**Richmond / Ermet Aid Foundation’s**

**HELP IS ON THE WAY 31 - Sun. July 20, 2025 – 7:30 pm**

**Orpheum Theatre in SF.**

**Rev. 5-30-25**

**BIOS- Performers and Producers**

***Including in Alphabetical Order*** *(scheduled to appear as of 5/4/25)…*

**LEANNE BORGHESI,**

**JASON BROCK,**

**GARRETT CLAYTON,**

**JULIE GARNYE,   
SAM HARRIS,**

**SHARON McNIGHT**

**BRUCE VILANCH,**

**PAULA WEST,   
and the Broadway touring cast of *“& Juliet***

**Musical Director – CESAR CANCINO**

**Producers: - KEN HENDERSON & JOE SEILER**

**LEANNE BORGHESI**

A vividly fierce, award-winning singer, actress, film and cabaret performer, Leanne has captivated audiences from San Francisco to New York in major concert halls, theaters, and nightclub venues with her brassy vocals and sultry Siren style. Leanne has shined in lead roles in musical theater, supporting performances in award-winning feature films (Evil Sublet) , and created a string of original, critically acclaimed MAC Award-winning theatrical cabaret and nightclub acts — including The ShowBroads, Mood Swings and Borghesi’s Back!  Her bold, irreverent artistry has garnered sold-out shows and, most recently, the New York Manhattan Association of Cabarets (MAC) Award for Best Musical Comedy Performer for her smash comedic hit, Borghesi’s Back!

A featured guest soloist with The Mabel Mercer Foundation, Leanne has had the honor of performing at The Rose Theater at Jazz at Lincoln Center and the Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall. Her New York nightclub & cabaret performances span iconic venues such as Birdland Jazz Club, 54 Below, The Greenroom 42, Don’t Tell Mama, The Duplex, Laurie Beechman Theater, The Triad Theater, and Feinstein’s at the Nikko. She can also be seen in the multi-award-winning horror comedy, feature film Evil Sublet, currently streaming on Amazon Prime starring Sally Struthers, Jennifer Leigh Houston, and an all-star cast. She will be returning to Jazz at Lincoln Center October 2025 in a celebration of the music and life of composer Cy Coleman. A proud member of Actors’ Equity Association, Leanne continues to dazzle audiences with her brassy vocals, sultry siren sizzle, comedic flair, and larger-than-life presence.

**JASON BROCK**

**Jason Brock** is a singer and actor who was a top 12 finalist on the X-Factor USA (Season 2). He’s also a four-time recipient of the Bay Area Reporter’s “Best Male Cabaret Singer” award. Jason has released several singles and music videos throughout his career. He’s been seen in many Japanese and American TV shows, films and commercials. Jason is currently performing live in San Francisco and beyond. <https://www.facebook.com/jasonbrockvocals/>

**SAM HARRIS**

**Sam Harris** is a Tony-nominated Broadway star, multi-platinum recording artist, and longtime "Help is on the Way” participant. Sam has been lauded by critics as one of the most powerful and versatile forces on the stage. Rolling Stone Magazine put him on their list of “The 100 Greatest Singers of All Time.” He first came into the public eye on the TV talent show, STAR SEARCH, pulling 25 million viewers a week. Jimmy Fallon called his now legendary performance of Over the Rainbow “one of the greatest performances ever on TV ever!” This led to a multi-platinum record career as well as numerous appearances on TV and in concert at prestigious venues from Carnegie Hall to London’s West End and everywhere in the world. Sam starred on Broadway in GREASE (Drama Desk), THE LIFE (Tony, Drama Desk, Outer Critic’s Circle nominations), THE PRODUCERS, the Broadway National Tour of JOSEPH AND THE AMAZINGH TECHNICOLOR DREAMCOAT, as well as JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR, CABARET, HAIR, PIPPIN, THE JAZZ SINGER, and THE FIRST WIVES CLUB, as well as the hit one-man shows HARD COPY, DIFFERENT HATS, SAM. And HAM: A MUSICAL MEMOIR, based on his best-selling book, “HAM: Slices of a Life,” playing to sold-out audiences in NY and LA to critical acclaim, and winning the prestigious Ovation Award for Best Musical and Best Actor. The show was filmed for TV and is on all major streaming sites. Behind the scenes, Sam co-wrote the TBS sit-com, DOWN TO EARTH, co- produced the TV special LOVE LETTER TO NEW YORK, supervised and directed segments of MICHAEL JACKSON’S 30 TH YEAR ANNIVERSARY at Madison Square Garden, and co-wrote LIZA’S AT THE PALACE for Liza Minnelli, winning the 2009 Tony Award. His first novel, “*The Substance of All Things”* received critical praise and is in development for a major motion picture.

