AMERICAN CONSERVATORY THEATER
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PRESENTS

WORDS on PLAYS

INSIGHT INTO THE PLAY, THE PLAYWRIGHT, AND THE PRODUCTION

A Night with Janis Joplin

Written and Directed by Randy Johnson

The Geary Theater
June 7–July 2, 2017

Words on Plays Volume XXIII, No. 7

Made possible by
Jewels of Charity

Additional support provided by
Bank of America, Bank of the West, Deloitte, Kimball Family Foundation, PG&E, The Sato Foundation, The Stanley S. Langendorf Foundation, Theatre Forward, Union Bank Foundation, US Bank, the Vermut Education Fund, and Wells Fargo

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Table of Contents

COVER Kacee Clanton in *A Night with Janis Joplin*. Photo by Mark and Tracy Photography. Design by Sara Morales.

OPPOSITE Fantasy Fair, Mill Valley, 1967. Photo by Elaine Mayes. Courtesy of the artist. Featured in *On the Road to the Summer of Love*, on view at the California Historical Society May 12 through September 10, 2017.

Overview of *A Night with Janis Joplin*

A Night with Janis Joplin, directed by Randy Johnson, opened at the Lyceum Theatre on Broadway in October 2013. Mary Bridget Davies, who played Janis Joplin, was nominated for a Tony Award for her performance. The production then commenced a national tour that ran from February 2016 through April 2016.

Creative Team

Choreographer ..... Patricia Wilcox
Scenic Designer ..... Rob Bissinger
Costume Designer ..... Amy Clark
Lighting Designers ..... Mike Baldassari and Gertjan Houben
Sound Designer ..... Ben Selke
Projection Designer ..... Darrel Maloney
Wig Designer ..... Leah Loukas
Music Director ..... Todd Olson
Original Music Arrangements ..... Len Rhodes

Characters and Cast

Janis Joplin ..... Kacee Clanton
Joplinaire, Blues Singer, Chantel ..... Sharon Catherine Brown
Joplinaire, Aretha Franklin, Nina Simone, Blues Woman, Chantel ..... Ashley Támar Davis
Joplinaire, Etta James, Chantel ..... Tawny Dolley
Joplinaire, Odetta, Bessie Smith, Chantel ..... Sylvia MacCalla
Janis Joplin Alternate ..... Kelly McIntyre

Synopsis

Over the course of a concert featuring more than 25 songs, Janis Joplin reflects on her journey from growing up in a Texas oil town to becoming a successful rock star playing to huge crowds. She is joined by five singers who perform together as her backing vocalists, the Joplinaires. These singers also play the individual artists—Bessie Smith, Odetta, Nina Simone, Aretha Franklin, and Etta James—who inspired Joplin's voice, her creativity, and her love of the blues.

OPPOSITE Kacee Clanton in *A Night with Janis Joplin*. Photo by Joan Marcus.

Now performing opposite Etta James in the song "Tell Mama," Joplin sings about her loneliness as a teenager and how much she needed people to love her. Recalling her youth and the start of her own musical journey, she talks about the girl groups of the 1950s, such as the Chantels. She remembers the Broadway musicals—*My Fair Lady*, *West Side Story*, and *Hello, Dolly!*—that she and her siblings, Laura and Michael, would listen to while doing their family chores at home in Port Arthur, Texas. And she muses on her own early artistic and intellectual interests, with a father who inspired her love of reading; she'd go to the library and, instead of borrowing teenage mystery novels, take out books on art.

During her years at college in Austin, Joplin recalls singing in a small-time hillbilly group called the Waller Creek Boys and meeting music promoter Chet Helms. He persuaded her to hitchhike with him to San Francisco, where he arranged for her to be the lead singer of Big Brother and the Holding Company. When she experienced the rush of performing in front of a big crowd, she tells us, she was hooked.

Joplin discusses the blues, how it's created and stirred by all our unfulfilled longings, from needing a partner to thirsting for a bottle of wine. She remembers how moved she was by listening to Nina Simone's "Little Girl Blue," a memory tied up with her own recollection of sharing a childhood room with her sister, Laura.

Musing on the energy a performer receives from a live audience, Joplin tells a story about a female opera singer who receives a marriage proposal from an audience member. The diva takes her suitor backstage to hear the applause, asking him, "Do you think you could give me that?" No man, Joplin says, could ever compete with that outpouring of love. Joplin segues into a song about a man who leaves her, traveling far away to find himself. Considering her own restlessness—the part of her personality that fuels her blues—she thinks back to her middle-class upbringing, to having a regular job and owning a car but remaining dissatisfied. Then she sings "Me and Bobby McGee," a song about losing a lover.

After revealing to the audience that she's working on a new album, she reflects on how success hasn't affected her; she's still the same lonely young woman from Texas who tells the truth both to herself and the people around her. She says she identifies with author Zelda Fitzgerald, who lived life at breakneck speed and wanted to share that experience with her husband, F. Scott Fitzgerald. Joplin says that people ask her about dying young, but she's committed to her career and her lifestyle. Onstage, she admits, is the only time when she doesn't feel lonely.

Living in the Now

A Biography of Janis Joplin

By Shannon Stockwell

Janis Joplin was born on January 19, 1943, in Port Arthur, Texas. She was the oldest of three children. According to her sister, Laura, Janis was a bright and happy child with a stubborn streak; one hot summer night Janis refused her father's request to pick up her toys outside, sitting with him amid clouds of mosquitoes for two hours before complying.

The family was solidly middle class. Dorothy, the matriarch of the family, loved singing, so the Joplin house was always full of music, especially on laundry day when everyone would pitch in and clean. Joplin also sang in church and in her school's glee club, but what most interested her were the visual arts—drawing and painting. She soon became an illustrator for *The Driftwood*, her school's literary magazine.

Joplin fit in easily during elementary and middle school, but it wasn't as easy in high school. She had acne, hit puberty late, and was overweight. In addition, she was realizing that the town's moral code was hypocritical; people held very specific beliefs about what made a "proper" lady, but prostitution and gambling were advertised openly on giant billboards. Throughout her life, Janis believed that the worst thing a person could be was a hypocrite, and if that's what the citizens of Port Arthur were, then she didn't want to fit in with them.

She still longed for friends, however, and she found a group of theater kids—mostly boys—that accepted her. She painted sets for them, and they all talked about the problems of mainstream society. The group of students she had chosen were heavily influenced by the beats, members of a '50s subculture that rejected such popular social norms as consumerism and conformity. Instead, the beats valued authenticity and personal freedom and expressed their beliefs through literature and poetry. Joplin and her new friends traded and devoured works by such writers as Jack Kerouac and Lawrence Ferlinghetti. Throughout her life, even after the beat subculture was replaced by hippies, Joplin would refer to herself as a "beatnik."

Although the beat scene mostly revolved around literature, music was also vital. Joplin and her friends would spend their days driving around and listening to records. The songs they played were mainly folk, a genre that featured much of the musical revolution that was happening during the 1950s. One time, her high school friends

An oil refinery in Port Arthur, Texas. Photo by Robert Yarnall Richie, 1956. Courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

remember, they were all singing along to a song by folk singer Odetta. Joplin was tired of them butchering it, so she broke out singing in a voice that sounded exactly like Odetta's. "Guess what?" she said. "I can sing."

Joplin began to drink during her junior year of high school. Although the drinking age in Texas was 21, she and her friends could usually find someone to buy them a six-pack. And they only lived a short drive away from the border of Louisiana, where the drinking age was 18. Louisiana wasn't just a place to get a drink, however; it was a new way of life. Music was everywhere. Joplin avoided the whites-only music halls, preferring the sincerity of black musicians. She adopted black vernacular language in her own vocabulary, calling cool people "cats," saying "ain't," and punctuating sentences with "man."

Joplin developed a distinctive style, always looking for creative ways to flout her school's dress code; sometimes she showed up in purple leotards. Her outfits were the subject of many arguments with her mother. But there was no winning against Joplin. Once she set her mind to something, she would make it happen, no matter how much society was against her.

In Port Arthur in the 1950s and '60s, high school seniors were expected to go off to college, and Joplin did just that, enrolling in Lamar State College of Technology to study art. She only lasted a semester; because the college catered mostly to engineering students, it didn't provide the artistic community she was looking for. She moved back

home and, at the request of her mother, signed up to take secretarial courses. She only attended nineteen days of class out of the four months she was enrolled. Instead, Joplin spent her days listening to music and her evenings partying with friends.

But eventually, Joplin's friends started moving on to bigger things, and her parents wanted her to find some kind of respectable ambition. So, they sent her off to Los Angeles to live with her two aunts, and she got a job as a keypunch operator at a telephone company.

Joplin fell in love with Los Angeles—not with the telephone company, but with the neighborhood of Venice, which had been the epicenter of the Southern Californian beat scene in the mid-'50s. By the late '50s, it was past its prime, but Joplin didn't care. She moved there and spent her time in the artsy coffee shops, which also functioned as art galleries and performance venues for poetry readings and concerts. There, she heard about the North Beach scene in San Francisco, where Bay Area beatniks congregated. She told her aunts she was going to visit. They offered money for the bus, but Joplin was intent on hitchhiking. "I don't want your money," she said. "I want to go and go *my* way."

