

2 October 2016

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**COMMISSIONED SONG COMMEMORATING 35-YEAR LANDMARK  
OF AIDS PANDEMIC DEBUTS AT LATCHIS THEATRE**

(Brattleboro, VT) A song commissioned to commemorate the 35<sup>th</sup> year of the AIDS pandemic will debut on October 15 during the performance of *Elegies for Angels, Punks and Raging Queens* at the Latchis Theatre in Brattleboro, VT. Richard W. Smith, vocal instructor at Vermont Academy and music director for the production, penned the music and lyrics for “Give Me Tomorrow.”

Smith’s life has revolved around music since he was a young boy. Noted for his musical prowess at age 14 when he began the piano, two years later he was working as an intern for the Osmond family in Hollywood, including the ABC variety show *The Osmonds*, starring Donnie and Marie Osmond. As a teen, Smith also composed and performed in many competitions.

But by the time he reached 23, health-related issues got the better of Smith and he left Los Angeles seeking a life out of the limelight, shifting his musical focus from performance-based music to choral and orchestral-based music rather than original compositions.

When commissioned to write a piece reflecting upon the last 35 years of those living with HIV and having died from AIDS, Smith decided it was time to compose once again. He knew he wanted the song to focus on a hopeful future that will bring about an end to the disease. “Just like Harvey Milk’s message to the gay community in the late 70s, I believe in hope. Hope for a cure. Hope for moving beyond tolerance toward acceptance. Hope for meaning in the lives that have come before, all those people who have been loved and lost.”

The song will be performed by singer Emily Dixon and available for I-Tunes download that night as part of a text-a-thon after the show has ended. All sales proceeds on October 15 will be donated to the AIDS Project of Southern Vermont, for whom the performance is a benefit.

Smith has been involved in the industry for decades, beginning as a staffer at Walt Disney and Warner Brothers Studios. Projects include *Tiny Toons*, *Star Trek TNG*, *Ghost*, *Kindergarten Cop*, *High School Musical*, *Beauty and the Beast* and *Aladdin*. He has composed over 250 pieces of music in print through Hinshaw Music, Theodore Presser and Universe, and been involved in 40 album productions.

*Elegies* is a song cycle with music by Janet Hood and lyrics and additional text by lyricist Bill Russell. It debuted in 1989 at the Ohio Theatre in Manhattan’s SoHo district before moving on to London. Each of the monologues is written from the perspective of characters who’ve died from AIDS, and the songs represent the feelings of friends and family members dealing with the loss. The piece was developed in the late 1980s and originally entitled “The Quilt” to acknowledge the AIDS Memorial Quilt, founded in 1985 by AIDS activist, Cleve Jones.

Lead sponsor for the event is **The Samara Fund**, a component fund of the Vermont Community Foundation, helping to create a vibrant Vermont LGBTQ community and ensure that LGBTQ Vermonters are connected, healthy, appreciated, safe, and empowered. The Fund

will celebrate its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary as Vermont's premiere philanthropic organization for LGBTQ and HIV/AIDS causes in 2017. The Vermont Community Foundation is a family of hundreds of charitable funds and foundations dedicated to creating healthy and vital Vermont communities. <http://www.vermontcf.org/samara>

Net proceeds benefit the **AIDS Project of Southern Vermont**, a 501c3 nonprofit organization founded in 1988. <http://www.aidsprojectsouthernvermont.org/>

For all details about weekend events, visit [www.elegiesvt.com](http://www.elegiesvt.com). To purchase tickets visit <https://app.arts-people.com/index.php?ticketing=larts>