

“Always Nina”

A Tennessee Story and Songbook

Stories by Nina Cathey Allbert

Music and Lyrics by Joan Burr

Book by Nina Cathey Allbert and Joan Burr

Nina Cathey Allbert and Joan Burr return to the Thomaston Opera House September 2019! During the 1990's, Nina played a starring role in many TOH productions, including *Guys and Dolls*, *Into the Woods*, *Kiss Me Kate*, *Steel Magnolias*, *Passion*, *My Fair Lady*, *Hello Dolly*, *Noises Off*, *Children of Eden*, *Tommy*, *Pirates of Penzance*, *1776*, and *The Secret Garden*. A wonderful partnership was born when Joan joined Nina as music director/pianist for many of these shows, beginning with Stephen Sondheim's *Passion*. Their collaboration has continued over the years, and they are thrilled to bring their new, original musical to Thomaston, where it all began. *Always Nina: a Tennessee Story and Songbook* will be presented by Landmark Community Theatre in the black box theatre at the Thomaston Opera House Arts Center from September 6 to September 15, 2019.

Always Nina: a Tennessee Story and Songbook played to standing ovations at the Community Center in Pomona Park, Florida, on the Ides of March, 2018. Three years earlier, in June, Joan and Roger were visiting with Nina in Tuxedo Park, New York, one last time before Nina moved to Kansas to be with Al. As usual, several delightful hours passed listening to Nina's stories of Tennessee and of her family. Joan said, "You really should write these stories down.....or even make a show of them." "Oh, I'm not a writer. I can't do that," Nina replied. Without a blink.....or a second thought.....Joan jumped right in. "Just record your stories on your iPhone and send the sound files to me. I'll write them down for you. I may even turn some of them into songs!" They had just seen the one-woman show, *The Pianist of Willisden Lane*, a Jewish girl's war story, at the Hartford Stage two months earlier and had been enthralled by Mona Golabek's story and pianistic talent. They realized that Nina could do a similar type of show with her humorous and entertaining Southern stories and her incredible singing voice. Well, three years and two trips to Nina's Florida house later, we had a show. As one audience member at our workshop performance stated, Nina is not just a singer, she is a PERFORMER! Her stories have now been set to music and brought to life for audiences everywhere to enjoy. Since these workshop performances, Nina has continued to charm audiences across the country. After two successful weeks of performances in August, 2018, at the beautiful Bibb-White Bluff Civic Center in Nina's hometown of White Bluff, Tennessee, Joan and Nina moved on to Joan's hometown of Glastonbury, Connecticut, where they presented *Always Nina* on November 17 and 18, 2018. A return trip to Florida for performances in Pomona Park and at the Shoestring Theatre in Deland in March, 2019, was followed by a very successful run at Arts Center East in Vernon, Connecticut in April.

WHAT OUR AUDIENCE MEMBERS ARE SAYING:

A must see! Exceptional stories, lyrics and music, all original, some breathtaking in quality. Nina's stories are both uniquely hers, and uniquely Tennessean, but in some ways the stories of us all. Poignant in parts, entertaining and laugh-out-loud funny in parts, all delivered with just the right touch. Beautiful piano accompaniment that will just carry you away. For all ages, young and old. A delightful and memorable experience.

From Pomona Park Florida, 3/15/18

.....your overall message of inner strength, perseverance, and most of all love--for your family, your husband, and your community was beautiful. Thanks for being both vulnerable and strong enough to bring your journey to the stage. Brava!

From White Bluff, Tennessee, 8/25/18

Today, Terry, Jennifer and I went to see Nina Allbert in Always Nina: A Tennessee Story and Songbook. The show was awesome!! My heart strings were tugged, I laughed out loud, had tears in my eyes, and got chills when Nina and group sang Amazing Grace. Also, I thoroughly enjoyed hearing stories of precious White Bluff characters as well as stories from Nina's travels!! So sorry today was the last performance...would have gone again!!

From White Bluff, Tennessee, 8/26/18

Dear Joan.....Your music so beautifully enhanced and developed Nina's stories. And she is a wonderful storyteller and performer. The show was just delightful. I am glad I got to see it. What is your next endeavor?

From Glastonbury, Connecticut, 11/18/2018

A NOTE FROM NINA CATHEY ALLBERT

This musical has been a labor of love and it would not have happened without the driving force of Joan Burr. She truly believed that these stories should have an audience and wrote beautiful music around them. I have listened to my family tell stories all of my life. We all do it! Family get-togethers are loud, with each of us trying to "top" the previous story. They are filled with laughter, wiping of eyes, and "Oh, tell the one..."! I hope this show makes you recall your own family stories, and I encourage you to tell them, and often! One of my favorite quotes is from Designing Women; Julia Sugarbaker proudly says, "In the south we are proud of our crazy folks; we do not hide them in a back room; we bring them down to the parlor and show them off." Nina Cathey Allbert has been performing since her first role as a lion when she was six. She taught music and drama for twenty- six years in Nashville, TN; Glastonbury, CT; and Tuxedo Park, NY. While teaching full time, she continued, and continues, to perform in local community and professional theatres throughout the United States. She was a soloist on numerous occasions for the Nashville Symphony Orchestra. She received her Master's Degree at Wesleyan University in Middletown, CT, and continued advanced studies in music at The Manhattan School of Music. Some of her favorite roles include: Dolly Levi, Eliza Doolittle, Nellie Forbush, Kate in Kiss Me Kate, M'lynn and Ouiser in Steel Magnolias, and Daisy in Driving Miss Daisy. While performing in Connecticut she was awarded "Best Actress in a Musical", "Best Supporting Actress in a Musical", "Best Actress in a Play" and "Entertainer of the Year" by the Waterbury Republican. Working on Always Nina with her wonderful friend and talented composer Joan Burr has truly been a labor of love. She is grateful for the support of her husband Al, her daughter Roxie and all of her friends and students who often begged, "Please, tell us a story"! This show is for you!

Composer and lyricist Joan Burr is a graduate of the Eastman School of Music. A retired public school music teacher, she now performs as a pianist and vocalist and composes music for choir, piano, solo instruments and voice. Her previous works include a full-length musical about a German girl and Jewish family during the Holocaust, Behind the Bedroom Wall, which has been performed in Glastonbury, CT, and at the Connecticut Repertory Theatre at the University of

Connecticut in Storrs, CT Joan is a native New Englander, currently living with her husband, Roger, in Glastonbury, CT.