American Academy of Arts and Letters
633 WEST 155 STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10032
www.artsandletters.org

NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Jane Bolster
academy@artsandletters.org
(212) 368-5900

TWO MUSICALS WIN 2010 COMPETITION

New York, February 9, 2010 – Winners of the 2010 Richard Rodgers Awards for Musical Theater were announced today by the American Academy of Arts and Letters, which administers the Rodgers Awards. They are:

Buddy's Tavern by Raymond De Felitta, Alison Louise Hubbard, and Kim Oler
Rocket Science by Patricia Cotter, Jason Rhyne, and Stephen Weiner

The two works were awarded staged readings.

The intent of the Richard Rodgers Award is to nurture the careers of talented composers and playwrights by enabling their musicals to be produced in New York City. Former award recipients include Maury Yeston, *Nine*; Jonathan Larson, *Rent*; Julie Taymor and Elliot Goldenthal, *Juan Darien*; Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty, *Lucky Stiff*; and Jeanine Tesori and Brian Crawley, *Violet*. Since 1980 sixty-eight works have received Rodgers awards.

This year's jury included Stephen Sondheim (chair), Lynn Ahrens, John Guare, Sheldon Harnick, David Ives, Richard Maltby, Jr., Lin-Manuel Miranda, Jeanine Tesori, and John Weidman.

> *Buddy's Tavern,* based upon the film *Two Family House*, set in the 1950s, tells the story of an Italian-American factory worker on Staten Island, and his quest to run his own business – a bar where he can sing his heart out to his customers. Family pressures, race relations, unexpected love, and the struggle to achieve one's dreams, come alive in this new romantic musical comedy.
>
> *Rocket Science*, based on the HBO movie by Jeffrey Blitz, tells the tale of sixteen-year-old Hal Hefner, life-long stutterer and oddball, and his determination to risk everything for love. Hal enters the world of high school speech and debate and learns what it means to find one's true voice.

Richard Rodgers, elected to the Academy in 1955, endowed these awards in 1978. The awards provide financial support for productions, studio productions, and staged readings of original musicals by nonprofit theaters in New York City.

The Richard Rodgers Awards are the Academy's only awards for which applications are accepted. **Applications for the Richard Rodgers Awards may be downloaded from www.artsandletters.org.**

Biographies

Raymond De Felitta, Alison Louise Hubbard, and Kim Oler, authors of *Buddy's Tavern*

Raymond De Felitta's (book) films include *Bronx Cheers* (nominated for an Academy Award in 1991); *Begin the Beguine*; *Café Society*; *Two Family House* (winner of 2000 Sundance Audience Award); *The Thing about My Folks;* and *City Island*, winner of the Heineken Audience Award at the 2009 Tribeca Film Festival. *Buddy's Tavern* is based upon De Felitta's film, *Two Family House*.

Alison Louise Hubbard (lyrics) and **Kim Oler** (music) have collaborated on *Little Women* (1998 Richard Rodgers Stage Reading award), with a book by Sean Hartley; *The Enchanted Cottage*, (Director's Choice Award at New York Musical Theatre Festival (NYMF), 2004; *Pets! – A Musical Revue*; *When the Cookie Crumbles; The Secret Garden; Harriet the Spy, Tom Sawyer; Little Women (play), Class Clown*; *Babes in Toyland*. Mr. Oler won Emmy Awards in 2003 and 2005 for *All My Children*, *Tracy Ullman Show*, and *Guiding Light*. His recordings include Paul Winter Consort's *Missa Gaia*. Ms. Hubbard wrote *The Cop and The Anthem,* and is a winner of the 2006 Kleban Award. Her recordings include *Parachute Express* and *Jamie DeRoy and Friends*. Kim and Alison are members of the Dramatists Guild and the BMI Lehman Engel Musical Theater Workshop, where they were awarded the BMI Foundation's Jerry Harrington Award for Outstanding Creative Achievement in 2002. They were Artists in Residence at the New Harmony Project, New Harmony, IN, in 2007.

Patricia Cotter, Jason Rhyne, and Stephen A. Weiner, authors of *Rocket Science*

Patricia Cotter (book) has written the book for several musicals, including *Break Up Notebook: The Lesbian Musical*, based on her play, *Break Up Notebook* (music and lyrics by Lori Scarlett); *Fat (*book and lyrics co-written with Kevin M. Mitchell) and *Mulan, Jr.* (stage adaptation of the Disney film *Mulan*). Her plays include *Three: Best/Worst Flawed*; *The Girls*; and *Poison*. Ms. Cotter has written for film and television and has received a Daytime Emmy Award for her writing.

Jason Rhyne (lyrics), a graduate of the North Carolina School of the Arts, has studied musical theater at Ithaca College. Credits include lyrics for a musical adaptation of the HBO film *Rocket Science* (music by Stephen Weiner, book by Patricia Cotter), which was featured in the Village Theatre's 2009 Festival of New Musicals; music and lyrics for the "The MacGuffin," presented at the New York Musical Theatre Festival; and book, music and lyrics for an adaptation of the children's novel "Littlejim." Jason is a former member of the BMI Musical Theatre Workshop, and recipient of a 2008 Jonathan Larson Award as a composer-lyricist.

Stephen A. Weiner (composer) was the 2003 Richard Rodgers Award winner for *Once Upon A Time in New Jersey* (book and lyrics by Susan DiLallo). Steve received a Jonathan Larson Development Grant for *The Hudsucker Proxy* (book and lyrics by Glenn Slater). Along with *Rocket Science*, he has composed the scores for *Iron Curtain* (book by Susan DiLallo, lyrics by Peter Mills); *newyorkers* (lyrics by Glenn Slater), and *Spittin' Image* (book by Karin Kasdin, lyrics by Laura Szabo Cohen). He is also the recipient of the ASCAP Richard Rodgers New Horizons Award. He has been nominated for Drama Desk, Obie, Lucille Lortel and Chicago Jeff Awards. He is a member of ASCAP and The Dramatists Guild.

The American Academy of Arts and Letters was established in 1898 to "foster, assist, and sustain an interest in literature, music, and the fine arts." Election to the Academy is considered the highest formal recognition of artistic merit in this country. Founding members include William Merritt Chase, Kenyon Cox, Daniel Chester French, Childe Hassam, Henry James, Theodore Roosevelt, Elihu Vedder, and Woodrow Wilson. The Academy is currently comprised of 250 of America's leading voices in the fields of Art, Architecture, Literature, and Music. The Academy presents exhibitions of art, architecture, and manuscripts; and readings and performances of new musicals throughout the year, and is located in three landmark buildings designed by McKim, Mead & White, Cass Gilbert, and Charles Pratt Huntington on Audubon Terrace at 155 Street and Broadway, New York City.