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SPEAKERS

Buddy Johnston

B

Buddy Johnston 00:01

And right now we're speaking to Larry lash with Paula door records. Larry is the producer of the wonderful soundtrack album Torch Song Trilogy, joining us by phone in New York and Larry, what's your position with Paula door?

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00:13

Well, that's a good question. I am sort of making a change right now. For the past seven years, I've been primarily involved with legal and business affairs. But I come from a background in theatre and music and opera, specifically. And in those seven frustrating years, working with lawyers and managers, and contracts have been very slowly but surely convincing the company that I do have something to offer. As far as you know, my knowledge of music, and they've been letting me do a couple of projects here and there. About two years ago, I pretty much took over our theater catalog, produced a couple of albums and started doing some art direction. Pretty much on a fluke, I wound up going to Los Angeles on literally three hours notice. Essentially, put together the background score for the film of Torch Song Trilogy. And also wound up taking over the production of the soundtrack album,

B

Buddy Johnston 01:29

which is now available in record stores everywhere. We hope and how's the sales of the album coming along?

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01:34

It's doing pretty respectably. I think we shipped out around 23,000 copies before. The initial order was 23,000 copies. And that was with the movie just playing in eight cities, eight major markets. And in the past week, it's open, I think, I think it's now got a total of 44 screens across

the country, which is still not a huge distribution, but it's from what I understand holding up very well at the box office. You

 Buddy Johnston 02:09

produced the album Larry or CO produced the album, I CO produced

 02:12

the album with Peter Matthews, who has been in the industry for Oh, my goodness, guess about 30 years. Peter, started in New York working on Broadway musicals, doing orchestrations and where they would throw the rehearsal pianist, a couple of numbers for the dance sequence to orchestrate. And Peter has worked his way up to virtually a household word in the industry, at least in LA. I think you'll find if you look at just about any Barbra Streisand Album that he's worked on, almost all of them I think, for the past 25 years. He's got a shelf full of what's the TV award? I can't remember all I can think of his Grammy Emmy Award, Emmy Awards for working on TV specials and things and Peter was hired to do the original underscoring for Torch Song and the orchestrations of the numbers that were performed by the cast of the film.

 Buddy Johnston 03:18

How did Paula Dora and subsequently Larry lash become involved in the project?

 03:24

See what exactly happened? The whole procedure on this back in God? I guess it was April. Ron Fierstein, who is Harvey's brother and lawyer and agent and manager approached Polygram, about doing background music for the movie because we have one of the largest catalogs of jazz recordings from the 30s. Through the 60s, we on the verge of catalog in the old embassy catalog, I mean, the best of Ella Fitzgerald, Dinah Washington, Billie Holiday, Oscar Peterson, all the really great names in jazz from those decades. So Ron approached us and our West Coast office decided that this was, as they put it, a last project if they ever saw one. And I was essentially brought in as a consultant to towards some productions in New Line Cinema. And working with Harvey and his brother and Paul Bogart, who directed the film and Howard Godfrey to produce it. We put together a list of God, I think we came up with about 48 titles of toward songs initially. And then I did research and came up with a list of every single artist that recorded those songs that Polygram had rights to. We had pages and pages of this stuff. And then we sat down and went through and narrowed it down and I came up With four hours of cassette tapes that I submitted to them that they then used on the set when they were filming to set the mood, and they shot the whole movie over just a couple of weeks this summer, they did a couple of weeks of location shots in New York. And then most of it was done then in California, and I think principal photography was completed in August. So I had this flutter of activity in April in May trying to get all this stuff together. And then everything was quiet. And I thought, Well, that's it. That's my involvement, period, pick what they want from those four hours. And that's it. But then I started getting calls, frantic calls from Edward Godfried in September saying, oh, TV really liked the song, but we don't like the way Sarah Vaughn sings.