After her trip to San Francisco, Joplin returned to Port Arthur to live with her family briefly before heading off in 1962 to the University of Texas at Austin to study visual art. The city of Austin was known to be welcoming to the arts, and Joplin believed that she would find a creative community there.

She did find other students she got along with, but what inspired her most was the Austin music scene. Soon, she dropped painting and drawing in favor of the adrenaline-inducing performing arts. She was particularly influenced by a barkeeper/musician by the name of Kenneth Threadgill, an old-school country singer who took Joplin under his wing. She earned two dollars a performance at his bar; the low pay encouraged her to learn the guitar so she wouldn't have to split the earnings with an accompanist. Threadgill usually let musicians play only country and bluegrass, but every now and then he would let Joplin sing the blues. By playing at his bar, she grew into a stronger and more confident musician.

At UT Austin, Joplin's unique style began to coalesce. She let her hair grow long and wore oversized men's button-down shirts and an inside-out World War II bomber jacket with the sleeves cut off. She did not wear makeup. She became a well-known personality on campus, famous for her language (she used "fuck" liberally), her quick temper, and her commanding charisma. "When Janis walked in the room, she completely dominated it," remembers Jack Jackson, a former classmate at UT Austin.

She was so famous on campus that she was the subject of an article in the *Summer Texan*, a school newspaper. The article began:

> She goes barefooted when she feels like it, wears Levi's to class because they're more comfortable, and carries her autoharp with her everywhere she goes so that in case she gets the urge to break into song it will be handy. Her name is Janis Joplin, and she looks like the type of girl a square . . . would call a "beatnik." "Jivey" is what Janis calls herself, not "beat." She leads a life that

> is enviously unrestrained. She doesn't bother to have her hair set every week, or to wear the latest feminine fashion fads, and when she feels like singing, she sings in a vibrant alto voice.

In the winter of 1962, a man named Chet Helms passed through Austin. He was a Texas native and had attended UT Austin, but he was now living in San Francisco and working as a music promoter. He heard Joplin perform and told her that her authentic style would be a hit in San Francisco. Determined to make the move, she started saving up money, partly by stealing food. She and Helms left Austin in mid-January 1963, hitchhiking their way to San Francisco. Fifty hours later, they arrived.

The music scene in 1963 San Francisco had not yet moved to the neighborhood of Haight-Ashbury, which would have its heyday later; it was still largely in North Beach, which was populated by beat writers and folk musicians. Joplin, a folksy blues singer, performed at small gigs around the city and began to gain a fanbase.

Aside from a vibrant artistic culture, the North Beach beat scene was known for its rampant drug use. In college, alcohol had been Joplin's drug of choice, and she continued drinking to excess while in San Francisco. But in the beginning of 1964, she dabbled in methamphetamines, then known as speed. By the end of the year, she was totally addicted. The drug was enticing to artists in particular because it made them feel more productive. "No one knew about drugs then," remembers her roommate from those years, Linda Gottfried. "They were an experiment. We thought we were growing by leaps and bounds. We worked day and night. We did more paintings, more poems, and more songs."

It wasn't until a man Joplin was dating wound up in the hospital due to his speed addiction that she decided she had to quit the drug. She moved back to Port Arthur in 1965, weighing significantly less than she had when she left Texas (a side effect of speed addiction). She enrolled in college and for once was a serious student. She pulled her long hair back. She started seeing a counselor who prescribed her tranquilizers. In counseling sessions, she would admit that she *wanted* to want marriage and children, but she just couldn't squeeze herself into that conventional mold.

She also couldn't keep away from music, so she continued to perform in Texas. One day, she received a call from Helms. A band in San Francisco was looking for a lead singer. Was she interested?

Of course she was. Performance was her passion. But she also knew that the San Francisco art scene was inextricably linked to drug use. It was a hard choice between pursuing her dream and staying sober, but ultimately, she packed her bags and headed west. She auditioned for the band—Big Brother and the Holding Company—and they were blown away by her gritty, soulful voice. She was hired immediately, and within six days of arriving in San Francisco, she was performing with Big Brother.

OPPOSITE Crowd with flag at the Human Be-In, 1967. Photo by Gene Anthony. Collection of the California Historical Society. Featured in *On the Road to the Summer of Love*, on view at the California Historical Society May 12 through September 10, 2017.

With Big Brother, Joplin's fame skyrocketed. The band played at the Monterey International Pop Festival in June 1967 and was the only act to get an encore performance. The audience thought it was just because the band was so good, but it was actually because the first performance hadn't been recorded and the band insisted that it be videotaped for posterity. Nonetheless, the encore gave the band a huge boost in popularity. By the end of 1967, it was making $2,500 a performance, which was unheard of for a band that hadn't yet released a full album. *Cheap Thrills*, featuring "Piece of My Heart" and "Summertime," would be released in 1968.

Joplin was now seen as a revolutionary figure: the first female sex symbol in rock and roll, some postulated, who was closing the "girl gap" in the industry. The press wrote about her as though she was a singer with a band backing her, instead of embracing the democratic family feeling Big Brother's musicians had cultivated among themselves in San Francisco. Joplin began to entertain the idea of leaving the band, and her last performance with them was in December 1968. She premiered her new act three weeks later.

The new Kozmic Blues Band didn't receive rave reviews at first, but Joplin's fame was enough to carry it along. She performed at the Woodstock Music & Art Fair in August 1969 and the audience loved her. Her hectic performance schedule affected her health, however. She started using heroin at first as a way to calm down after the adrenaline rush of performance, but she soon became addicted. She was able to kick the habit a few times but always returned to the drug. "The strange truth was that when she did heroin, she turned into a hazy little girl," says Laura Joplin. "She lost the vibrant energy that was the persona of Janis Joplin. She became passive and oh-so-quiet. When she was straight [sober], her intellect bloomed."

On October 4, 1970, after a day of recording in Los Angeles, she returned to her hotel room in Hollywood. She was found dead later that evening. The coroner deemed the cause to be an accidental overdose of heroin.

Today, Joplin is remembered partly as a cautionary tale about the dangers of the rock and roll lifestyle, but her legacy is so much more than that. She paved the way for female singers to break down barriers of sexism. She was an example of how music could be a full-body performance. During her life, many people warned her that she needed to slow down lest her habits take a toll on her health, but she didn't care. "Maybe I won't last as long as other singers," she said, "but I think you can destroy your now worrying about tomorrow."

SOURCES John Byrne Cooke, *On the Road with Janis Joplin* (New York: Berkley Books, 2014); "Goodbye, Janis Joplin," *Rolling Stone*, October 29, 1970, https://goo.gl/OEgXeZ (accessed May 1, 2017); "Janis Joplin," *Biography.com*, April 28, 2017, https://goo.gl/10jjqP (accessed May 1, 2017); Laura Joplin, *Love, Janis* (New York: Villard Books, 1992)

Fire and Joy

An Interview with Writer and Director Randy Johnson

By Simon Hodgson

As a boy, Randy Johnson dreamed of show business. Growing up in Culver City, California, around the corner from the Hollywood film studios, he used to sneak into the MGM studio lot and wander around the sets. "It was magical," he says. "You hopped the fence and you were in Tarzan's jungle or in the train station where Greta Garbo filmed *Ninotchka*. My imagination was constantly fueled." While Johnson's parents were never a part of the film or theater business—his mom worked as a surgical nurse, his dad was an aircraft executive for Howard Hughes—they encouraged his dreams. "They always took me to the theater," he says. "At one point, they wished I'd become an aerospace engineer, but they knew that was never on the cards. Our family went to Las Vegas a lot. I grew up watching Vegas spectacles, casino showroom headliners Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, and Sammy Davis Jr., but the best was watching my godmother—jazz legend Keely Smith—headline at the Desert Inn Hotel and Casino."

After high school, Johnson took another step closer to show business, studying musical theater at the University of Southern California. Following graduation, his first show as a professional was producing the West Coast premiere of Larry Kramer's *The Normal Heart* (1985), starring Richard Dreyfus and Kathy Bates. From that ultra-contemporary and powerful drama, he switched gears to develop and produce *Always . . . Patsy Cline* (1989), a musical about the Nashville crooner that was produced more than 500 times in the next eight years. The music world would become a sweet spot for Johnson—his credits include productions about Conway Twitty, Keely Smith and Louis Prima, Tammy Wynette, George Jones, a Sony Music–PBS special for Carly Simon, and a multimedia spectacle entitled *Elvis the Concert* (featuring video projection of a posthumous Elvis Presley), which premiered in 1998 at Radio City Music Hall and toured sports arenas worldwide for 15 years.

Although Johnson has carved out a niche focusing on iconic musicians, he has not been limited to music, with events featuring political figures (he directed Ronald Reagan's 80th-birthday celebration at the Beverly Hills Hilton hotel in 1991), sporting personalities (*Mike Tyson: The Undisputed Truth* in 2012), and even spiritual leaders (Johnson staged and directed the 2008 appearance of Pope Benedict XVI in Yonkers, New York, in front of an audience of 100,000).

