



Denver Center
Theatre Company

Inside Out

PRODUCED BY THE MARKETING DEPARTMENT OF THE DENVER CENTER THEATRE COMPANY

OCTOBER 2003



Photo by Gary Isaacs

A Denver Center Production In Association with Harold Thau

Almost Heaven

Songs and Stories of John Denver

Opens October 2 • The Ricketson Theatre

Songs by John Denver and others
Written and Adapted by Peter Glazer
Orchestrations, Vocal Arrangements and Musical
Direction by Jeff Waxman
Original Concept by Harold Thau
Musical Consultation by Milt Okun
Directed by Randal Myler

“Annie's Song,” “Sunshine on my Shoulder” and “Rocky Mountain High” were only three of the songs that swept away Denver audiences during the 2001-02 season. DCTC director and artistic associate Randal Myler brings John Denver back in a brand new production with added songs and a new cast.

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The Playwright

Peter Glazer is Assistant Professor of Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies at the University of California-Berkeley. He specializes in directing, adaptation, performance theory, 20th century American theatre, and commemorative performance.

Peter is a director and playwright whose adaptations and collaborations include *Woody Guthrie's American Song* (Bay Area Drama Critics awards at Berkeley Rep and San Jose Rep; Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle nominations at the Melting Pot Theatre Co. in New York City; multi-Joseph Jefferson Award winner at Northlight Theatre in Chicago), *Almost Heaven: Songs and Stories of John Denver* (Denver Center Theatre Company), *O'Carolan's Farewell to Music* (Delaware Theatre Co. and Eureka Theatre, San Francisco), *Heart of Spain - A Musical of the Spanish Civil War*, a workshop production of *Foe* (Northwestern University), and *Michael, Margaret, Pat & Kate* (Victory Gardens Theatre, Chicago, IL, and Marin

Theatre Co., Mill Valley, CA). He has directed other plays and musicals including *My Fair Lady*, *Big River*, *Unidentified Human Remains* and *The True Nature of Love*. Last spring at UC-Berkeley, he directed José Rivera's play *Marisol*, and will direct the world premiere of *Foe*, his adaptation of J.M. Coetzee's novel, in the fall of 2003. He is a member of Actors' Equity Association, a member and past Executive Board member of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers, and a Governing Board member of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives (ALBA). In his work with American veterans of the Spanish Civil War and ALBA, he has written and directed five commemorative performances for the veterans' annual gatherings in New York and San Francisco. Becoming involved in ALBA and the veterans' community led to his dissertation: *Radical Nostalgia: Spanish Civil War Commemoration and the Politics of Desire*.

Biography: John Denver

One of the world's best-known and best-loved performers, John Denver earned international acclaim as a songwriter, performer, actor, environmentalist and humanitarian. John's music has spanned three decades, outlasted countless musical trends and garnered numerous music awards and honors, including the prestigious Albert Schweitzer Music award in 1993 and induction into the Songwriters' Hall of Fame in 1996.

The son of a U.S. Air Force officer, John's artistic journey began after the family moved to Tucson, where at age 11, he was given his grandmother's guitar. John eventually took up guitar lessons and joined a boy's choir, which led him at age 20 to take matters into his own hands and pursue his dream of a career in music.

In 1963 he struck out on his own, moving to Los Angeles to be in the heart of the burgeoning music scene. It was during this time that Henry John Deutschendorf Jr. was urged by friends to change his name if a recording career was to be in his future. His friends suggested the name John Somerville, but he ultimately took his stage name from the beautiful Rocky Mountain capital city of Colorado.

John Denver experienced his first major break in the music industry when he was chosen from 250 other hopefuls as lead singer for the popular Mitchell Trio. Two years and three albums later, John had honed his considerable vocal talent and developed his own songwriting style. He soon gained recognition when his song "Leaving On A Jet Plane" was recorded by Peter, Paul and Mary, becoming their first and only Number One hit.

