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**THE WHEELER OPERA HOUSE AND JOHN OATES ANNOUNCE
THE THIRD ANNUAL 7908 ASPEN SONGWRITERS FESTIVAL,
MARCH 21 – MARCH 25, 2012**

“This year, the festival is so big that we had to add an extra day,” said Wheeler Opera House Executive Director Gram Slaton, “but when there’s so much great talent that wants to be part of what you’re offering, you make room.” The festival Slaton is referring to is the [7908 Aspen Songwriters Festival](#), and the “we” is the Wheeler with producing partner (and rock legend) John Oates.

The **7908 Aspen Songwriters Festival** returns to the mountain town with a new slate of songwriters, covering the gamut of Appalachian Americana through to top Alt-Rock and Pop. The thirteen performances will blow audience’s minds as they get closer to the music than ever before. Acoustic in nature, the 7908 Festival remains committed to creating the shortest distance between the writer’s voice and the audience’s ear. The festival opens on **Wednesday, March 21** and concludes **Sunday, March 25**. Slaton explains “7908 is for music lovers of all stripes - new talents, proven talents, legends, and fans who can’t even whistle.”

This is the third installment of the 7908 Festival, following its initial outing in September 2010, and its hurry-up second incarnation in March 2011, only six months after the first one. “We learned so much after the first 7908,” said Slaton. “Our audiences loved what we were doing. We just needed to identify exactly what that was and then build on it. And fortunately, we pretty much doubled our numbers between the first and second 7908. Just as importantly, we got a buzz going in the songwriting community, so when it came to building this year’s festival, we were able to get it completely done a month ahead of last year’s. That’s what happens when you get a great reputation going with

both audiences and artists – things start to fall together so naturally. And this year's festival is going to be truly special. Hard to believe that only two years ago, 7908 wasn't even a working idea yet."

The **7908 Aspen Songwriters Festival** starts with the man who was hand-picked by Robert Plant for his 2011 "Band of Joy" tour: **DARRELL SCOTT** launches the festival on **Wednesday, March 21 at 7:00pm**. Scott has the gift for playing any form of musical instrument put before him. Receiving a Grammy Nomination for Best Country Song – "Long Time Gone," recorded by The Dixie Chicks in 2003 – Scott is sure to awe the crowd on the most acoustically perfect stage in Aspen. "Darrell has written songs for Keb Mo, Faith Hill, Maura O'Connell, Kathy Mattea, Brad Paisley, Sara Evans, Garth Brooks, Patty Loveless, Trace Adkins, Tim McGraw... the list goes on and on. He is the kind of talent that so naturally fits into this festival," says Slaton. Individual tickets are \$25.00.

Wednesday will also feature a later show starting at **8:30pm**, as the Yonder Mountain String Band's **ADAM AIJALA and BEN KAUFMANN** make a side trip to Aspen to show off their own songs. Adam and Ben – the guitarist and bassist and two of the vocalists for the amped-up, refried Bluegrass jammers known as Yonder Mountain String Band – will trade vocals on some of the most beloved songs in the YMSB catalog. "The last time we saw any of the Yonder Mountain boys here was in April 2006, which is way too long," said Slaton, "and this gives us an opportunity to bring in the heart and soul of the band in a rare Western Slope appearance." Individual tickets are \$30.00.

Thursday, March 22 features two shows, starting with **JAMES McMURTRY** at **7:00pm**. Astute, clear-eyed, and no holds barred ... that sums up the work of singer-songwriter James McMurtry, whose 2005 album *Childish Things* took on politicians of all stripes and held them accountable like a modern-day Woody Guthrie. The CD sat at the top of the Americana charts for an unprecedented six weeks, and he's never looked back since. He also has a wicked sense of humor, which is best caught live ... and on the Wheeler stage. Individual tickets are \$20.00.

