

PERFORMING **ARTS**

m a g a z i n e

FEBRUARY 2002





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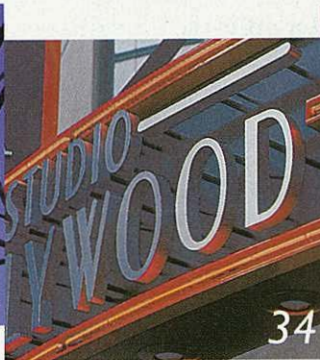
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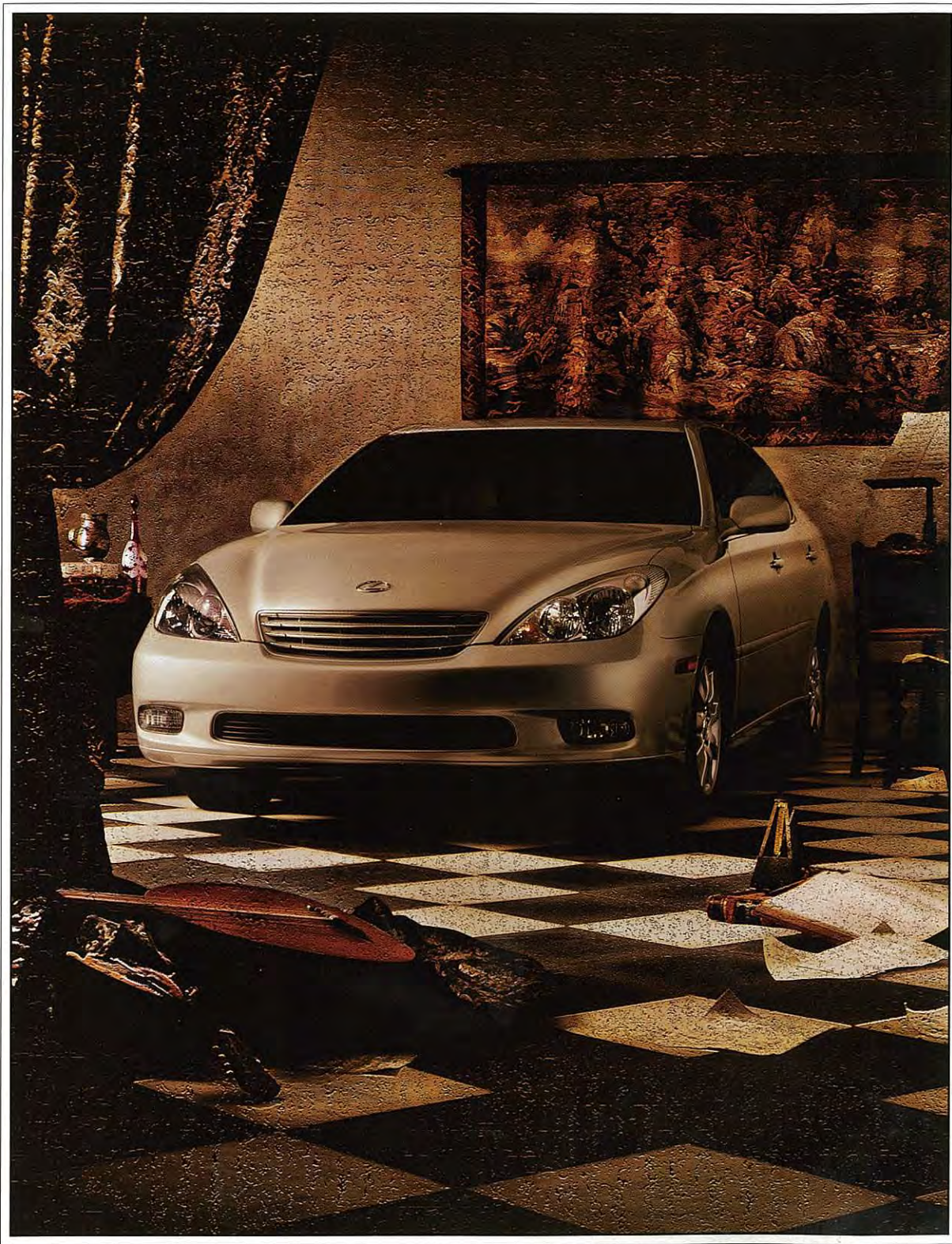


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We're not suggesting the all-new Lexus ES 300 should hang in the Louvre. But as an outstanding example of the carmaker's craft, it's most certainly worthy of attention.

