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BERKSHIRE
THEATRE GROUP

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For Immediate Release, Please: Wednesday, January 14, 2015

**Travel Back to the 1940's with Mount Holyoke Jazz Ensembles 10th Annual
The Big Broadcast! Hosted by WWLP-TV personality Brian Lapis**

**An evening of Classic Big Band Tunes from the Swing Era, Including Music by Bing
Crosby, the Andrew Sisters, Benny Goodman and Many More!**

Pittsfield, MA – Berkshire Theatre Group welcomes Mount Holyoke Jazz Ensembles 10th annual *The Big Broadcast!* hosted by WWLP-TV personality Brian Lapis on Friday, March 13, 2015 at 7pm at The Colonial Theatre.

Tickets for the 10th annual *The Big Broadcast!* are now on sale for \$15 for adults and \$10 for students. This production is a benefit for Berkshire Theatre Group's education program, BTG PLAYS! For tickets, contact the Colonial Ticket Office at 111 South Street, Pittsfield by calling 413-997-4444, or purchase online at www.berkshiretheatregroup.org. The Ticket Office is open Monday-Friday 10am-5pm, Saturdays 10am-2pm or on any performance day from 10am until curtain.

The Jazz Ensembles of Mount Holyoke College's 10th annual presentation of a live 1940's radio broadcast was created by Mark Gionfriddo (onstage as "Matt Morgan") with WWLP-TV meteorologist Brian Lapis as emcee "Fred Kelly." Under Gionfriddo's direction, the Mount Holyoke Big Band, Vocal Jazz, and Chamber Jazz Ensembles perform well-known tunes from the swing era, including music by Irving Berlin, the Andrews Sisters, Bing Crosby, George Gershwin, Benny Goodman and more!

Mount Holyoke College music faculty member Mark Gionfriddo originally created *The Big Broadcast!* for a small cabaret group he directed, and incorporated it into the concert season at Mount Holyoke College. "Students and I researched live radio broadcasts of the 1940's: the big

band swing music, the radio serials and the commercials of the day," said Gionfriddo. "We incorporate all of these elements into our production to give the audience the feel of an authentic radio variety program on a fictitious station named WJAZ."

Mark Gionfriddo ("Matt Morgan") is well known to area concertgoers as pianist, accompanist, composer, arranger, and musical director. His versatility and knowledge of many musical styles has brought him together with a wide range of popular and classical artists through the years, among them Mitzi Gaynor, Liberace, Al Martino, Anna Moffo, and Garrison Keillor. Mark's adventures while assistant conductor on board Cunard's MS Royal Viking Sun brought him around the world to 30 countries. Mark received his Bachelor's Degree in Piano from Skidmore College and Master's Degree in Accompanying from UMASS/Amherst.

Brian Lapis ("Fred Kelley") joined the 22News Storm Team in 1996. He got his start in broadcasting at the age of 15 at radio station WILI, in his hometown of Willimantic, CT. He's worked as a radio on-air talent for stations in Hartford, CT; Philadelphia, PA; Syracuse, NY; and Providence, RI. Brian has a Bachelor's degree in Television Radio Film Management from Syracuse University. In addition, he holds a certificate in Broadcast Meteorology from Mississippi State University.

This performance of *The Big Broadcast!* will benefit Berkshire Theatre Group's education program, BTG PLAYS!. Education and training programs are a fundamental component of Berkshire Theatre Group's mission to serve our community. BTG is proud to provide a multitude of arts opportunities to students. BTG PLAYS! encompasses in-school residency programs, vacation camps, after school classes, and the annual community production, through which local students have explored the art of theatre and shared their individual voices and creativity.

The 10th anniversary of *The Big Broadcast!* will also be held on Sunday, March 8, 2015 at 2pm and 7pm in Chapin Auditorium on the campus of Mount Holyoke College, Route 116 in South Hadley, MA. Tickets are available at the UMASS Fine Arts Center Box-Office in Amherst, at the Odyssey Bookshop, Village Commons, South Hadley, and at the door (subject to availability). For phone orders, please call [413-545-2511](tel:413-545-2511) or 1-800-999-UMASS. For online orders, please visit <https://fac.umass.edu/Online/MHC>.

Pictured: WWLP-TV personality Brian Lapis. Photo by Dori Gavitt.

For more information about Berkshire Theatre Group and our upcoming season, please visit our website at www.BerkshireTheatreGroup.org.

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About Berkshire Theatre Group

The Colonial Theatre, founded in 1903, and Berkshire Theatre Festival, founded in 1928, are two of the oldest cultural organizations in the Berkshires. Having united in November of 2010 under the leadership of Artistic Director and CEO Kate Maguire, these two institutions are providing the Berkshires and beyond with the finest in live theatre, music, dance and the visual arts on in Stockbridge, MA and Pittsfield, MA. The Fitzpatrick Main Stage (400 seats), cataloged by the National Register of Historic Places, was originally designed and built by Stanford White as the Stockbridge Casino in 1888. The intimate Unicorn Theatre (122 seats) is a home for

emerging artists and new theatrical ideas. The Colonial in Pittsfield (780 seats) re-opened in August of 2006, following a \$21 million restoration, and boasts pristine acoustics, classic gilded age architecture and state-of-the-art technical systems. BTG also performs at the at The Garage, a music venue located in the lobby of The Colonial. BTG serves over 100,000 patrons per year and reaches over 13,000 students through its educational and outreach programs. For more information on BTF call (413) 298-5536 and on The Colonial call (413) 448-8084. To purchase tickets, call (413) 997-4444 or (413) 298-5576 or go online to www.BerkshireTheatreGroup.org.