Thursday's second show will be casual, caustic and iconoclastic with **BOB SCHNEIDER**. "Bob is a human summation of everything we love about Texas's capital city" says Slaton. From his early days with The Scabs to his constant take-'em-all

appearances at the Austin Music Awards, Bob's endless energy and creativity rule southwestern songwriting. The show is at **8:30pm**, and individual tickets are \$25.00.

Friday, March 23 . At **6:00pm**, **THE BERKLEE SONGWRITERS CIRCLE** kicks off the evening with three of the brightest young talents from one of America's very finest music schools, Boston's College of Music. Join us as Sam Shrieve (son of the original Santana drummer Mike Shrieve), Merrily James, and Nick Goldston prove why they are the forefront of the next generation of the great songwriters. Seattle's Sam Shrieve released his first album, *Bittersweet Lullabies*, in May 2009, featuring Sam's diversity and dynamics in song and lyric writing make him a shining young talent who conveys a sense of wisdom beyond his years. Merrily James learned to sing by touring with the Total Experience Gospel Choir, and at age 17 performed on "Showtime at the Apollo" and had the audience singing along with her. A recent graduate of Berklee College of Music, Merrily has performed for Barbra Streisand, Linda Ronstadt and Smokey Robinson as well as been featured with the New York Songwriters Circle. Currently a songwriting and music business dual major at Berklee, Nick Goldston has been dedicated to music since third grade when he first started playing the piano. Nick has released three albums completely written, performed, recorded, mixed, and mastered by him. This is a **FREE** show.

At **7:15pm**, a lyrical double dose of original songwriter voices will get Friday evening in the right 7908 groove, with **JD SOUTHER AND CARRIE RODRIGUEZ**. JD has been one of the great lyric voices in rock, writing and co-writing one hit after the other for The Eagles ("Heartache Tonight," "New Kid In Town," "Best Of My Love,"), Linda Ronstadt ("Sometimes You Just Can't Win"), James Taylor ("Her Town Too"), and many more, while she is one of the most exciting new and completely original voices being discovered today, last seen on the Wheeler stage with the "Acoustic Brotherhood" tour in 2009. Together, they're four decades of great songwriting. Catch JD and Carrie together for the first time as they swap songs and stories in an intimate performance experience. Individual tickets are \$25.00.

Closing up Friday is **KENNY LOGGINS'** new project, with outstanding songwriters **GEORGIA MIDDLEMAN** and **GARY BURR**, simply called **THE BLUE SKY RIDERS**. Kenny Loggins' body of work over the past four decades can be described as gold on gold - from Loggins & Messina to a long and varied career as a solo performer (can

anyone forget "Footloose," "Danger Zone," and "I'm Alright"?). Now, much like his friend John Oates, he's rediscovered the musical heritage of the Appalachian mountains and Nashville, and he's teamed up with 2010 7908 veteran Gary Burr and new face Georgia Middleman for an incomparable trio of voices and intermeshing songwriter styles that flow together seamlessly. A 7908 coup, as this group has yet to be seen by many audiences in concert. Be among the very first! The Blue Sky Riders take the stage at **8:45pm**, and individual tickets are \$32.50.

Saturday, March 24 takes 7908 on a ride with three completely different masters of "The Hook." At **6:15pm**, **SOPHIE B. HAWKINS** kicks off the evening with a high-energy tour-de-force performance. She rocked everyone's world in the early 1990s with her monster hit, "Damn I Wish I Was Your Lover," and - surprise! - she's still doing it, better than ever, having her new music pop up on movie soundtracks and still heavy with great pop hooks and a killer soul delivery. But the only way to really capture her songs is performed by Sophie live, where the spirit of Janis Joplin grafts onto her always-unfettered soul. Slaton warns, "This is vital new music and not a trip down Memory Lane, because Sophie is bigger and sexier, wiser and saucier, and more alive than ever." Individual tickets are \$20.00.