Less than two years later, after the trio disbanded, John himself was climbing up the Pop charts with songs like "Take Me Home, Country Roads," "Rocky Mountain High," "Sunshine On My Shoulders," "Annie's Song," "Back Home Again,"

"Thank God I'm A Country Boy," and "Calypso," solidifying his position as one of the top stars of the decade.

Denver's concert tours reached millions globally. The world embraced John, captivated by each new release, including 18 gold albums and ten platinum albums in the US, as well as numerous gold and platinum sales overseas.

All of this emerged as a reflection of John's personal growth and artistic evolution. By the time his third album was released in 1970, John's social and political leanings were more clearly defined. He was one of the first artists to share a socially responsible message through his music, beginning with the song "Whose Garden Was This?" which launched a long line of songs about the environment.

Fans responded to his environmental and humanitarian messages, heartfelt urgings towards the earth, peace, and compassion that were consistently communicated in a gentle manner on his records and at live performances.

His passion to help create a global community paved the way for ventures into new musical and geographical territories. In 1985 he was invited by the Soviet Union of Composers to perform in their country, inspiring the internationally acclaimed song "Let Us Begin (What Are We Making Weapons For?)," which was featured on John's 25th album "One World."

A separate and unique version of the song was recorded in Moscow as a duet with the well-known Soviet singer Alexandre Gradsky. That recording was the first time a Soviet artist was allowed to perform on a record with a major American singer. The powerful video of "Let Us Begin" moved viewers around the world.

"I thought that I might be able to do something to further the cause of East/West understanding," he said. "[This] seemed like a good time to see the face behind all the propaganda. The Russians say

"...The Russians say that the first swallow of spring won't make the weather for the whole season, but it can mark the turn toward a warmer climate. I tried to be that swallow."

Biography: John Denver

C O N T I N U E D

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The success of his visit paved the way for a concert tour of the USSR in 1986. These were the first performances by an American artist since the start of Cold War—an unprecedented cultural exchange between the United States and the Soviet Union. He returned to the USSR in 1987 to give a benefit concert for the victims of Chernobyl.

John was also the first artist from the west to do a multi-city tour of Mainland China, in October 1992. He was somewhat astonished to discover how popular and well known his songs were among the Chinese. "Country Roads," he was

told, "is the most famous song written in the West."

John also contributed his talents to benefit many charitable and environmental causes and received numerous civic and humanitarian awards over the years.

Today, millions of fans, old and new, still enjoy the work of this extraordinary performer. Thirty albums and three decades after he began, John Denver's music is as relevant as ever. His humanitarian work continues to strengthen our global village, and his dynamic celebration of life, spirit and nature is a powerful inspiration to us all.

Philanthropy

John's music clearly reflects the conscience of a concerned citizen, a man working for the improvement of the quality of life for all people – environmentally, socially and politically. He was asked to serve as a member of the Presidential Commission on World and Domestic Hunger and was one of five founders of The Hunger Project, an organization committed to the sustainable end of chronic hunger. John was asked to be a member of the fact-finding delegation, which toured African countries devastated by drought and starvation, as a representative of the Hunger project and UNICEF. Because of his tireless effort and dedication, Denver was awarded the Presidential "World Without Hunger" Award.

John also received recognition from many governments for his concerts about global hunger problems. Other causes John supported include The National Wildlife Federation, Save The Children, The Cousteau Society, Friends of the Earth and the Human/Dolphin Foundation, to name just a few.

"My music and all my work stem from the conviction that people everywhere are intrinsically the same. When I write a song, I want to take the personal experience or observation that inspired it and express it in as universal a way as possible. I'm a global citizen. I've created that for myself, and I don't want to step away from it. I want to work in whatever I do...towards a world in balance, a world that creates a better quality of life for all people."

– John Denver in a 1995 interview

This commitment led to the establishment of The Windstar Foundation, a not-for-profit environmental education and research center founded by

Denver, Hal Thau and Tom Crum in 1976.