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you simply want to sit in front of and

admire. This automobile calls out to be driven. And with a 210-horsepower V6 engine mated to a new, five-speed automatic transmission, it could certainly qualify as performance art.

But perhaps the question we posed earlier is best answered by yet another question.

What better place to mull over what passes for art these days than behind the wheel of an automobile that has the power to move you?

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THE ARTS OF THE STATE

MUSIC

Renée Fleming

The superb soprano gives a recital in Los Angeles, sings Richard Strauss' *Four Last Songs* in San Francisco, then travels around the state on a recital tour. **Feb. 24, Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, Los Angeles, (213) 365-3500, www.losangelesopera.com; Feb. 27-March 2, Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, (415) 864-6000, www.sfsymphony.org; March 17, Orange County Performing Arts Center, Costa Mesa, (714) 556-2787, www.ocpac.org; March 19, Arlington Theatre, Santa Barbara, (805) 963-4408, www.camab.org; March 22, California Center for the Arts, Escondido, (760) 839-4100, www.artcenter.org.**

Vienna Philharmonic

Bernard Haitink leads one of the world's greatest orchestras in symphonies by Mozart, Schubert, and Bruckner. **March 11-13, Orange County Performing Arts Center, Costa Mesa, (714) 556-2787, www.ocpac.org.**

L.A. Philharmonic

Esa-Pekka Salonen continues his Schoenberg survey with *Transfigured Night*, on a program that also features Mahler's *Song of Lamentation*. **March 22-24, Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, Los Angeles, (323) 850-2000, www.laphil.org.**

Debussy Trio

This Los Angeles-based ensemble is noted for its unusual combination of flute, viola, and harp and its dedication to new American music. The program features works from their just-released CD *Three Friends*. **March 7, Laxson Auditorium, Cal State Chico, (530) 898-6333, www.debussytrio.com.**

Garrick Ohlsson

The busy pianist performs concertos with the San Francisco Symphony. Ten days later, he joins violinist Jorja Fleezanis and cellist Michael Grebanier to perform trios by Schubert and Dvořák. **March 14-16, Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, (415) 864-6000, www.sfsymphony.org; March 25, Kohl Mansion, Burlingame, (650) 343-8463, www.musicatkohlmansion.org.**

L.A. Jewish Symphony

A German emigré composer, Ernst Toch won the Pulitzer Prize and received three Academy Award nominations for his film scores. This concert features the first

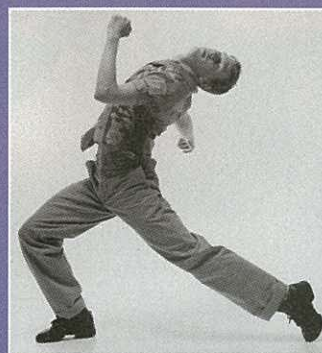


ANDREW ECCLES

Renée Fleming

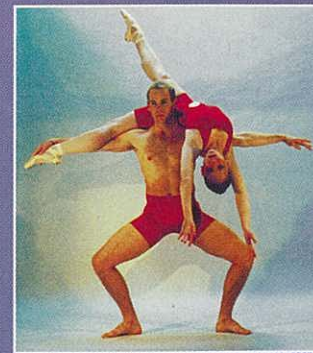


Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company



WILLIAM FREDERICK

Hubbard St. Dance



JO ANNE EMERY

City Ballet of San Diego



MUSEO CARRILLO GIL

Jose Clemente Orozco



TIBOR WESTER

Exchange/Transformation



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Edward Weston

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performance in 50 years of his poignant *Cantata of the Bitter Herbs*. **March 10, Peters Auditorium, Beverly Hills, (818) 753-6681, www.lajewishsymphony.com.**

