Gurney's *The Dining Room*, *True West*, and *Heartbreak House*. Mr. Thau is the producer of *Almost Heaven - John Denver's America* which premiered in Denver, CO in April 2002 through February, 2004.

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CENTER REPERTORY COMPANY ANNOUNCES ITS 2005-2006 SEASON

The Women
 by Clare Boothe Luce
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A Christmas Carol
 by Charles Dickens
 Dec 8 - 18, 2005

Around the World in 80 Days
 by Jules Verne
 Feb 2 - Mar 4, 2006

Desire Under the Elms
 by Eugene O'Neill
 Mar 23 - Apr 22, 2006

Laughter on the 23rd Floor
 by Neil Simon
 May 18 - Jun 17, 2006

Shirley Valentine
 by Willy Russell
 Jun 29 - Jul 29, 2006