Windstar works to promote a holistic approach to addressing global issues, inspiring individuals to recognize themselves as an integral and vital part of the world around them and to work toward a sustainable future for the world.

The most prominent of John's philanthropic involvements began when he founded "Plant-It 2020," a leading environmental foundation that urges people all over the world to plant as many indigenous trees as possible. This reforestation project is aimed at encouraging citizens everywhere to recognize the necessity of replenishing what humanity has wantonly destroyed. "Plant-It 2020" has met with instant response from people everywhere in all walks of life, including major foundations, businesses and institutions. More than one million indigenous trees have been planted since the foundation was started in 1992.

"I see more clearly now what I can do about [the Earth's needs], and I see that it needs doing as I live my life, daily, reverently. This isn't the reverence of "holier than thou," it's the reverence that says, "Do thyself no harm, for we are all here together." Not you or me, but you and me."

PHILANTHROPIC AWARDS HE RECEIVED:

- 1979: U.S. Jaycee's Ten Outstanding men of America Award
- Whale Protection Fund Service Award
- 1985: NASA Medal for Public Service
- Presidential "World Without Hunger Award" conferred by President Reagan
- 1990: National Wildlife Federation Conservation Achievement Award
- International Center for Tropical Ecology World Ecology Award

BOARD OF DIRECTORS & ADVISORY BOARDS HE SERVED ON:

- Presidential commission on World & Domestic Hunger, under President Carter's administration

- Plant-It-2030 (Founder and Chairman of the Board)
- The Cousteau Society
- The Hunger Project (Founder, Board of Directors)
- The Windstar Foundation (Founder, Board of Directors)
- National Space Institute
- World Federalists Association
- Friends of the Earth
- Est
- The Kushi Foundation
- Human/Dolphin Foundation
- Music Association of Aspen
- Aspen Center for Environmental Studies
- The Challenger Center

Recording Awards

ASCAP TOP HITS

1969 – “Leaving On A Jet Plane”
1971 – “Follow Me,” “Take Me Home, Country Roads”
1973 – “Rocky Mountain High”
1975 – “Calypso,” “Fly Away,” “I’m Sorry,” “Thank God I’m A Country Boy”
1976 – “Looking For Space”
1977 – “Baby You Look Good To Me Tonight”
1978 – “How Can I Leave You Again”
1981 – “Take Me Home, Country Roads” (re-release)

Platinum Albums (1 Million Sold):

Back Home Again
Poems, Prayers and Promises
Rocky Mountain High
John Denver’s Greatest Hits
An Evening With John Denver
A Christmas Together (John Denver and the Muppets)
I Want To Live
Spirit

Platinum Singles:

“Take Me Home, Country Roads”
“Rocky Mountain High”
“Farewell Andromeda”
“Aerie”
“Windsong”
“Back Home Again”
“Rocky Mountain Christmas”
“Poems, prayers and Promises”
“I Want To Live”
“A Christmas Together”
“Spirit”
“Some Days Are Diamonds”

Gold Singles:

“Sunshine On My Shoulders”
“Back Home Again”
“I’m Sorry”
“Thank God I’m A Country Boy”
“Annie’s Song”
“Perhaps Love” (with Placido Domingo)

International Record Sales

CANADA GOLD

John Denver’s Greatest Hits
“A Christmas Together”

GERMANY GOLD

Great Successes (a release of Greatest Hits Vols. 1&2)
The Best of John Denver

PLATINUM

Great Successes

In 1981, John received a special RCA Award for his album *John Denver’s Greatest Hits*, which sold in excess of 20 million copies in the US alone, and is still one of the largest selling albums in the history of RCA.