San Diego Symphony

American composer Edgar Meyer wrote his Violin Concerto specifically for Hilary Hahn. The young virtuosa performs it as part of a program that also features Mozart's *Jupiter Symphony*. **March 8-9, Copley Symphony Hall, San Diego, (619) 235-0804, www.sandiegosymphony.org.**

Jazz Women

SF Jazz kicks off its spring season with a five-day look at the contributions women have made to jazz. **March 19-24, various San Francisco locations, (415) 788-7353, www.sfjazz.org.**

Anthony Dean Griffey

The rising young tenor, praised by critics for both his technique and musicianship, performs a recital of songs by Schubert, Brahms, Ravel, and Copland. **March 2, Sherwood Auditorium, La Jolla, (619) 232-7636, www.sdopera.com.**

Other Minds Festival

The annual showcase of new music salutes veteran composer Lou Harrison with performances of two of his keyboard works and a world premiere. **March 7-9, Palace of Fine Arts Theatre, San Francisco, (415) 646-0760, www.otherminds.org.**

Newport Jazz 2002

This year's touring version of the Newport Jazz Festival features an impressive lineup including Terence Blanchard, Cedar Walton, and Joe Lovano. **March 8, Royce Hall, UCLA, (310) 825-2101, www.performing-arts.ucla.edu; March 10, Campbell Hall, UC Santa Barbara, (805) 893-3535, www.artsandlectures.ucsb.edu.**

OPERA

The Magic Flute

Sir Peter Hall's 1993 production of Mozart's great fairy-tale opera, notable for Gerald Scarfe's creative and colorful designs. Sumi Jo is the Queen of the Night and Rodney Gilfry is Papageno. **March 24-April 14, Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, Los Angeles, (213) 365-3500, www.laopera.org.**

DANCE

Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane

The innovative troupe celebrates its 20th anniversary with a series of chamber works choreographed by Jones and played

by the Orion String Quartet. **March 1-2, Royce Hall, UCLA, (310) 825-2101, www.performingarts.ucla.edu.**

Hubbard Street Dance

The critically acclaimed company mixes theatrical jazz, modern, and classical ballet technique to create its own eclectic style of movement. **March 8-9, Irvine Barclay Theatre, (949) 854-4646, www.thebarclay.org; March 10, Alex Theatre, Glendale, (800) 414-2539, www.alextheatre.org.**

Diablo Ballet

The company celebrates its eighth anniversary with Balanchine's *Allegro Brillante* and a new version of the story ballet *La Boutique Fantasque*. **March 15-16, Dean Leshner Regional Center for the Arts, Walnut Creek, (925) 943-7469, www.diabloballet.org.**

San Diego City Ballet

The company's annual *Ballet on the Edge* program will be highlighted by the multimedia piece *Enigma*, featuring choreography by Elizabeth Wistrich. **March 22-25, Garfield Theatre, La Jolla, (858) 272-8663, www.cityballet.org.**

THEATER

The Blue Room

Ten couples are linked by a string of sexual encounters in David Hare's controversial contemporary adaptation of Arthur Schnitzler's 19th-century classic. **March 8-April 21, Pasadena Playhouse, (626) 356-7529, www.pasadenaplayhouse.org.**

Knock, Knock

In Jules Feiffer's absurdist comedy, the philosophical arguments of two eccentric retirees are interrupted by a series of strange visitors — including Joan of Arc. **March 8-April 14, Aurora Theatre, Berkeley, (510) 843-4822, www.auroratheatre.org.**

Memoir

John Murrell's biographical drama is an intimate look at one of the best-known actresses of the 20th century, Sarah Bernhardt. **March 24-May 5, Globe Theatres, San Diego, (619) 239-2255, www.the-globetheatres.org.**