Johnson's productions have played in front of audiences across America, but not one had played on Broadway until *A Night with Janis Joplin* in 2013. "This show got to Broadway," he says. "I don't take that lightly." As Johnson prepared to bring his hit musical to The Geary Theater, we caught up with him to talk about discovering the hidden side of Janis, meeting with the Joplin family, and his 30-year career.

You're known for productions focusing on iconic musicians, but *A Night with Janis Joplin* has a more personal connection for you. Why?

When I was a kid, one of the first albums I bought was Janis Joplin's *Cheap Thrills*. And the first person I saw in concert was Nina Simone [the soul singer who appears in *A Night with Janis Joplin* as one of Joplin's musical inspirations] at the Troubadour nightclub in Los Angeles. So when the Joplin family reached out to me, those connections were the spark that created *A Night with Janis Joplin*.

You met with Michael and Laura Joplin, Janis's brother and sister, after which you were given access to their archives about Janis. How did you use that material to create this musical?

I knew that the show couldn't be an outsider's opinion of her life, as that would be a disservice to both the woman and the audience. When you read biographies and some cradle-to-grave bio-musicals, they are made up of other people's opinions of the artist.

I was fortunate enough to *live* with Janis and her material and get to know her only through her words, her music, and her family's recollections. For a month I turned off the cable TV and the internet, and through Janis's writing and music I lived in her world. I let Janis do the talking and I listened. I learned everything about Janis firsthand. I wanted it to be from the source. There's no revisionist history. Through family recollections and the journals of Janis herself, I came to realize that here was this woman who made her ordinary life an extraordinary adventure.

The best way to tell that story was to put Janis front and center in a concert setting. That was Janis's world, where she thrived. I've taken the experience of a concert and put it into a dramatic and theatrical context. It's not a tribute act, it's not a jukebox musical, it is musical theater. The audience is going back in time to hear Janis Joplin in concert, telling the story of her life, one week before her life tragically ended. I took all my combined experience over the years creating theater about historic and iconic musicians and directing concerts for living artists, and I brought that to the stage.

What aspects of Janis did you find in your research that are less well known?

What surprised me the most was the joy in her life, her sense of humor, and her intellectual spark. At an early age, when she first became successful, she understood that what she said onstage influenced a whole lot of people. I read in her letters that she understood the responsibility. This was a woman who loved her family, and even as her

Writer and director Randy Johnson.

star rose, she wrote to her mother almost weekly. Janis was not just some drug-fueled hippie chick singer. Her influences ran deep and wide. She was an intellectual, she was an artist, she was deep and thoughtful, she *loved* Broadway musicals, and she had a great sense of humor. She had such a short amount of time on earth—what she accomplished is astounding. I came not only to like Janis as a singer but to respect the woman that lived a deep, joyful, and complex life.

How did you approach the darker side of Janis's story?

There has been too much focus on the myth of Janis Joplin's tragedy. But America didn't fall in love with Janis because she was a tragic figure. We fell in love with her because she was a remarkable musician with a great message. Music only survives if it comes from an authentic nature, and Janis instinctively knew that. When she was onstage, she was filled with fire and joy. I wanted audiences to get to know Janis the way her family knew her. The way I got to know her. Was she fueled by demons, bad choices, and addictions? Yes, but I didn't want that to overshadow this woman's enormous cultural impact. The reason that her music and her persona have lasted all these years is not because of her bad choices but because of the integrity of her music, art, and personality.

Janis Joplin, Mike Tyson, and the Pope make for a diverse list of credits. How do you pick your projects?

Usually, as with *Janis*, the projects pick me. I have always been drawn to interesting and unusual projects. Working on *The Normal Heart* changed my perspective on what theater could be. From *Always . . . Patsy Cline*, I fell in love with theater that could tell great stories. I find inspiration in how ordinary people become larger-than-life legends and what it took to get them there. I am always open to new adventures. If an opportunity presents itself that is new and challenging, I say yes; I have had extraordinary opportunities. I learned more from Mike Tyson than I could have ever imagined, while directing a papal event is a lesson in spectacle, religion, politics, pomp and circumstance, diplomacy, and world history.

You've been working on *A Night with Janis Joplin* for several years. What are you looking forward to about bringing it to The Geary and to San Francisco in 2017, the 50th anniversary of the Summer of Love?

Over the years since I created the show, I have met remarkable people who saw Janis live at the Avalon Ballroom and at other venues in this city. They walked the streets of San Francisco with her. Janis was and is part of the fabric of their lives. Janis was the queen of rock and roll and San Francisco is where that journey began. The Summer of Love changed so much in our culture. It made it okay to be so many things—primarily, it let all of us just be ourselves. The very nature of the city at the time gave Janis permission to breathe and flourish. As a result, music has never been the same. For so many of us, San Francisco is the apex of cultural change and consciousness. To be part of that celebration here and now is astounding. *A Night with Janis Joplin* is both a homecoming and a love letter to the life and times of Janis Joplin and the city where it all began.

The Height of the Haight

The Counterculture of the 1960s in San Francisco

By Shannon Stockwell

San Francisco has a strong reputation as a city full of dreamers, risk-takers, and radicals. Some assume that this characterization stems directly from the '60s Haight-Ashbury heyday when hippies took over a neighborhood near Golden Gate Park, but it actually goes all the way back to the mid-nineteenth century, when San Francisco welcomed thousands of adventurers and migrants drawn west by the California gold rush. A move to San Francisco back then meant that an individual was a maverick, a person who was willing to risk everything for a chance at success. This identity in turn attracted artistic types who were already on the societal frontier, so they moved to America's intellectual frontier. Prior to the earthquake of 1906, the city was packed full of artists, just one of the reasons why it was known as the Paris of the West. By the end of World War II, San Francisco had rebuilt itself from the rubble of that great earthquake into a thriving creative hotspot, home to some of the greatest innovations in literature and art.

The 1950s in America

For many middle-class white Americans, the '50s were generally good years. It was a decade of economic growth and prosperity, illustrated by the magazine-spread myth that happiness could be achieved through material wealth and a cookie-cutter suburban house, occupied by a husband, a wife, and 2.5 children. But things weren't perfect. Racial segregation laws were still in effect in the Southern states. Women were now expected to have jobs *and* do all the housework. The Cold War—a state of geopolitical tension between the Soviet Union and the United States—instilled a sense of anxiety and paranoia, which led in part to communist witch hunts known as the Red Scare.

Some middle-class white people (mostly men) felt pressured by '50s society to conform to certain behaviors and styles, and they found cause to reject common cultural values of materialism and societal organization. Instead, they valued authenticity and personal freedom. They wanted to fully experience life. This desire led to drug experimentation, sexual exploration, and, most importantly, literary innovation. These people were known as the beats, and they formed one of the major countercultures of the '50s.

A woman teaches a group of girls how to dance in New York. Photo by Fred Palumbo, 1953. Courtesy Library of Congress.

A major beat hotspot was North Beach, a neighborhood in northeast San Francisco. There, the rent was cheap, the bars tolerant, and the atmosphere European—appealing to creative types who romanticized artistic countries such as France and Italy. In 1953, poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti opened up City Lights Bookstore there and began publishing books, including Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* in 1956. The poem, an impassioned and fiery lament on the state of modern society, became the subject of an obscenity trial that ultimately led to increased sales of the book and international attention on the San Francisco beat scene.

Meanwhile, as middle-class white children of the '50s grew into teenagers and young adults of the '60s, they inevitably wondered about their identities. How should they define themselves, especially after so many years of conformity? And what was their relationship to their country? After World War II and the Korean War, their parents had promised them peace and equality. But that's not what these youth of America saw on television. Instead, they saw black students refusing to leave a whites-only lunch counter; they saw President John F. Kennedy assassinated; they saw the United States get involved in a war in Vietnam and they didn't quite understand why.

In the Bay Area, protests became a frequent event. A 1960 student-organized protest against the House Un-American Activities Committee (formed by the House of Representatives in 1938 to investigate suspected communists) on the steps of San Francisco City Hall turned into a riot that culminated in police turning fire hoses on

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1963 March on Washington. Photo courtesy United States Information Agency.

the demonstrators. Sixty-four protesters were arrested. Later that year, students gathered to protest the execution of Caryl Chessman, a man who claimed he was innocent of the crimes of which he was convicted (kidnapping and sexual assault) but who was nevertheless sentenced to death. The protests ultimately failed, and Chessman was executed. Maybe, thought the youth of the Bay Area and the whole country, America wasn't so great after all. Maybe there was another way. But what was it?

More and more young people turned to the beats for direction. For years now, these artists had been saying that authority was not to be trusted. They seemed to have the right idea. So, asked the young people, what was to be done?

Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds

By the mid-'60s, the beats had been turned on to a new drug: lysergic acid diethylamide (known as LSD or acid). The drug was invented in 1938 and produced as a psychiatric medication by Sandoz Laboratories beginning in 1947. LSD induces feelings of intense love and spiritual understanding. It also causes powerful hallucinations. In the 1950s, the CIA performed experiments with the drug. Author Ken Kesey took part in these experiments at Menlo Park Veterans' Hospital, where he worked as a night aide. From his experiences there, he was inspired to write his hit book, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962). Kesey used the money he made from sales of the book to buy a log cabin

Ken Kesey's bus for his Merry Pranksters, restored for a festival in Seattle, Washington. Photo by Joe Mabel, 2010. Courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

in La Honda, California, in the Santa Cruz mountains. Having been turned on to the effects of LSD, he hosted "happenings" at which he gave his guests doses of the drug. He and his friends—the self-styled Merry Pranksters—would also ride around in a painted school bus and bring acid to the people.

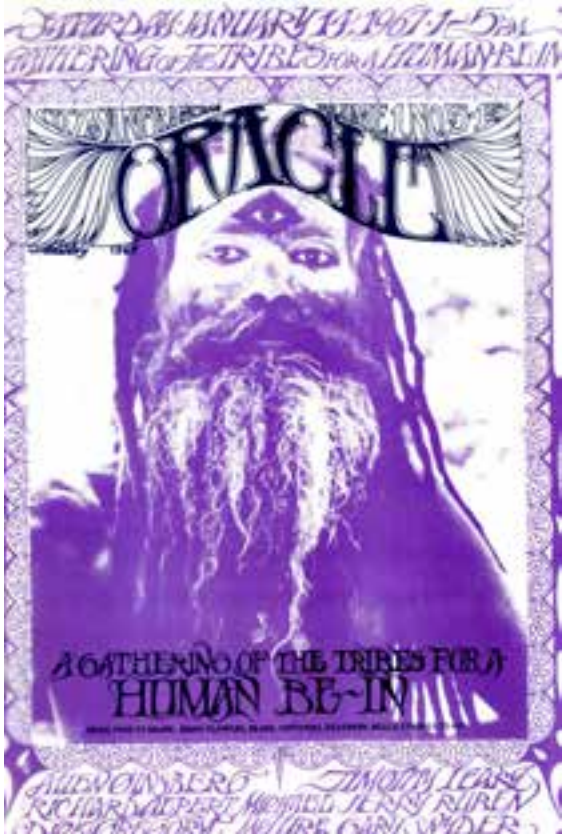
As LSD grew more and more popular, the attitude of the counterculture changed. The young people in San Francisco rejected mainstream society just as the beats had, but now they wanted to replace it with a culture of love and understanding—qualities they had discovered were important while tripping on acid.

As the attitude shifted, so did the location. Rents in North Beach were rising, and the neighborhood was becoming touristy. The residents flocked to Haight-Ashbury, where rent was cheaper. This area had the added benefit of being close to Golden Gate Park, and it was also a short bus ride away from San Francisco State College, enabling students to rub shoulders with artists.

LSD changed the arts, including music. Psychedelic rock—with its distorted guitar, musical improvisation, and poetic lyrics (sometimes referencing drugs)—became the soundtrack of 1960s San Francisco. Bands such as the Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane, and Big Brother and the Holding Company played impromptu concerts. But now concerts weren't just musical events; they were multimedia experiences involving light

shows, LSD, and a new kind of dancing—no more partners or rehearsed steps, just freeform movement.

By the mid-'60s, a strong community had formed in San Francisco. In 1965, a dance was held at the Longshoremen's Hall near Fisherman's Wharf. For the first time, the youth of the counterculture gathered in a large group, looked around, and realized that they weren't alone. That same year, journalist Michael Fallen wrote a series of articles about Haight-Ashbury for the *San Francisco Examiner*. He dubbed the long-haired denizens of the Haight "hippies." The name caught on and was widespread by 1967.



A 1967 cover of the *Oracle*, a Haight-Ashbury magazine, advertising the Human Be-In. Courtesy the Estate of Allen Cohen and Regent Press.

Inspired by the public demonstrations that were a hallmark of the 1960s, the denizens of Haight-Ashbury organized one of their own centered around the issues they believed were important. The Human Be-In took place in January 1967 and attracted thousands to Golden Gate Park in a celebration of love and peace. Here, Harvard psychologist Timothy Leary promoted his mantra, "Turn on, tune in, drop out," encouraging young people to expand their consciousness by using LSD and to reject mainstream American society. The huge turnout also garnered much media attention. Knowing they had to top the Be-In, Haight community organizers announced a season-long event they called the Summer of Love and invited the youth of the nation to come to Haight-Ashbury after school let out. Neighborhood residents prepared to house and feed the sudden influx of guests.

The Summer of Love

The Monterey International Pop Festival was the event that truly kicked off the Summer of Love. The hope was that the festival would put rock, pop, and folk music on the same level as jazz, which at the time was more respected as an art form. The coordinators of the festival had locked down several famous groups, as well as some unknowns, such as a black guitarist named Jimi Hendrix. But the coordinators knew that they needed some San Francisco bands, since Haight-Ashbury was now known all over the country. And yet they had trouble getting the San Francisco bands to agree to perform. The groups

were infused with the culture of Haight-Ashbury and were against stardom, fame, and profit. Big Brother and the Holding Company and the Grateful Dead were particularly resistant; they only agreed after intense questioning about where the money was going, and the Grateful Dead refused to be filmed. In the end, the festival was a huge success and launched the careers of Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix. A reported 90,000 people enjoyed the music and the perfect weather.

The rest of the summer was one long celebration filled with spontaneous concerts, protests, and public performances. "Every day it was a parade, a procession," says Stanley Mouse, an artist who became renowned for his psychedelic '60s posters. New arrivals showed up all summer long, lured by the feeling that a revolution was underway and wanting desperately to be a part of it.

Not all of San Francisco was smitten with the hippies. Conservative *San Francisco Chronicle* editorials painted a dark picture of the new lifestyle, and transport officials, police officers, and government administrators denounced the long-haired migrants. When city officials refused to help manage the sudden population increase, the Haight-Ashbury community created its own social services, such as housing aid, legal assistance, and a free medical clinic that remains in operation today. For a few months in 1967, notions of a free society that may once have been dismissed as idealistic or romantic seemed attainable.

But by the end of the summer, the scene had soured. It had become flooded by young people interested in sexual and psychotropic experimentation but not in the hippies' spiritual doctrine of love and understanding. The police were cracking down on drug possession, and tourists now took buses through the neighborhood to ogle at this foreign subculture as though its members were animals in a zoo. The hippies knew it was time to move on. In October, performance artists held a funeral procession for "Hippie, devoted son of Mass Media," and many hippies either returned home or moved north to Marin County.

The Summer of Love may have ended, but there was no stopping the cultural revolution from continuing elsewhere. The events of 1967 in Haight-Ashbury brought hippiedom into the mainstream, leading to sexual liberation, increased awareness of environmental issues, and the abolishment of the military draft, among many other changes. Now, 50 years later, A.C.T. celebrates and remembers that summer with the story of the woman whose music formed the soundtrack to it all: Janis Joplin.

SOURCES Anthony Ashbolt, *A Cultural History of the Radical Sixties in the San Francisco Bay Area* (New York: Routledge, 2016); Alan Brinkley, "The Fifties," *The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History*, https://goo.gl/6LxUwl (accessed May 1, 2017); Tom Brokaw, *Boom! Voices of the Sixties* (New York: Random House, 2007); Joel Selvin, *The Haight: Love, Rock, and Revolution* (San Rafael: Insight Editions, 2014); Sheila Weller, "Suddenly That Summer," *Vanity Fair*, July 2012, https://goo.gl/AyINHR (accessed May 1, 2017)

"She Showed Me the Air and Taught Me How to Fill It"

The Women Who Influenced Janis Joplin

By Allie Moss

A Night with Janis Joplin imagines interactions between Joplin and five female African American musicians whom she cites as major influences. Joplin's emulation of their vocal styles and her covers of their songs straddle the line between appreciation and appropriation, and in her short career she made artistic choices that fell into both categories. Nevertheless, the women who paved the way for Joplin's own creative journey—Bessie Smith, Odetta, Nina Simone, Etta James, and Aretha Franklin—all had groundbreaking careers of their own and deserve the recognition that not all were afforded in their own lifetimes.

Bessie Smith was born on April 15, 1894, in Chattanooga, Tennessee. She was one of seven children. Her childhood was marked by tragedy; by the time she was 14, she had lost both parents and two of her brothers. When she was a teenager, Smith performed as a street singer, accompanied by one of her younger brothers on the guitar. As a young woman, Smith sang with the Moses Stokes minstrel show, and then with the Rabbit Foot Minstrels alongside blues legend Ma Rainey. Rainey liked Smith and mentored her; while the two women worked together, it is likely that they also had a romantic relationship. By 1923, Smith had moved to Philadelphia and married Jack Gee, a night watchman who would later help manage her career. That same year, she signed with Columbia Records and began to make her own recordings, including the incredibly successful track "Downhearted Blues." Her popularity continued to increase; she toured extensively and worked with legendary jazz artists such as saxophonist Sidney Bechet and pianist James P. Johnson. She recorded "Backwater Blues," one of her most famous songs, with Johnson, and she worked with Louis Armstrong on her hits "Cold in Hand Blues" and "I Ain't Gonna Play No Second Fiddle." By 1930, she was the highest paid black performer in America and was known as the Empress of the Blues. Unfortunately, the height of her success coincided with the onset of the Great Depression and turmoil in her personal life. Smith's marriage ended in 1929 after the attention she paid certain female dancers sent her former husband into jealous rages, and she left Columbia

Bessie Smith in 1936. Photo by Carl Van Vechten. Courtesy Library of Congress.