**BRUCE VILANCH**

**Bruce Vilanch**, one of the most sought-after joke smiths in the entertainment industry, has become a recognizable face in his own right, thanks to the feature-length documentary "*Get Bruce!"* (1999) and his one-time stint as a regular on "Hollywood Squares" (1998), for which he also served as head writer.   
  
He made his feature debut as a dress manufacturer in "*Mahogany'* (1975), starring Diana Ross, and also contributed material to her live act. Mr. Vilanch put his Muppet-like persona to excellent use as Santa's number one helper in the syndicated TV-movie "*It Nearly Wasn't Christmas"* (1989). On the heels of *"Get Bruce!",* Vilanch performed his comedy stylings Off-Broadway in "*Bruce Vilanch: Almost Famous"* (2000). After a first act reminiscing on his odd path to almost famousness, he opened up the floor to questions in Act II, displaying his amazing ability for off-the-cuff one-liners. As he told US WEEKLY (June 12, 2000), there is a downside to celebrity: "*Now, I get knocked if someone tries something that doesn't work. Before it was the fault of these anonymous people, 'the writers.'"*  
Vilanch began contributing to Academy Awards telecasts in 1989, collaborating with the likes of Billy Crystal, Whoopi Goldberg and David Letterman, and graduated to head writer in 2000. He has roasted celebrities like Elizabeth Taylor and President Clinton. The Whoopi connection led to his providing the notorious material Ted Danson performed in blackface at a certain 1993 Friars Club roast of his then-girlfriend Goldberg, but his resume also includes "*You Made Me Watch You",* the Emmy-winning valedictory Midler crooned as a send-off to Johnny Carson.  
  
He scripted most of the Academy Awards telecasts over the last decade, two of which won Emmys, including the one featuring Billy Crystal’s Hannibal Lecter entrance. Mr. Vilanch has also written for The Tony's, The Grammy's, The Emmy's, and just about every other award show to brighten your television screen. He also participates and volunteers at almost every charity function, especially those dealing with GLBT issues.   
  
Mr. Vilanch capped off his 14th writing gig for the Oscars in 2003, wrote Bette Midler's 2003 Fall Tour and debuted in the popular Broadway hit, "*Hairspray*". For the part of Edna Turnblad, Mr. Vilanch shaved off his famous 30 year-old beard. No telling what's lurking in there...but one thing it has never been able to hide...TALENT!!!

When he's not doing benefits, he has been a Hollywood Square, a Baltimore housewife in the musical *HAIRSPRAY*, the Emmy-winning writer of 25 Oscar telecasts, and the Emmy-losing writer of some other award shows.  Altogether he is the EGOT of that particular brand of TV.  he's always happy to come to San Francisco because there is always a chance he will meet a tech billionaire half his age and be swept away to a vineyard.

**SHARON McNIGHT**

**Sharon McNight** began her career in San Francisco, and made her Broadway debut in 1989 in “Starmites”, creating the role of Diva.  She received a Tony nomination as “Best Leading Actress in a Musical” for her performance, and is the recipient of the coveted Theatre World Award for “Outstanding Broadway Debut” and a Hirschfeld drawing of her character.  She has six solo recordings to her credit, and has played from Moose Hall to Carnegie Hall, from Los Angeles to Berlin.  She has won two Lifetime Achievement awards, a MAC, a Bistro award, a New York Nightlife award, and six San Francisco Cabaret Gold awards.