The Dazzle

Richard Greenberg, author of *Eastern Standard* and *Three Days of Rain*, created this look at two wealthy and eccentric brothers — one of whom is a great pianist. **March 26-April 28, South Coast Repertory, Costa Mesa, (714) 708-5555, www.scr.org.**

The Piano Lesson

Members of an African American family in 1930s Pittsburgh must decide whether

to sell a treasured heirloom in this provocative August Wilson drama. **Feb. 14-March 10, Lorraine Hansberry Theatre, San Francisco, (415) 474-8800, www.lorrainehansberrytheatre.com.**

Beggar's Holiday

Rubicon Theatre produces this 1946 work, the only musical written for Broadway by Duke Ellington and based on John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*. **March 1-10, Laurel Theatre, Ventura, (805) 667-2900, www.rubicontheatre.org.**

A Noise Within

Sexual attraction is the theme of two classics running in repertory: Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* and William Inge's *Bus Stop*. **March 1-May 11 (LLL), March 15-May 18 (Bus Stop), A Noise Within, Glendale, (818) 240-0910, www.anoisewithin.org.**

Kiss Me, Kate

Rex Smith and Rachel York play the battling couple in Cole Porter's adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. **March 5-10, Civic Theatre, San Diego, (619) 570-1100, www.broadwaysd.com; March 19-24, Orange County Performing Arts Center, Costa Mesa, (714) 556-2787, www.ocpac.org.**

Riverdance

Celebrate St. Patrick's Day with this ever-popular mix of Irish dancing and Broadway-style theatricality. **Feb. 26-March 3, Civic Theatre, San Diego, (619) 570-1100, www.broadwaysd.com; March 26-31, Orange County Performing Arts Center, Costa Mesa, (714) 556-2787, www.ocpac.org.**

VISUAL ARTS

Jose Clemente Orozco

A comprehensive survey of the work produced during 1928-34, when the great Mexican artist lived in the U.S. **March 9-May 19, San Diego Museum of Art, (619) 232-7931, www.sdmart.org.**

Edward Weston

This is the first exhibition to examine the final years of the great photographer's career, which he spent in and around Carmel. **March 1-July 9, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, (415) 357-4000, www.sfmoma.org.**

Exchange/Transformation

Cross-fertilization among avant-garde movements in Eastern Europe between 1910 and 1930 is examined in this exhibit. **March 10-June 2, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, (323) 857-6000, www.lacma.org.**

Cal Performances



Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

TUE-FRI, FEB 19-22, 8 PM; SAT, FEB 23, 2 PM & 8 PM
AND SUN, FEB 24, 3 PM

ZELLERBACH HALL \$24, \$32, \$48

Judith Jamison's remarkable troupe returns with a special program filled with excerpts of Ailey classics, plus two premieres.

PROGRAM A (FEB 19, 23 EVE & 24): BYRD/*DANCE AT THE GYM*, MUSIC BY MIO MORALES; JAMISON/*HERE...NOW*, MUSIC BY WYNTON MARSALIS (**WEST COAST PREMIERE**); AILEY/*REVELATIONS*

PROGRAM B (FEB 20 & 22): BROWN/*SERVING NIA*, MUSIC BY ROY BROOKS, BRANFORD MARSALIS, M'BEMBA BANGOURA, AND DIZZY GILLESPIE (**BAY AREA PREMIERE**); KING/*FOLLOWING THE SUBTLE CURRENT UPSTREAM*, MUSIC BY ZAKIR HUSSAIN, MIGUEL FRASCONI AND MIRIAM MAKEBA; FALCO/*CARAVAN*, MUSIC BY MICHAEL KAMEN, BASED ON DUKE ELLINGTON THEMES