Records in 1931. She continued to perform, and her songs from the 1930s would go on to influence the swing era of the next decade. On September 26, 1937, Smith was killed in a car accident on her way to a show. However, her legacy continued; Billie Holiday and Aretha Franklin cite Smith as a major influence. Smith's distinctive throaty and full-bodied voice, knack for improvisation, and penchant for unexpected rhythms, stand out as a clear precursor to all of their work. Janis Joplin was also inspired by Smith; in 1970, shortly before Joplin's own death, she had a headstone made for Smith's unmarked grave, which reads, "The Greatest Blues Singer in the World Will Never Stop Singing."

Odetta was born Odetta Holmes in Birmingham, Alabama, on December 31, 1930; her father worked in a steel mill and her mother was a maid. Her father died when she was young, after which her mother remarried and moved the family to Los Angeles. When Odetta was in elementary school, a teacher recognized the potential in her deep, rich, distinctive voice, and encouraged her parents to enroll her in formal lessons. Odetta started studying opera when she was 13 years old. After finishing high school, she worked as a maid but spent her evenings studying classical music and musical comedy at Los Angeles City College. Her first professional gigs were in the touring productions of *Finian's Rainbow* in 1949 and *Guys and Dolls* in 1950. While on tour in San Francisco,

Odetta discovered folk music. She started performing in clubs there and quickly gained a local following. The next decade saw Odetta's musical career take off. In 1954, the San Francisco label Fantasy Records produced *Odetta and Larry*, a joint album with folk musician Larry Mohr. Two solo albums followed: *Odetta Sings Ballads and Blues* in 1956 and *At the Horn* in 1957. In 1959, she appeared on Harry Belafonte's television special, which exposed her to a much wider audience, and by 1960 she had signed with Vanguard Records. In the 1960s, Odetta was active in the civil rights movement—in 1963, she sang at the March on Washington, and two years later, she marched with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. from Selma to Montgomery. Several of her most famous songs, including "I'm On My Way" and "Oh, Freedom," were written and performed as acts of protest. Throughout the 1960s, Odetta continued to record albums and receive high-profile gigs; she sang to huge crowds at Carnegie Hall and performed for President John F. Kennedy. However, the musical tastes of the decade were shifting towards a rock and roll sound that left folk behind. Ironically, it was musicians like Janis Joplin—who grew up listening to Odetta, and who first realized she could sing after expertly belting out an Odetta song in front of her friends—that pushed Odetta out of the mainstream music scene. Although Odetta's popularity waned, she continued to use music for activism throughout her career. In 2008, despite battling serious illness, she campaigned for presidential candidate Barack Obama. She died on December 2, 2008, just months before an engagement to sing at President Obama's inauguration.

Nina Simone was born Eunice Waymon on February 21, 1933, in Tryon, North Carolina. She started playing piano when she was three—her mother hoped she would become the first world-renowned black classical pianist. Simone intended to pursue this dream when she enrolled in Juilliard in 1950, but by 1954 she was playing and singing in jazz nightclubs in New York to make ends meet. During this period, she assumed the stage name Nina Simone because she didn't want her mother to find out how she was making her living. Simone never intended to sing professionally, but the bars that employed her insisted that she couldn't *just* play piano. Vocals became a regular part of her act, and in 1957, she recorded her first song with Bethlehem Records. In 1959, Simone booked gigs at the Newport Festival, on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, and in several top-tier concert venues. This new visibility shifted her creative focus; previously Simone sang mostly love songs, but as she later reflected, "I stopped singing love songs and started singing protest songs because protest songs were needed." Her participation in the civil rights movement provided people with perspective on the challenges of being a black artist, and Simone was never afraid to address racial issues head-on. She is remembered for her song "Mississippi Goddam," which she wrote in reaction to the assassination of Medgar Evers in 1963 and the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing later that year. In fact, both the content and the form of her songs were political: her rasping high notes, gravelly low notes, and unstable pitch and timbre challenged industry ideas about how a black female pop singer should sound. By the mid-'60s, she was playing regularly at Carnegie

Hall in New York and touring Europe, where fans were much more responsive to her work than American audiences. Her song "To Be Young, Gifted, and Black" and her cover of the Beatles' hit "Here Comes the Sun" were released in the late 1970s. Those same years also saw her first brush with the law when she was arrested in 1978 for withholding taxes. In 1991, Simone moved to France and published her autobiography, *I Put a Spell on You*. Around the same time, her mental health began to decline, and she became increasingly unpredictable; she canceled concerts and was released from a jail sentence because her lawyer proved she was "incapable of evaluating the consequences of her actions." Uniting classical Juilliard training with a fierce political edge, Simone sang gospel, blues, and Broadway show tunes, becoming on one of the twentieth century's most celebrated artists. She died in France on April 21, 2003.

Etta James was born Jamesetta Hawkins in Los Angeles in 1938 to 14-year-old Dorothy Hawkins. She was raised by an adoptive mother until she was 12, when she joined her birth mother in San Francisco. She was largely unsupervised as an adolescent, and her exploits included drinking, smoking marijuana, and auditioning for singer and talent scout Johnny Otis with her after-school trio, the Creolettes. James's voice was a thing of wonder: her raspy speaking voice transformed when she sang to produce rich, earthy, brassy tones that stretch from delicate high notes to bellowing low ones. Otis was so impressed by it that he immediately asked her to record the song "Roll with Me Henry." The next day, after the 16-year-old James forged her mother's signature on a document claiming that she was 18, they left for Los Angeles. "Roll with Me Henry," retitled "Wallflower" to make it more palatable to the studio, rose to number one on the R & B charts almost immediately. Afterwards, James went on tour with Ike and Tina Turner, Otis, and Little Richard, all of whom mentored her artistry—and spurred her drinking and drug use. In 1959, James signed with the Chicago-based blues label Chess Records, which branded her the "Queen of Soul." In her early years with Chess, she recorded the hits "All I Could Do Was Cry," "If I Can't Have You," and "At Last." On a trip to Atlanta in 1967, she worked with Fame Studios producer Rick Hall to record the boisterous "Tell Mama" and the soulful ballad "I'd Rather Go Blind." In a show of true mastery of her craft, James not only recorded all these hits, but she also wrote or cowrote all her songs. Her influence on America's musical landscape is clear: artists such as Tina Turner, Gladys Knight, and Janis Joplin all emulated James's vocal style, and Joplin even covered "Tell Mama." Despite her success, James struggled with drug addiction, and she was constantly in and out of jail. After Joplin died in 1970, James began working with Joplin's collaborator Gabriel Meckler. Together, they produced the album *Come a Little Closer* in 1974, while James was in rehab. It wasn't until 1988 that James overcame her drug addiction. Her career has been celebrated by six Grammy Awards, a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, and an induction into both the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and the Blues Hall of Fame. James continued to make music until the end of her life; she released her last album, *The Dreamer*, in 2011, and she died from leukemia in 2012.

Aretha Franklin, 1967. Courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

Aretha Franklin, often called the Queen of Soul, was a defining voice of the 1960s. She was born on March 25, 1942, in Memphis, Tennessee, where she was raised by her father, a pastor and gospel singer. When Franklin was four, the family moved to Detroit. Living in this musical hub enabled her to start recording as a teenager; when she was 14, she went with her father on tour and rubbed elbows with gospel luminaries Clara Ward, James Cleveland, and Sam Cooke. She moved to New York in 1960 and signed with Columbia Records, but though she released ten albums in the first six years of her professional career, a real hit eluded her. In 1966, she switched labels to Atlantic Records and found instant success with the hits "Respect," "You Make Me Feel Like a Natural Woman," "Chain of Fools," and "Since You've Been Gone." With her fresh new sound that blended gospel, pop, R & B, and soul, Franklin's popularity soared. In addition to her unique musical style, her voice itself was impressive; she indulged in musical runs that featured smoky low notes, nasal middle tones, and a light, high belt—all in the span of a few seconds. Franklin was involved in the civil rights movement of the 1960s—Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was a friend of her father—and she sang at King's funeral in 1968. The next decade brought continued success in her professional life but turbulence in her personal life; she divorced her first husband in 1969 and was arrested twice for reckless driving and disorderly conduct. However, she continued to produce hits such as "Don't

Play That Song" and "Spanish Harlem," and a cover of Simon and Garfunkel's "Bridge over Troubled Water" topped the charts. By 1974, she had collected eight consecutive Grammy Awards. The late 1970s saw a decline in her career as the emerging disco scene threatened to leave her behind, but she had recovered by 1986 when her album *Aretha* went gold. In 1987, Franklin was the first woman to be inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame; she received an honorary doctorate from the University of Detroit; and she put out the Grammy Award–winning album *One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism*. She went on to sing at the inaugurations of both President Bill Clinton and President Barack Obama, win a total of 18 Grammys, and start her own record label. In February 2017, Franklin announced her retirement from touring, but she still plans to continue making music. "The future of soul music?" she said in her retirement announcement. "[That's] me, because I'm not quitting. I'm not sitting down."

