

Boston Cabaret

as part of its "My Boston" show as well as "Sunday with Liz Walker" on WBZ-TV. She has been a featured guest of WBZ-Radio host Jordan Rich for several years.

O'Shaughnessy has three CD's, "The Way I See It," "Live At Scullers," and "Ring-A-Ding-Ding....The Music of the Rat Pack," all of which have received rave

retro show "Stuff in the Box Provincetown, The Early Years" in 2004. Carol is also an accomplished actress and has performed as Matron "Mama" Morton in the Worcester Foothills Theatre productions of Chicago. O'Shaughnessy cruised with RSVP Travel on the Star Clipper to the Mediterranean as well as a riverboat cruise the summer of 2006 to Budapest, Vienna, and Prague. This past July, Ms. O' emceed the New Roseland Ballroom in Taunton, Mass.

Upcoming Open Mikes

Friday, November 14 - CCAE Event Code CN14,
host and accompanist TBA

Friday, December 5 - CCAE Event Code CD05,
host and accompanist TBA

BACA/CCAЕ Cabaret Open Mikes

All Open Mikes take place at the Blacksmith House, 56 Brattle St, Cambridge, MA. They are co-sponsored by Cambridge Center for Adult Education and thus have CCAE Event Code numbers. Doors open at 7:00 P.M. for sign-up, and singing starts at 7:30 P.M. Prices for each are \$12, \$10 for BACA members.

Advance tickets are available from CCAE at 617-547-6789 x1 or at the door.

reviews. Carol appeared in Provincetown with her fabulous



WRITING AN ORIGINAL SONG: WHERE DO WE BEGIN?

**Featured Songwriter,
Dennis Livingston**

1. *What led you to be songwriter?*

Many members of the BACA community are accomplished songwriters. Until this year, however, BACA had never provided a showcase for its talent. On May 24, 2008, the First Annual BACA Songwriting Showcase was born. It was an exciting, well-attended show that we hope can continue as an annual event.

We polled some of our composers/lyricists to find out how they get words and music on paper. Many collaborate on lyrics, and/or music, while others write both. Since answers to our questionnaire varied greatly, we'd like to feature a BACA songwriter in each of our newsletters. Maybe they'll inspire some of you to express yourself in lyrics and melodies.

machine. Less often, a good title or some phrases will come to mind first.

Livingston, Featured Songwriter continued

I decided in mid-life that I wanted to try, after avoiding the temptation of entering the same field as my father¹ all my life. Actually, my first effort was a children's musical about dinosaurs, since I wanted to do something involving science. Once that was done and I experienced how hard it is to market original musicals, I decided doing standalone songs was more practical – you don't wait years to get a result!

2. *Why did you pick "cabaret" as a field or market to associate with?*

It seemed the best fit for someone with an intellectual bent who liked playing with words and using songs for storytelling. I couldn't think of any other pop genre that would accommodate my style, though I sure wouldn't mind having a crossover hit in the adult contemporary market.

3. *How did you start writing music?*

I went to a songwriting class! I believe it was taught by Berklee's John Braheny. I knew I had to learn something about the craft of organizing words and music and, in fact, used every lesson to write my first cabaret song, "It's Time for Roses."

4. *Which comes first, music or lyrics?*

The phone call. I forget who gave that as his standard answer to this common question, but seriously, it can be either since I do both. However, as a piano-trained person, I usually start by playing around with tunes that often just pop into my head. When this happens on the road, I sing them into my cell phone to the answering

¹ Dennis' father, Jerry Livingston (1909-1987), was one of the leading songwriters from the Tin Pan Alley and big band years of the 1930s until the coming of rock n' roll in the 1960's. Some of his most popular works were "Mairzy Doats," "The Twelfth of Never," along with the score for Walt Disney's Cinderella, and other movie and television theme songs (including "77 Sunset Strip.") He was elected to the Songwriters' Hall of Fame in 1980.

5. *Do you sit down every day and write?*

I try to, no matter how little, 'cause it's a good habit. But in reality days or even weeks can pass sometimes. I always feel uneasy when I'm away from the piano for a long time, it's a real pull.

6. *What, if anything, inspires you to write a song?*

Royalties. Sorry, another answer the old time guys would give. Inspiration can come from a good title, a phrase I hear someone say, a tune that decides to make itself known, a trip, a piece of history or a novel that I want to use.

7. *Do you collaborate with other songwriters? How does that work?*

I didn't in my first years. But in the past two years, I've consciously searched for compatible collaborators and found a few people who, so far, supply me with lyrics to use with my music. It's just a matter of getting out more songs more efficiently than you can working alone; also getting another perspective. The process has been long distance so far – email to exchange lyrics, I use Apple's GarageBand to easily record a tune that I convert to MP3

and email to collaborator for comment. We go back and forth that way, for however long it takes.

8. *What do you do with your songs, once they are written?*

I always hire a good singer and go to a studio for a professional demo recording – most often using Doug Hammer as the pianist and recording engineer (I don't perform). The result is something that is "broadcast-ready," though it might not have all the bells and whistles you would want for a commercial release. My web guy puts the demo on my website. I also convert the audio to an MP3 and notate the sheet music in Sibelius. I convert that to a pdf for easy mailing to anyone interested. Then, I market.

9. *How do you market your material?*

My website (www.dennislivingston.com) is my major tool for promo. I use it to direct performers I contact to consider particular songs that might interest them. Some performers I know from going to shows, but in most cases, I scour postings to the email lists of cabaret groups I belong to and read Cabaret Scenes magazine religiously.



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