Have you got anybody else doing it? So then I'd have to go back and research and see if I could come up with something else. And then finally, one day, I got home from work. And there was a message in my machine to call Howard. And I did and he said, where are you? I said, Well, I'm at home. I left the office a little early today. Why aren't you here? You're supposed to be at a screening tonight. And I said, Well, that's news to me, nobody got in touch with me. Turns out I had missed an earlier call from LA that day. And quite literally, I was on a flight for LA three hours later. And it turns out that they were in the process of editing the movie, this is now the first or second week of October. And they were finding that although a lot of this music from these four hours of tapes that I put together, worked really well on paper or worked when they were doing the shooting, when they were actually laying the tracks down on the master film. It wasn't working at all. Either the dialogue was getting in the way and they needed instrumental versions or something about the vocal performance was too distinctive, and it drew your attention away too much from the film or things just weren't working out. And Peter had really only been hired to do the original music. And so they really had no one acting as music supervisors. So I spent about 10 days out there working literally around the clock. I mean, I got the phone call. First thing I did was to grab a suitcase and fill it with compact discs. And my first day out there, I sat in Peters office, and we looked at the rough cut of the movie. And we pinpointed all of the music cues, I guess there were 40 separate cues throughout the movie where we needed music. And then we tried to figure out where we could use an existing recording where Peter would write original music. Do we need a vocal? Do we need an Instrumental Jazz? Should it be disco? Do we need to set a time period? And what sort of feeling do we want? I then went back to the hotel with a shortstop at Tower Records were charged up a couple of 100 bucks and set up all night and spread everything out and sat there with my little headsets on and came up with ideas for all of these different music

B

Buddy Johnston 08:23

theory. What about the film itself Torch Song Trilogy?

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08:26

I'm very, very proud to be associated with it. I think probably the best single element about it is Harvey's adaptation. Of his play the transference from stage from a four hour stage play to a two hour and 10 minute film, I think is brilliant. And I think it will be a sin if he does not get a nomination for Best adaptation of a screenplay. I think the performances down the line art are incredible. Again, I'm very, very proud to be associated with it. And I think it's a very important film. The one thing that all of us have in common down the line, everybody who came into contact with this movie from Anne Bancroft, down the line is that we believed in it very, very strongly. It was very much a labor of love. Larry,

B

Buddy Johnston 09:19

I want to thank you for taking the time to talk with us and for sending us through Paula door and Polygram Records copies of the soundtrack album and cassette and CD to give away to our listeners. So thanks a lot. Oh,



09:33

no problem. More than happy to word of mouth is going to have a lot to do with the success of both this movie and the album.



Buddy Johnston 09:43

And before I let you go I want to take the time to say thanks one more time to you Larry for taking the time to send us the soundtrack albums and cassettes to give away and I hope the album does very well. It's a beautiful piece of work Torch Song Trilogy, the original soundtrack album we're speaking to Larry live She's co producer of the album in New York. And Larry, just for you, I'd like to play this little song from the LP by Kate swift and Paul James. It's called, can't we be friends?



10:11

Terrific. Thank you so much, buddy.



Buddy Johnston 10:14

And you're listening to after hours on KPFT Houston, 90.1 FM. And right now on after hours, we're talking to Joe, what's your name again? Joe. What's your name? Joe watts. Right.



10:34

Direct whatever you say. Director of the GRU at this hour? Who knows?



Buddy Johnston 10:40

Workshop? What do you mean at this hour and give me a break? It's Thursday night and we're there live on tape. So you're not here. I'm the one that's here running to think I was wishing I was. Anyway, along with Bart Loesser here this morning talking about safe sex and the AIDS Foundation Joe's producing a play at Center for positive lifestyle, right? No, no. Okay, where is it?



11:07

I'm directing it. Okay, who's producing it out there presenter for



Buddy Johnston 11:11

a positive lifestyle. Ron and the folks down there.



11:13

So you do Ron Davis, the director of the Center. Tell



Buddy Johnston 11:17

us about the play Joe.



11:21

Okay. It was written by Jeff Hager Doran who wrote the first theater piece in America about AIDS, which I did at First Unitarian Church in 1985. And it was revived in the spring of 86. Anyway, Jeff's written this insane little one act called the layman's guide to safe sex. It's a comedy. It's very entertaining, but it's very full of real and pertinent information about safe sex.