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Memory Keepers

An Interview with Laura and Michael Joplin

By Simon Hodgson

For many Americans who grew up as part of the baby boomer generation, Janis Joplin was a star. But to Laura Joplin and her brother Michael growing up in the oil town of Port Arthur, Texas, Janis was simply their older sister. "When Janis graduated from high school aged 17, I was 11 [and Michael was 7]," says Laura. "I thought Janis was wonderful. Anything that she did, I thought was awesome." Janis's journey to the pinnacle of 1960s music is well known, but her siblings' lives are less so. Michael became a glass artist who lives and works in Arizona. Laura is now retired in Chico, California, after working as an education consultant. Together, Janis's two siblings also take care of her legacy—notably with the book *Love, Janis* written by Laura Joplin and published by HarperCollins in 1992—and advise on creative projects about Janis, including Randy Johnson's *A Night with Janis Joplin*. We spoke by phone with Laura and Michael about the Summer of Love, growing up in Texas, and folding laundry to the sound of show tunes.

One of the moments in *A Night with Janis Joplin* is based on your family tradition of doing chores. Can you talk about the ritual of laundry day in the Joplin household?

Michael Joplin: On laundry day, we would be cleaning the house or doing chores and we'd all be singing. Mom wanted to be on Broadway, so she would play these show tunes—whatever was hot at the time—as loud as we could get them. Mom was A-OK with whatever we sounded like. She just wanted us to sing. She'd had some surgery as a younger woman and it kind of messed up her throat, so she was frustrated in that aspect. But we never knew the difference. She just liked to sing. I'm just thinking of all the different shows: *The Threepenny Opera*, *West Side Story* . . .

Laura Joplin: *Porgy and Bess* was a biggy, of course. We played "Summertime" a lot.

MJ: We'd all have our parts, singing the songs. I know so many Broadway show tunes, it's insane.

LJ: What Mother would do is stop us mid-stride, make us put our laundry down, and then she would give us an impromptu lesson about support from the diaphragm and projecting and holding our heads up and stuff like that. And then we would pick up our laundry and keep going. [*Laughs.*]

An oil refinery in Janis Joplin's hometown of Port Arthur, Texas. Photo by Robert Yarnall Richie, 1944. Courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

Was the Joplin family a little different from the traditional conservative families of that time in Texas?

LJ: I think so. My parents were not from the South. They were from North Texas, which is a little different. And they were both readers. That was one of the things that bonded us—we would have discussions about good literature at the dinner table. They didn't want us to just listen to their lectures, they wanted us to participate, so even at a very young age we were encouraged to have an opinion. And that was very different from a lot of the families where we lived in the 1950s. Our parents thought it was wonderful that Janis was a painter, though they preferred that maybe she would paint still lifes rather than nudes!

But the conservatives were a sign of the times. It was the '50s. The dominant culture was a churchgoing culture of honor. Port Arthur was an oil town, a union town of good blue-collar jobs. It wasn't a beatnik center, but there was a coffeehouse there and there were some people who read beatnik literature and things like that.

MJ: Hippiedom hadn't quite made it all the way across the US at that time, you know.

How did Janis respond to that conservative atmosphere?

LJ: Janis moved away from the normally accepted things, and, as such, she was looked at differently. That made her feel like she wanted to keep looking for different possibilities. She saw a different world and she yearned for other opportunities. Janis was a painter. She had been taking art lessons since the third grade, so she thought in terms of creativity. That was different from the kids she went to school with.

MJ: Our parents said we could be anything we wanted to be, and our family was always a little weird. We were the only people that I knew who had classical music in their house. We're listening to show tunes and Rachmaninov and everybody else is listening to Cajun or hard-core country. Everybody always knew that we were different.

What was it like when your family went to San Francisco in 1967 to visit Janis?

LJ: That was the first time we'd been out of the state. We weren't a family that traveled and we hadn't really been out of Port Arthur, so to travel all the way across the West was incredible. My father bought another car he thought could make it, so we drove out there and stopped at a few places on the way to sightsee. To go to San Francisco and hang out with Janis was special. I experienced it with the mind of a young, small-town girl because I thought having a cup of tea and a sweet roll at the café at Woolworth's was the height of cool. [*Laughs.*]

What do you remember about the city?

LJ: Everything was so different: the music, the sound, the styles, the city itself. In Port Arthur, we had three or four buildings that were more than two stories high, but San Francisco was huge. At home, it's hot and flat. San Francisco was cool, with mountains overlooking it. There was a lot of trying to take all of that in. It sounds silly, but one thing I really enjoyed in San Francisco was seeing Janis's dog. It made her so human, and because we also had a dog, it made her the person I grew up with.

MJ: I remember the Summer of Love. I was 14 years old, a wannabe hippie. We went to the Avalon Ballroom. We'd all heard of Chet [Helms, a major music promoter and the manager of Big Brother and the Holding Company at the time], and we'd met him way back. When we walked up the stairs to the Avalon as a family, Chet was standing at the top of the stairs to greet us. My parents were this white couple, fiftysomething years old, and going into the Avalon Ballroom, they were definitely out of place. But Chet was welcoming and wonderful. My parents said, "Oh my god, what's going on?" I said, "This is the coolest thing I've ever seen in my entire life." Later on I got to run lights at the Avalon Ballroom. That's one of the high points of my life. It was freaking awesome.

Ohio to San Francisco, 1967. Photo by Herb Greene. Featured in *On the Road to the Summer of Love,* on view at the California Historical Society from May 12 through September 10, 2017.

How did you feel seeing your sister onstage?

MJ: When she came out, I just saw Janis. But to my parents, the audience's reaction to her was extremely significant. That was more important than what was happening onstage because my parents were able to see for the first time that Janis was getting recognition for what she was doing. They had been concerned about her, but at the Avalon, they saw that she might be okay.

LJ: The best part for all of us was realizing how happy she was there, how strongly she felt about what she was doing. I think my parents realized that they weren't needed or wanted in the same way they had been before.

MJ: When we were leaving, Laura overheard our father say to our mother, "I don't think we're going to have much influence over her anymore." So they could see the change. I don't know if their fears went away because of that trip. If you're a parent you'd understand that, and they had a right to be fearful for Janis, obviously.

Let's switch focus from the Avalon to The Geary and *A Night with Janis Joplin*. When Randy Johnson met with you both, what made him the right guy for this production?

LJ: Talking to Randy, it was clear that he was full of excitement about and celebration of the art, the music that Janis had created. You could tell that he was really honoring her achievement as a woman, as a singer, as someone who stepped out of the norm of society. We felt that his production would be an exciting and positive portrayal.

MJ: We were sitting in the room, and everything Randy said and everything we said resonated. We clicked from the get-go. And he had done some other shows about musicians. It was just a really comfortable fit for us.

What part did you play in creating *A Night with Janis Joplin*?

LJ: Over the years Michael and I have collected and gathered anything and everything we can find in terms of articles and tapes and images and stories. All of those live in a notebook and file folders. My brother and I are the memory keepers. So when Randy would ask specific questions—"What do you know about her connection to these singers? What was she doing here?"—Michael and I would look it up in our files or check our memories. So we're the memory helpers in trying to understand Janis. We like people to understand her through authentic materials.

MJ: He would call all the time to talk, and both Laura and I have been involved in castings and previews. Neither Laura nor I are in the theater business, so although we've made suggestions about changes, I'm not even sure what "giving notes" means. [*Laughs.*] It's mostly a question of us responding to some of the words, or the phrasing. Randy did so much research; there's a ton of film out there and he watched it all, so he got a lot of her public persona.

What did you feel when you saw the final production of the show?

LJ: It really is a musical triumph. Randy gives her a wide range of emotions onstage, so you get to see not just the same Janis but all the emotional stages that she went through. For me, that's the most authentic aspect of the show.

MJ: What's really wonderful about the play for Laura and me is that we get to go visit with Janis. And I can hear her laugh. Although I'm looking at the actress, I'm remembering Janis—the side glances, the little sneers, these little joking things—and I'm seeing moments that nobody else in the audience could recognize.

From Beehives to Bra Burning

Women and Music in the 1960s

By Elspeth Sweatman

Janis Joplin "belonged to that select group of pop figures who mattered as much for themselves as for their music," says music journalist Ellen Wills. "Among American rock performers, she was second only to Bob Dylan in importance as a creator–recorder–embodiment of her generation's mythology." But what about Joplin's place in the rise of another mythology in the 1960s: second-wave feminism? How did the female artists who came before her pave the way for her unique, iconoclastic music and image?