Her eclectic repertory ranges from blues to country to good old fashioned entertainment. The Los Angeles Times called her "one of the great wonders of the musical stage." She is most noted for her movie reenactment of The Wizard of OZ and for being one of the few real women to impersonate Bette Davis.  
Ms. McNight received her Masters of Arts degree in direction from San Francisco State College and was a master teacher on the faculty of the Cabaret Conference at Yale University.  She says the greatest day of her life was the day she quit smoking.

**PAULA WEST** 

**Paula West** is an American jazz and cabaret singer known for her rich, powerful contralto voice and for her highly nuanced interpretations of an extraordinarily eclectic selection of songs that range from the Great American songbook to reinterpretations of songs by artists such as Bob Dylan, David Bowie, Lou Reed and Johnny Cash.

Ms. West has performed predominantly in clubs in SF and NY with additional performances in Philadelphia, Baltimore, and select European cities. For ten years she held a one-month residency at the Empire Plush Room at the York Hotel in SF. She has had recurring engagements at the Oak Room of the Algonquin Hotel, Jazz at Lincoln Center, and Mezzrow in NY as well as SF Jazz, Feinstein’s at The Nikko, and Yoshi’s in SF. Her nights at the Algonquin Hotel’s famed Oak Room earned her three straight NY Magazine Nightlife Awards as “*Outstanding Female Jazz Vocalist.”* The NY Times has been particularly vocal in their praise for Ms. West, singling out her “*thickly textured voice [that] has ripened into a driving expressive force*” and an “*ever-deepening feel for the blues.*” She has also performed at Lincoln Center with Wynton Marsalis, The White House, and Maison de la Musique in Paris as well as at numerous jazz festivals, including: the Monterey Jazz Festival, Spoleto Festival, Rochester Jazz Festival, San Jose Jazz Fest, Big Sur Jazz Festival, Los Gatos Jazz on The Plazz, Yerba Buena Gardens Festival, and the Fillmore Street Jazz Festival.

Her collaboration with noted pianist/arranger George Mesterhazy (who accompanied the late Jazz great Shirley Horn) was lauded in the NY Times, as “*a match made in pop-jazz heaven*” (Stephen Holden, *NY Times*, October 22, 2007). 

Ms. West has recorded four albums (three studio and one live), including: *Temptation* (1997), *Restless* (1999), *Come What May* (2001), and *Live at Jazz Standard* (2012). In February 2013, Ms. West traveled to NY to appear with [Wynton Marsalis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wynton_Marsalis) and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra to perform in *Blood on the Fields*for which he won a Pulitzer Prize.

Ms. West has been praised for her willingness to creatively re-imagine the standards that she does perform, and an eagerness to identify worthy songs not usually found within the jazz/cabaret repertoire.

Ms. West currently performs at jazz venues around the country and has recurring engagements at Feinstein’s at The Nikko Hotel (SF), SFJAZZ, and Jazz at Lincoln Center (NY). <https://www.mspaulawest.com>

**KEN HENDERSON, Producer**

Ken Henderson serves as Executive Director of REAF and has co-produced all REAF events along with his partner, Joe Seiler since its inception in 1994. When founders Barbara Richmond and Peggy Ermet called Ken and Joe with an idea of producing a benefit to honor both their sons and help raise funds to help support the agencies that provided services for their sons before they died, they both readily accepted.

As one of the original founders, Ken has helped create REAF’s vision and oversee most of the Foundation’s event committees. In addition to co-producing the *"Help is on the Way"* and "*Help is on the Way for the Holidays"* productions, he and Joe have worked with over 65 touring Broadway shows to produce the popular *"One Night Only"* benefit cabaret series of fundraisers for REAF and Broadway Cares/ Equity Fights AIDS. They also produced REAF’s *"All You Need is Love: A Help is on the Way Valentine Benefit", "Divas & Dames",* and *"Dances from the Heart I and II"* and *"Broadway Bares/San Francisco Strips*" for the past eight years.