PROGRAM C (FEB 21 & 23 MAT): AILEY CLASSICS, INCLUDING EXCERPTS FROM *NIGHT CREATURE*, *THE MOOCHE*, *OPUS MCSHANN*, *A SONG FOR YOU*, *FOR 'BIRD' -WITH LOVE*, *HIDDEN RITES*, *CRY*, *MEMORIA*, AND *PAS DE DUKE*, PLUS A FULL PERFORMANCE OF *REVELATIONS*

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Pascal Rioult Dance Theatre

FRI & SAT, FEB 15 & 16, 8 PM

ZELLERBACH HALL \$24, \$32, \$46

Formally a principal dancer with the Martha Graham Company, Pascal Rioult has established himself as one of today's most original and musical choreographers. For its Bay Area debut, the company will perform two programs, including the complete works of Rioult's critically acclaimed suite of dances known as *The Ravel Project*, the first time all four pieces have been performed together in North America.

PROGRAM A (FEB 15): *THE RAVEL PROJECT* (**NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE**); RIOULT/*WIEN*, *HOME FRONT*, *PRELUDE TO NIGHT*, *BOLÉRO*

PROGRAM B (FEB 16): RIOULT/*LA VIE EN ROSE*, SET TO MUSIC OF EDITH PIAF; *AURORA*, SET TO MUSIC BY MOZART; *NO EXIT*, SET TO MUSIC BY STRAVINSKY; *WIEN*, SET TO RAVEL'S *LA VALSE*



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ZELLERBACH HALL \$24, \$34, \$46

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2x2: Terpsichore's Treasures



LLOYD ENGLERT

Helgi Tomasson's
17th season at
San Francisco Ballet
pays homage to
two New York City
Ballet masters

Jewels choreographed by
George Balanchine

BY DONNA PERLMUTTER

Take a superb dancer with impeccable taste who is also an exponent of the New York City Ballet style — say, Helgi Tomasson. Give him, in his retirement from performing, a company to build on, like San Francisco's. And just watch it bloom.

The result, in this 17th season of the Icelander's directorship, highlights what we can expect from any stellar troupe with NYCB bloodlines: the treasures of George Balanchine and Jerome Robbins. But it also rounds out the picture with works by Tomasson himself and significant innovations from new choreographers, some so successful that other companies clamor for their works. Nor does the lineup slight perennials like *Giselle*, the sine qua non of 19th-century Romantic ballet.

Shortly after Balanchine's death in 1983, critics, unhappy with how NYCB proper was getting along, anointed Tomasson the West Coast keeper of the flame — so

impressed were they with the breadth and depth of his artistic vision and his power to infuse performances with Balanchinian style, élan, and virtuosity, not to mention his way with Robbins.

Now he's adding more NYCB repertoire to the agenda, in choices that set up an exceptionally sharp contrast between his alma mater's two masters: the 1967 *Jewels* by Balanchine and the 1969 *Dances at a Gathering* by Robbins. Whether Tomasson had it in mind or not, he illustrates with these particular works how Balanchine defined neoclassicism and how Robbins did the same for neo-romanticism — two models that countless choreographers everywhere have since wrapped their steps around.

So admired was *Dances* that when Antony Tudor created his 1975 landmark ballet, *The Leaves Are Falling*, he said, in his typically self-deprecating, inaccurate way: "Imagine me, an old man, finally

doing a Jerry Robbins ballet." (The truth is, however, that Robbins learned at Tudor's feet, as it were, and returned the compliment to the British choreographer by giving the *Dances* characters names like The Man in Brown, a device Tudor used to memorialize them as people without giving up their anonymity.)