Beginnings

America in 1960. Led by a charismatic young president, John F. Kennedy, the country was thriving. People were feeling optimistic. They were making more money and spending it on the latest technology, like washer-dryer combos, record players, and televisions. With all these new luxury goods to buy, many families needed a second income. This, coupled with a growing service industry, led to many women entering the workforce.

These working women, however, found themselves caught between the lingering 1950s idyllic view of domesticity—the woman as homemaker—and this new world of employment. At home, they were still expected to fulfill all their duties. At work, they were confined to traditionally feminine occupations like teaching, nursing, and secretarial work, only earning 60 cents for every dollar that a man earned. If a working woman got pregnant, she was often fired. If women did want to protest against these strictures, there were few avenues for legal recourse; in 1960, the feminist movement was just an unorganized, grassroots initiative. The National Organization for Women did not exist and the federal government had yet to outlaw sexual discrimination.

Be My Baby

On the radio, the musical rebellion of the 1950s, embodied by rock and roll and Elvis Presley, had been replaced with the crooning of Frankie Avalon, the folk stylings of a young Bob Dylan, and a distinctly female pop sound. In two of the nation's music capitals—Detroit and New York City—aspiring songwriters and girl groups collaborated to create some of the decade's most iconic tunes, including "Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow?", by the Shirelles (1961), and "Be My Baby," by the Ronettes (1964).

The Ronettes in 1966. Photo by James Kriegsmann. Courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

These groups were called "girl" groups for a reason. An estimated 1,500-plus groups were formed between 1958 and 1963, largely composed of young women aged 11 to 18. Entering the recording studio right out of school, they sang songs about things that mattered to them, such as love, the complexities of growing up, and strict parents. On the surface, it would appear that many of the songs in this genre upheld the traditional feminine values of the previous decade (chastity, modesty, demureness), but upon a closer look, there is a subversive undercurrent. Doo-wop language (such as "doo lang doo lang" in the Crystals' 1963 hit "He's So Fine") was often used to cover up references to sex and other "improper" activities. Sometimes even just cleverly disguised lyrics—"Is this a lasting treasure / Or just a moment's pleasure" in "Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow?"—could let these young women and their listeners explore taboo subjects.

But the music industry that made it possible for hundreds of girl groups to flourish also took advantage of these young women. Because the groups did not typically write the songs that they performed, they were not viewed as artists. In fact, in the eyes of some music producers, the girl groups were interchangeable. Many groups unwittingly signed contracts that denied them access to royalties and the rights to their groups' names. And the few aspiring female songwriters that did produce songs for these groups were not always recognized, because the producers believed that they would soon leave to have children and therefore wouldn't need the credit to advance their careers.

You Don't Own Me

This notion that the fulfillment that women gained from their work would be replaced by that of marriage and children was critiqued in February 1963 when Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* articulated the depression and lack of satisfaction that middle-class, educated white women were experiencing. They "felt that the contradiction between the realities of paid work and higher education on the one hand, and the still pervasive ideology of domesticity on the other, had become irreconcilable," says University of Southern California history professor Alice Echols. These women were no longer content to simply be housewives, to be defined solely by their relationships to their spouses. By December 1963, female musicians were expressing these restless feelings openly in their work. Pop singer Lesley Gore's "You Don't Own Me" admonishes a male antagonist for telling her what she can and cannot do.

The idyllic image of domestic bliss in the '50s was further dismantled by the cracks forming in the nation's optimism. By 1963, violence was erupting across the nation as racial tensions boiled over. Young men were being drafted to fight in the jungles of Vietnam. Many young people increasingly felt that they were paying for the fears and prejudices of their parents' generation.

Leader of the Pack

In this new uncertain world, the sunny, adolescent outlook of the early '60s girl groups was out of place. Teenagers now wanted music that spoke to their mounting fear and anger. The answer came in the form of four young men from Liverpool: the Beatles. Writing and performing their own material, the Beatles changed the course of American music seemingly overnight. Gone were the songwriting teams churning out song after song. Gone were the groups who didn't accompany themselves. Soon, other rock and roll groups like the Beach Boys and a reinvented Bob Dylan dominated the airwaves.

The girl groups that survived this rock and roll explosion represented the growing split between the 1950s image of domesticity and the rebellious young woman. In place of the girl next door stood the sophisticated woman and the groovy chick. The Supremes presented a more polished, feminine front, with satin dresses and coiffed wigs, while the Shangri-Las went for a tough-girl image, with tight pants and lots of eyeliner. Following in the vein of "You Don't Own Me," both the Supremes and the Shangri-Las adopted a more overtly feminist flavor in their music, with songs touching on taboo subjects such as dating the bad boy ("Leader of the Pack," 1965), infidelity ("Stop! In the Name of Love," 1965), and children born out of wedlock ("Illegitimate Child," 1968).

Respect

As the crucible of fear and uncertainty caused by the US's involvement in Vietnam produced protest after protest, many young women began to see political activism as a path forward in their own struggle for equality. While protesting against the Vietnam War and racial discrimination, they learned the language and methods to launch their own movement. In 1966, the National Organization for Women was created, along with a Bill of Rights for Women. Among its articles were tax deductions for child-care expenses, equal education and job-training opportunities, and enforcement of laws banning sexual discrimination in the workplace. There was also a call for the liberalization of contraception and abortion, making these more available but, in the case of abortion, not yet legal.

These demonstrations of strength were echoed in Nancy Sinatra's "These Boots Are Made for Walkin'" (1966) and Aretha Franklin's "Respect" (1967). Both of these songs featured a strong female protagonist asserting her independence and right to be treated equally.

However, many young women were inspired by the activism of the antiwar and civil rights movements in a different way. Embracing the power of civil unrest, these women organized protests across the nation. The most infamous was the 1968 Miss America pageant protest, after which commentators coined the term "bra-burning feminists" (even though no bras were burned at the event). Protesters elected a sheep as Miss America and tossed symbols of their oppression—girdles, bras, stockings—into a trash can. Due to the large media presence, the protest was broadcast nationwide.

Women Is Losers

These more radical feminists searched for female musicians who embodied their ideals. They found them not in the feminine, sophisticated stylings of the female pop artists but in the male-dominated world of rock and roll. Rockers Janis Joplin (with Big Brother and the Holding Company) and Grace Slick (with Jefferson Airplane) rejected the accepted norms of how female musicians were supposed to behave and appear; both wore their hair naturally instead of perfectly coiffed in a beehive, and both wore informal clothing instead of tailored, sequined gowns.

And, perhaps most importantly, both adopted a sexual persona onstage, acting as women who put their own pleasure first. Through songs such as "Get It While You Can," Joplin became the figurehead of the second-wave feminist movement. In "Get It While You Can," Joplin discusses the prevailing view that women should postpone pleasure (i.e. sex) until they are married, and then should put off professional fulfillment for the sake of their children. Instead, Joplin advocated for women to embrace their sexual needs: "Hey hey, get it while you can / Don't you turn your back on love."

Joplin became a figurehead of the burgeoning second-wave feminist movement, but she also pointed out that, for many women across the US, the movement was something that they only heard about on the news. Their daily lives remained unchanged. In

A women's rights demonstration in 1970. Photo by Warren K. Leffler. Courtesy Library of Congress.

"Women Is Losers," she asks the listener to consider how much a woman's place in society had really changed. "Men always seem to end up on top," says Joplin in the song's chorus.

This sentiment is evident in the way that Joplin's and Slick's talents were entangled with their gender. Even though Joplin had a larger following, many rock and roll critics (mostly male) argued that Slick was more feminine and therefore a better songwriter (an obvious fallacy). They also criticized Joplin for her contradictions; she sang about women's pleasure but also about her need for a man in songs like "Cry Baby" and "Maybe."

Just Because I'm a Woman

In almost every genre at the end of the 1960s, women were using their music as a platform to point out political, economic, and societal double standards. Country music singer Dolly Parton released a song called "Just Because I'm a Woman" (1968) with the lyrics: "Yes, I've made my mistakes, but listen and understand / My mistakes are no worse than yours just because I'm a woman." Rhythm and blues singer Aretha Franklin released many songs that called for women to be treated with more respect.

As the new decade dawned, the feminist movement continued to gain traction, leading to the passage of Title IX (1972), eliminating sexual discrimination in education programs and college sports, and the landmark Supreme Court case *Roe v. Wade* (1973),

which legalized abortion in the United States. On the airwaves, female musicians supported these calls for change ("Sisters, O Sisters," by Yoko Ono in 1972) and celebrated the triumphs with such songs as "The Pill," by Loretta Lynn (1975), Helen Reddy's "I Am Woman" (1975), and Gloria Gaynor's "I Will Survive" (1978).

