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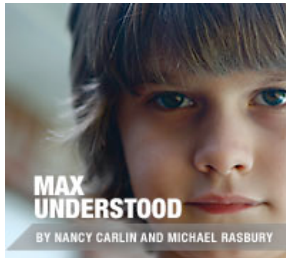
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30 Days Of NYMF: Day One MAX UNDERSTOOD

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Tuesday, September 15, 2009; Posted: 09:09 AM - by [BWW News Desk](#)



Max Understood
By Nancy Carlin, book/co-lyricist

As Michael repeats the same sound over and over on his computer, perfecting a cue on Digital Performer, I'm looking over the re-writes we did yesterday. We got so tired it all seemed utterly absurd. Singing about frozen waffles made us giggle mercilessly. Writing a musical based on the life of an autistic boy and his family has turned out to be the most rewarding, wonderfully bizarre experience. After three years of working on this when we can. (I live in Berkeley, CA, my composer/collaborator [Michael Rasbury](#), in Charlottesville,

VA), two workshops under our belts, we're now on the ride of our lives about to start rehearsals for NYMF.

"How did we get here?/Just need to get clear./No need to fear." Mom and Dad in Max Understood ask each other this, deep into the play, as are we, the "parents" of this "baby", our special needs musical. Four speakers and a laptop...

From The Lake Tahoe Shakespeare Festival to Grass Valley, CA to Waterford, CT to New York, NY. From the initial idea to write a theatrical piece inspired by Michael's autistic son, "we should write a musical," to Michael's reply, "I don't like musicals" to my, "then we should definitely write a musical" - to the first work shop with Foothill Theatre Company's New Voices. Audience response was so emotional and mixed and gratifying and fascinating. Emboldened, submitted to the O'Neill - were selected! - wonderful collaborators. Much work done. Revisions. New song for Mom. Clarifying vocabulary of the sounds in Max's world - the repetition becomes rhythms, becomes song. The texture of life's sound-track. Mom's heartfelt plea rising from the rhythm of the washing machine cycle.

Now that we have time to continue the play's evolution before this first small production, we're layering in more and more environment texture - music. The invaluable contributions of ultra-cool director [David Schweizer](#) joining us for this production. Wake me up, I'm dreaming.

And here I am listening to Michael make crickets chirp in rhythm. Bending nature to Reason (a composing software.) Power lines electrically sizzling and shorting - as frayed as Mom's nerves.

And as word, sound, song, gesture continue to synthesize into what makes Max Understood, I look forward to the synergy of our NYMF team, coming from every corner of this collaboration. Our stage manager from Grass Valley, music director from Waterford, my favorite director in NY, his remarkable designers, ridiculously talented performers....can't wait to get started.

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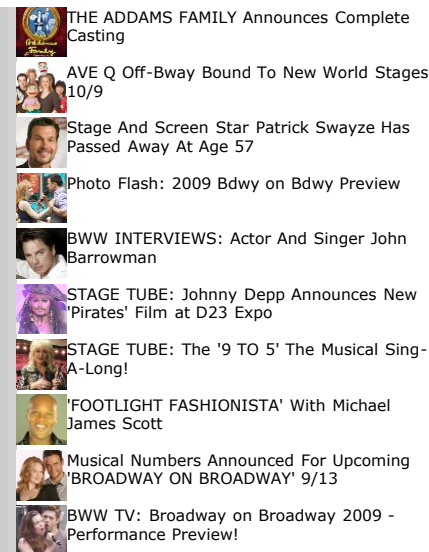


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