MATT SCANNELL scooped the charts with "Everything You Want," "You're A God," "Best I Ever Had" ... these are only a few of the radio standards that Matt created with his enduring band, Vertical Horizon, and 7908 is the perfect vehicle for this ace storyteller who is no stranger to the world of solo acoustic performance. **MATT SCANNELL**'s first-ever performance at the Wheeler is at **7:45pm**; individual tickets are \$25.00.

7908 breaks its own rules and brings in this Bayou-drenched soul master, **MARC BROUSSARD** and his full band for an all-out funkfest. Powerful, passionate, steeped in the soulful sanctity of the church and the worldly pleasures of New Orleans, Marc is the living, breathing future of Rhythm & Blues – "One part Ray Charles, one part Otis Redding, and three parts Louisiana gumbo," explains Slaton. If you're worried about the future of R&B, Marc Broussard is here to tell you that it's alive and well ... very well indeed. Showtime is 9:15pm, and individual tickets are \$27.50.

Sunday, March 25 was added to 7908 schedule “because we just couldn’t fit it all into just four days,” says Slaton. **ANGEL SNOW** will take the stage at **6:15pm**. No less an authority than Alison Krauss says "Angel Snow's music is absolutely beautiful – when she sings I hold my breath." And our own John Oates says that she is the next great American songwriter. See for yourself when this North Carolina songbird takes the stage in this special early show. Individual tickets are \$15.00.

It wouldn't be a 7908 if the Wheeler's two resident musicians didn't nail down some stage time together. **JOHN OATES AND SAM BUSH** will take over the stage at **7:15pm**, where they can stretch out and swap songs and hooks. “This time, Sam's bringing his master Bluegrass guitarist Stephen Mouglin to round out the sound.” Slaton continues,” And - knowing these two - there's no telling who else might end up on the stage, so it's fair game to expect some surprise guests from 7908. One way or the other, it's the kind of show you can only expect to catch at our festival.” Individual tickets are \$25.00.

MATT NATHANSON is making it a point to return to 7908. Last year, Nathanson regretted not attending the whole festival “I got here, walked over to the venue, read the wall of people and thought, why didn't I come here three days ago, camp out, and go to every one of these shows?” We agree! At **8:45pm**, Nathanson will return as the 7908 closing show. “We love Matt because he gave us a game-changing closing performance for 7908 2011, with Donovan Frankenreiter, but let's face it - Matt stole the show,” Slaton jokes. Matt must love the Wheeler too because he's taking his day off from opening for the Kelly Clarkson tour to come to Aspen with his band and close out 7908 all over again. Individual tickets are \$30.00

New to this year's 7908 Songwriters Festival is a homegrown search for **Colorado's Best Songwriter 2012**. Six towns will hold competitions to see which tunesmiths get to be part of this year's 7908. “We are going to Breckenridge, Vail, Steamboat Springs, Aspen, Winter Park and Boulder to hold competitions open to all Colorado residents,” says Slaton. “Contestants are required to perform only self-penned material for the judges. Based on originality, talent, and presentation, finalists will receive three nights lodging in Aspen, perform in several of Aspen's best-loved bars over three evenings, and receive a full-festival pass. And the winner will get to perform before the final 7908 show, sharing the stage with John Oates. Not a bad first prize!”

Full festival passes are \$195.00, or 35% off the single ticket price for all twelve shows. “We are introducing reserved seating for full-festival pass holders; however there will be a limited number of full-festival passes available.” Back by popular demand this year are day passes, which take a full 20% off the price of that day’s shows. Day passes for Wednesday are \$44.00; for Thursday, \$36.00; for Friday, \$46.00; for Saturday, \$58.00 and for Sunday, \$56.00. All passes and individual tickets will go on sale at 11:00am on **Monday, January 23rd**, at the Wheeler’s Aspen Show Tickets box office (970-920-5770 locally, 866-449-0464 out of area, or online at www.aspenshowtix.com).

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