International Record Sales

C O N T I N U E D

AUSTRALIA

GOLD

“Rocky Mountain Christmas”
An Evening With John Denver
“Windsong”
“Rocky Mountain High”
John Denver’s Greatest Hits
“Poems, Prayers and Promises”
“Back Home Again”
“Higher Ground”
“Spirit”
“Rocky Mountain High”
An Evening With John Denver
Greatest Hits Volume 2

PLATINUM

Greatest hits Volume 2
“Back Home Again”
“Some Days Are Like Diamonds”

UNITED KINGDOM

GOLD

An Evening With John Denver
“Rocky Mountain High”
“Windsong”
“Back Home Again”
“Live in London”
The Best of John Denver

PLATINUM

“Back Home Again”
“Live in London”
Best of John Denver

Music & Writing Awards

Among the numerous tributes and awards listed below, John Denver was the recipient of the prestigious Albert Schweitzer Music Award in 1993, given to him "For a life's work dedicated to music and devoted to humanity." It was the first time a non-classical music artist had been so honored.

In 1996 he was inducted into the national Academy of Popular Music’s Songwriter’s Hall of Fame.

1974

Cashbox’s #1 Album seller, #1 Artist
ASCAP Award for Top Album of the Year

1974/75

Record World’s Top Male Recording Artist

1975

ABC’s Bi-centennial Music Award for Top Male Vocalist by the National Press
Finalist in 5 categories for Country Music Awards
Country Music Song of the Year (“Back Home Again”)
People’s Choice Award’s Favorite Musical Performer
AGVA Singing Star of the Year

1977

People’s Choice Award

1977

Poet Laureate of Colorado

1982

Carl Sandburg’s People’s Poet Award

1993

Albert Schweitzer Music Award

1996

Induction into Songwriter’s Hall of Fame

Personal Passions

John was a true adventurer, exploring all that the world had to offer. Throughout his life's journey, John challenged himself on every level, which is an integral part of what made him an extraordinary man, an uncommon friend and a rare human being.

While the frontiers of the American West satisfied his spirit, less-traveled frontiers appealed to his imagination. John's well-known interest in outer space led him to witness the launch of the first internationally-manned space flight, the Apollo/Soyuz 1. He was so taken with the experience that he attended the launch of the Apollo/Soyuz 2 as well as the landing of the space shuttle, the STS 1. His enthusiasm for space travel was so great that he took and passed NASA's physical examination to determine mental and physical fitness needed for space travel.

He then became one of the leading candidates to be the "first civilian in space." John was planning on writing a song while up in space. Luckily for him, circumstances kept him from joining that ill-fated expedition which saddened the world when it exploded during take-off in 1986.

One of the thrills of his involvement with NASA was getting to fly and land the Space Shuttle simulator. Because of his steadfast support, NASA awarded John its public service medal for helping "increase awareness of space exploration by the people of the world." John was also honored to be the Master of Ceremonies at the Goddard Dinner in Washington D.C., a yearly black tie event that

honors aerospace luminaries which is attended by aerospace executives, government officials and space educators, to honor the previous years achievements in space.

Among his many gifts, John was also a talented photographer. He photographed images of the people he met and places he experienced all over the world, and showed his work professionally, often in connection with speeches made at colleges, universities as well as government and business facilities across the country.

A series of John's photographs along with paintings by David Armstrong were exhibited by the Hammer Gallery in NYC from December 2, 1980 through January 7th 1981, celebrating and benefiting The Windstar Foundation.

Many of John's songs reflected his relationship with nature and indeed, one of his greatest pleasures was spending time outdoors. He spent as much time as possible backpacking, hiking and climbing and was also an avid fisherman; he had a rod and reel in hand almost as often as a guitar. John was a golf enthusiast as well, not only as a yearly guest at the Bob Hope Celebrity Classic, but as the host of his own annual Pro-Am Celebrity Golf Tournament in Tucson every January.

These are just a few of John Denver's numerous interests, all of which help to illuminate the true diversity of John Denver's talents and passions.

S O U R C E F O R A L L S T O R I E S

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JANUS

FLORENCE
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