Buddy Johnston 11:57

Okay, let's listen to the first thing now.



11:59

Sure. Do you remember when the scariest thing about love was sex? It seems like it's completely turned around.



12:06

Turn around and look at me. Don't you feel anything for me? God? Yes. No, you don't.



12:12

I love you.



12:13

You don't love me at all. If you really loved me, you'd say yes. No. Why not?



12:17

Because it's dangerous.

B

Buddy Johnston 12:19

Haven't you always loved danger? Yes,

♂

12:22

danger. The excitement it causes. I love it.

♂

12:25

I hate it. Oh, come

♂

12:26

on. Didn't you love doing it in your bedroom when your parents were in the living room watching TV? Wasn't it great. Trying not to get caught? It didn't it does love that fear. No. Oh, you can't fool me. It was fun. And you know it. Okay.

♂

12:39

Okay. It was sort of fun worrying about getting caught. But that's not the same thing as worrying about catching something.

♂

12:47

What makes you think it'll be dangerous?

♂

12:49

I don't want to catch something. What do you think you'll catch? Do you want to listen? Yes. Okay. AIDS, herpes, gonorrhea.

♂

12:58

Do I really look like someone who would have something like that?

♂

13:03

I have a confession to make. I got my first case of clap from a priest.



13:08

My swore to me he was the Virgin fiance. How



Buddy Johnston 13:12

do you duty?



13:13

How do you duty that was



13:15

a costume party. Let's face it. You can't just go on the basis of what people look like or if they're rich or poor, or young or old. I mean, the majority of people who have AIDS in the United States are gay males. But this does not mean that all of them are



13:30

great. Tease me until I and then just you know what, you are smart.



13:37

The most positive way anyone has not catching a sexually transmitted disease is to not have sex. No,



13:46

thanks. It's that simple. You could have been on my side, you know, I



13:50

am on your side. Sure. There are other options. Like what?



13:55

spending the rest of my life masturbating to dirty magazines? Why not? Lots of us? Are I not a robot or something? I'm a human being. And I'm not going to spend the rest of my life just masturbating. No way.



14:08

You don't like masturbating? No, I don't.



14:11

You're a terrible liar.



14:12

I'm not lying. I don't like masturbating. I don't. Much. Well, it's just not like the real thing. Uh huh. Now we know what the real problem is. I can't help it. Sometimes. I really want to Jaime I really really want to. It's like I have to. How would you ever felt that way?



14:34

No. It looks like he's not the only terrible liar. Here was that. A robber?



14:42

I ain't using one of those. You



14:43

will if you love me, watch.



14:46

It's not just yourself. You're protecting here. It's the person you love.



14:50

So tell me do you really love me? Really, really love me? No, I do enough to make sure nothing happens to me of course. Well,



15:00

you mean if I, then you?



15:06

Thanks. When I came out,

 Buddy Johnston 15:08

I thought one of the big advantages of being gay was that you

 15:11

didn't have to wear rubbers.

 15:13

The first rubber I ever saw was hefty bag green. Really? I mean, there was this man with this tiny little hefty bag where no wonder he wanted to do it in the dark.

 15:27

This is very embarrassing, but Well, I don't know how to use one. Why? No one ever told me how

 Buddy Johnston 15:35

we're back with Joe Watts and the group Theater Workshop talking about a new production going on at the Center for positive lifestyle. That play is called the layman's guide to safe sex. And it's running.

 15:50

It's going to open February the fourth which is a Saturday night, and it's gonna run for six consecutive Saturday evenings at the Center for a positive lifestyle, which is located which is in the heart of Montrose at 1505. Nevada. It's right down the street from our house, Nevada at Commonwealth is there a gate charge? Yeah, and it's very nominal fee of nominal that's very nominal to

 Buddy Johnston 16:16

so it's a lot of fun for tickets or reservations they need to call

 16:19

either or. Oh, yeah, either that me either it's either five to six, I mean five to six. Love or, oh you heard the either the either is five to six love that or is 5222204

you heard the stories the stories is five to six love that is is BEEEEEY.