Run the World (Girls)

The legacy of Janis Joplin, Grace Slick, and Aretha Franklin can be seen in the leading female musicians of today, both in terms of genre and content. Women are at the forefront in all of the major music genres: rock (No Doubt, Evanescence, Joan Jett), pop (Beyoncé, Katy Perry, Taylor Swift, Lady Gaga), rap and hip-hop (Missy Elliot, Nicki Minaj), and country (Dolly Parton, Carrie Underwood). These artists are upfront about female sexual pleasure, societal double standards, and the power and strength of women. Katy Perry's "I Kissed a Girl" (2008) caused shockwaves when it was released because it hinted at a not-yet mainstream aspect of female sexuality. Beyoncé continues to pen songs that espouse women's strength: "If I Were a Boy" (2008), "Run the World (Girls)" (2011), and "Hold Up" (2016). Joplin's larger-than-life personality, charismatic sexuality, laidback sense of style, whiskey-laced stage antics, and full-bodied performances may not share exactly the same artistic DNA as contemporary music's tastemakers and trendsetters, but she was indisputably revolutionary in her time, and she paved the way for many of the female musicians who followed.

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A *Night with Janis Joplin* Glossary

Amedeo Modigliani (1884–1920) was an Italian painter and sculptor known for his elongated human figures. Refusing to be categorized by any of the major art movements of the time—cubism, dadaism, surrealism—his talent was unrecognized during his career. Only after his death was his artistry acknowledged. Today, his works command prices of up to $170 million.

The Avalon Ballroom was a music venue in San Francisco from 1966 to '69. Founded by Robert E. Cohen and Chet Helms, it was one of the central venues of the 1960s counterculture movement.

A beatnik is a member of the 1950s and '60s beat literary movement. A beatnik's characteristics included pseudo-intellectualism, anti-materialism, and drug use. The word was coined in 1958 by *San Francisco Chronicle* columnist Herb Caen.

Big Brother and the Holding Company is a rock band most closely associated with Janis Joplin, who was its lead singer from 1966 to '68. The band (comprising Joplin, Peter Albin, Sam Andrew, Dave Getz, and James Gurley) was a major part of the psychedelic rock scene in San Francisco during the late 1960s, playing as the Avalon Ballroom's house band.

Capricorn is the tenth zodiac sign, attributed to people born between December 22 and January 19. The sign is represented by a sea-goat. Those born under this sign (including Janis Joplin, who was born January 19, 1949) are reputed to be ambitious, hardworking, and stubborn.

Casablanca is the largest city in Morocco. It became known as a romantic and exotic destination thanks to the 1942 film of the same name, starring Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman.

Cat is slang for "a cool person." It is associated with jazz music and the beatnik era.

The Chantels was a pop girl group that was popular from 1957 to '70. In 1969, Joplin covered one of its more famous songs, "Maybe" (1958).

Chester Leo "Chet" Helms (1942–2005) was a music promoter dubbed the "father of the Summer of Love." Raised in Texas, he found professional success in

The Grateful Dead, c. 1966. Photo by Gene Anthony; collection of the California Historical Society. Featured in *On the Road to the Summer of Love*, on view at the California Historical Society from May 12 through September 10, 2017.

San Francisco, where he founded and managed the band Big Brother and the Holding Company.

The Dead is short for the Grateful Dead, a rock band from 1965 to '95. It was a groundbreaking player in the 1960s counterculture in San Francisco.

F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896–1940) and his wife, **Zelda** (1900–48), were novelists and socialites. They were celebrities of the jazz age; Zelda is often referred to as the original flapper. In the 1930s, F. Scott suffered from alcoholism, while Zelda was diagnosed with schizophrenia and spent much of her life in and out of psychiatric institutions.

"Give me a 12 bar in D" is a line that needs unpacking. The phrase "12 bar" refers to the 12-bar blues, a musical form that features a specific chord progression, chord structure, and lyrical phrasing. The lyrics are typically divided into verses of three lines; the first two lines in a verse are repetitions of the same words ("What good can drinkin' do? / What good can drinkin' do? / Lord, I drink all night but the next day I still feel blue" in Joplin's "What Good Can Drinkin' Do"). "D" refers to the what key the piece is in.

Haight-Ashbury is a district in San Francisco located on the eastern edge of Golden Gate Park. During the 1960s, it became the epicenter of the hippie counterculture; Janis Joplin, members of the Grateful Dead, and members of Jefferson Airplane all lived in this area.

Heavies is short for heavy hitters, a slang word for influential or famous people.

Hello, Dolly! (1964) is a musical by Jerry Herman and Michael Stewart. Starring

Jefferson Airplane playing at a festival in Marin county, California, 1967. Photo by Bryan Costales. Courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

Carol Channing, it won 10 Tony Awards and became one of the longest-running musicals in Broadway history.

Jefferson Airplane was a psychedelic rock band from San Francisco from 1965 to '72. Its original members included Marty Balin, Paul Kantner, Grace Slick, Jorma Kaukonen, Jack Casady, and Spencer Dryden. In 1972, Jefferson Airplane split into two separate bands: Hot Tuna and Jefferson Starship.

Jerry Ragovoy (1930–2011) was a songwriter and record producer whose songs were made famous by the Rolling Stones and Janis Joplin. Joplin recorded "Piece of My Heart," "Try (Just a Little Bit Harder)," and "My Baby."

Joan Baez (born 1941) is an American singer, songwriter, and activist. Bursting onto the scene in 1960, she used her fame to draw attention to issues like the war in Vietnam, human rights, and world peace. She performed at the first Woodstock Festival in 1969.

"Kosmic Blues" is a song from *I Got Dem Ol' Kozmic Blues Again Mama!* (1969), the album that Joplin released after leaving Big Brother and the Holding Company.

The Lawrence Welk Show was an American musical variety show that ran from 1951 to '71. Hosted by bandleader Lawrence Welk, it featured a wide range of musical genres, including big band, pop, country, patriotic, and religious music. It upheld the traditional, wholesome values of the 1950s.

Monterey is a city 100 miles south of San Francisco. In June 1967, it was the site of **the Monterey International Pop Festival**, a three-day, open-air concert featuring artists such as Jimi Hendrix, The Who, and Janis Joplin. The concert was such a success that it became a template for many future music festivals, such as Woodstock.

My Fair Lady (1956) is a musical by Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe based on George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* (1913).

Starring Rex Harrison and Julie Andrews, it set the record for the longest run on Broadway with 2,717 performances.

Nancy Drew is a fictional girl detective created by Edward Stratemeyer in 1930. The books became popular among preteen girls in the 1930s and '40s. In 1959, the books were revised and shortened to appeal to younger readers. As a result, the heroine became more feminine and less assertive.

Olema is an unincorporated community in Marin County, California, known for its countercultural identity.

Porgy and Bess (1934) is an opera composed by George Gershwin. It tells the story of street-beggar Porgy who tries to rescue Bess from a controlling lover and a violent drug dealer. One of its songs, "Summertime," has become popular in its own right and has been covered by artists including Billie Holiday and Janis Joplin.

Port Arthur is an oil town located in southeastern Texas near the border with Louisiana.

Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–69) was a Dutch painter who is known for his precise portraiture, his exceptional control of light and shadow, and his mixture of the mystical and the earthly.

The Rolling Stones is an English rock band that was part of the British Invasion and San Francisco's counterculture in the 1960s. Formed in 1962, the band has achieved great success. Many of its songs have entered popular culture, like "You Can't Always Get What You Want" and "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction."

Threadgill's is a restaurant with live music in Austin, Texas. Owner Kenneth Threadgill (1909–87) was a country singer who became a mentor to the young Janis Joplin, sharing with her his knowledge of music when she performed at his bar with the Waller Creek Boys. Threadgill's is where she was discovered by Chet Helms.

The Waller Creek Boys was a folk band formed in Austin in 1962, featuring Janis Joplin, Lanny Wiggins, and Powell St. John.

West Side Story is a 1957 musical by Leonard Bernstein, Stephen Sondheim, and Arthur Laurents based on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Set in New York City, it tells the story of star-crossed lovers **Tony** and **Maria** who are from rival gangs (the white **Jets** and the Puerto Rican **Sharks**). There is also a secondary couple, **Bernardo** and **Anita**, who are caught up in this violence.

Woodrow Wilson "Woody" Guthrie (1912–67) was a singer-songwriter known for his protest and folk music. One of his most famous songs is "This Land Is Your Land."

Woodstock (or the Woodstock Music & Art Fair) was a music festival in upstate New York in August 1969. The acts that performed included Joan Baez, the Grateful Dead, Creedence Clearwater Revival, Janis Joplin, The Who, Jefferson Airplane, and Jimi Hendrix.

Questions to Consider

1. What did you know about Janis Joplin before you saw this show? Did the show confirm or refute those ideas?

2. What surprised you about *A Night with Janis Joplin*?

3. Why is the Summer of Love important for San Franciscans to remember and celebrate?

4. How did Joplin's influences make it possible for her to succeed? In turn, how do you think she has influenced the course of music since?

5. What was it about the late '60s that made it a fertile era for Joplin to achieve fame?

Have an answer? We'd love to hear from you. Email your thoughts to **shodgson@act-sf.org**. You may even see your answer published on our blog at blog.act-sf.org!

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