

## Words don't fail songwriter David

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You aren't much of a songwriter if there isn't a revue out there that crams your biggest hits into two hours of song and dance.

The golden oldies have 'em - Cole Porter (*Red, Hot & Cole*), Irving Berlin (*Melodies of Irving Berlin*), Rodgers and Hammerstein (*A Grand Night for Singing*). The jazz greats have 'em - Duke Ellington (*Sophisticated Ladies*), Fats Waller (*Ain't Misbehavin'*). The rockers have 'em - Billy Joel (*Movin' Out*), Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller (*Smoky Joe's Cafe*), the Beatles (*Twist and Shout*).

Now, Burt Bacharach and Hal David have one.

The Oscar-winning duo have combined their talents with the resources of Theater League to create *Love, Sweet Love*, which opens its world-premiere tour Nov. 20 at the Mesa Arts Center and then moves to downtown's Orpheum Theatre on Nov. 23.

Beginning with the pair's first hits, Marty Robbins' *The Story of My Life* and Perry Como's *Magic Moments*, the show charts their climb to the top with *What the World Needs Now*, *Alfie*, *One Less Bell to Answer*, *This Guy's in Love With You*, *Message to Michael*, *Wishin' and Hopin'*, *What's New Pussycat?*, *I'll Never Fall in Love Again*, *Close to You*, *The Look of Love* and the Oscar-winning *Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head*.

And that, producer Mark Edelman says with a laugh, "is just for starters."

It was Edelman's deep admiration for the songs that led to the creation of *Love, Sweet Love*.

"Besides the fact that many of them were No. 1 hits, these songs are the perfect vehicle for musical theater," he says. "Each Hal David lyric is a wonderful, self-contained story about love - whether lost, found, dreamed about or realized."

David, a spry 86 and still writing his wry, romantic lyrics, met Bacharach, 79, when a music executive introduced them in New York's legendary Brill Building in 1957. The Brill was ground zero for pop culture of the day, with Phil Spector, Neil Sedaka, Carole King, Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil, Jeff Barry and Ellie Greenwich and Leiber and Stoller roaming the halls.

"Don't ask me to define it, but there was a chemistry there that's still around today," David says.

He recently was in a reminiscent mood about his partnership.

**Question:** What was your working arrangement with Burt?

**Answer:** We met every day in our office in the Brill Building. It could go two ways. He'd play me some of his music and then I would produce lyrics that might go with it - or I would hand him something I'd written and he would sit down and work out a melody. Sometimes we would be working on three songs at once. **Q:** What gave the partnership its juice?

**A:** All I can tell you is that his music brought out the best in me - and I would like to think I brought out the best in him. Some partners thrive on discord - but we were friends from the start and remained so all the way through. I looked forward to seeing him each day.

**Q:** It seems like every song the two of you wrote was an immediate hit. True?

**A:** Of course, I would like to say yes, but I'm afraid the actual answer is not always. We wrote *Close to You* in the early '60s, but it didn't become a hit until the Carpenters recorded it in 1970. And one of my favorite songs is *The Time for Getting Married*, which we wrote for the Broadway musical *Promises, Promises*.

Everybody loved that song. It was always a hit when we played it in our living rooms. It was meant to be sung by a group of secretaries but, as the show took shape, the roles of the secretaries kept getting cut back. Suddenly, having a song for them didn't make any sense. . . . I've always liked it so much, but nobody really knows it.

**Q:** Is that the favorite of all your songs?

**A:** No, I'd have to say that *Alfie* remains the one I'm most partial to - although, in recent years, I've become very fond of *What the World Needs Now (Is Love, Sweet Love)*. It seems relevant to these times we're living in.

**Q:** Probably no singer is more closely associated with your songs than Dionne Warwick. What was your relationship like?

**A:** I'll never forget the day she walked into our office. She came in wearing jeans that were torn at the knee and asked if she could do demo records for us. That voice! It was magic. When I heard her do the demo for *Make It Easy on Yourself*, I told her, "My God, Dionne, the next time we write a song . . . "

**Q:** That song was *Don't Make Me Over*. After that, Dionne went on to turn 19 of your tunes into Top 40 hits. Who can forget her versions of *Walk on By*, *What the World Needs Now*, *Message to Michael*, *I Say a Little Prayer* and *Do You Know the Way to San Jose*?

**A:** She was the singer who instinctively knew how to perform our songs. Her influence was profound. I would hear her voice in my mind and ear when I was writing a lyric. I'm sure Burt did the same. Would we have been as successful without her? Maybe. A lot of artists had hits with our music. But I do believe she took us to another level. If I brought out the best in Burt and he in me then she did in us.

**Q:** Your one big Broadway hit was *Promises, Promises* in 1968. Neil Simon wrote the book, Michael Bennett did the choreography, Jerry Orbach was the star and the score gave us two Bacharach-David classics, *I'll Never Fall in Love Again* and the title tune. With all those egos, was it tough to pull together?

**A:** You know, I was never worried about that show. It felt like a hit right from the start - and with artists like that, how could it not have been a hit? That was a great time in my life. Walking down

Broadway and seeing my name in lights - it made me feel good all over.

**Q:** Do you still get a kick from hearing your songs performed?

**A:** You bet I do. I turn on the radio and there's one of our things, or the television's on and I hear something we wrote. Now, a lot of new people are going to be exposed to the songs with *Love, Sweet Love*. Those are pieces of me out there - and to know that people love them . . . well, there really aren't words to explain how I feel."

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