In 2022, Ken and Joe moved to the Palm Springs/Cathedral City area, created an event committee there and began to produce a series of events in that area called *“House Party PS”* benefiting local charities in the Coachella Valley. These events each have a different theme, include special entertainment and a silent auction. These House Parties have all sold-out and raised significant funds for Coachella Valley area charities.

Additionally, Ken is the key contact for corporate underwriting for REAF, oversees the beneficiary selection process, is the chief administrative officer, and donates his graphic design skills and time to the Foundation. It is the faces of the many friends lost to AIDS, those still fighting the battle and the ongoing crises in hunger and homelessness that motivate Ken to continue with this cause. Together, we all can truly make a difference.

**JOE SEILER, Producer**

**Joe Seiler**, along with his partner Ken, has served as Executive Producers for *"Help is on the Way"* events since REAF’s inception. Joe has co-produced all Help is on the Way events as well as 19 *"Help is on the Way for the Holidays"* gala events.  Joe has directed several of REAF's *"Help is on the Way for the Holidays"* shows and co-produced all editions of REAF's newest, sexiest show, *"Broadway Bares/ San Francisco Strips."* Joe has also co-produced REAF's "*All You Need is Love Valentine Benefit," "Dances from the Heart," "The Big Gay Comedy Show"*and*"Donna Sachet's Big Gay Comedy Extravaganza."* He has been an integral force in developing new events for the foundation and has co-produced *"One Night Only"* cabaret benefits featuring over 65 Broadway touring casts including casts of: *Jekyll and Hyde, Cabaret, Sunset Boulevard, Les Miserables, Titanic, Ragtime, Aida, The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas, Kiss Me Kate, The Full Monty, Some Like it Hot, Phantom of the Opera, The Producers, Mamma Mia, Lion King, Beauty and the Beast, Hairspray, Evita, Annie, Avenue Q, Jersey Boys, Wicked, The Book of Mormon, Hair, West Side Story, Once, Newsies, Kinky Boots, School of Rock, Some Like It Hot, Hamilton* and many others. Joe has also served as co-producer and director of REAF’s *"One Night Only: Comedy Tonight"* and *"Divas and Dames in Concert."*

Joe began producing theatrical benefits while living in NY where he also worked as a band singer and MC. He eventually moved to SF where he worked for Macy’s as Manager of Training and Development. During this time, he also coordinated numerous events including talent shows, fashion shows, and customer appreciation events. Joe has been heard as the “Voice of God” for *"Help is on the Way*" events, the SF GLAAD awards, and the annual SF Hotel Hero Awards. Joe also has produced and edited a series of promotional video presentations about REAF and its mission. During the pandemic, he produced and edited 3 virtual REAF benefit concerts featuring video highlights from past REAF performances. Joe has also been instrumental in the recent development of a REAF Palm Springs chapter, supporting charities in the Coachella Valley.  In Palm Springs, REAF is producing its newest benefit series, *"House Party PS,"* featuring theme-based entertainment events conducted in beautiful residences donated by REAF supporters and has presented 14 events to date. Joe, along with his partner Ken, are proud to have been awarded the Lifetime of Commitment Award for dedication in improving the lives of those touched by HIV/AIDS from the Board of Directors of the National AIDS Memorial Grove. Joe is also proud that REAF has been awarded the SF Pride “Heritage of Pride Community Organization Award” and Certificates of Honor from both CA Governor Gavin Newsom and from the SF Mayors office. Joe has served as the Board Chair of REAF since its inception and thanks the many volunteers who give of their time and talent who have helped to provide approximately $5 million of support to services for homeless youth, hunger programs and for those living with HIV/AIDS.

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