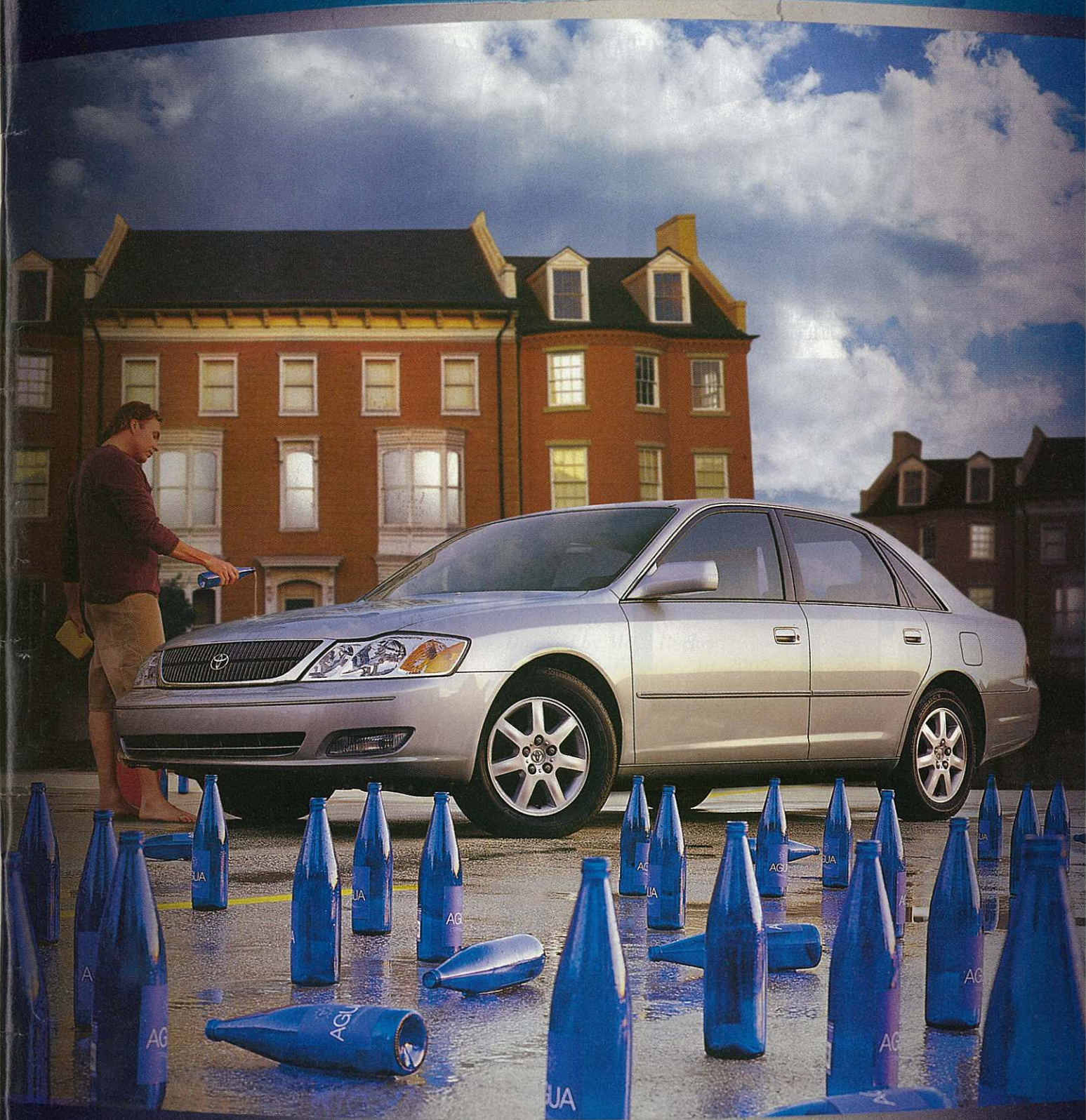
Stravinsky was to Balanchine what Chopin was to Robbins. And just looking at "Rubies," the middle section of *Jewels*, one can feel the cheeky irreverence of Stravinsky's brash but rhythmically ordered *Capriccio for Piano and Orchestra*. It laughs, it guffaws, it mocks. And so does the movement — women in sizzling

Continued on page 39

San Francisco Ballet performs its repertory season February 5 through May 12 at the War Memorial Opera House. For tickets and information, call (415) 865-2000 or visit www.sfballet.org.



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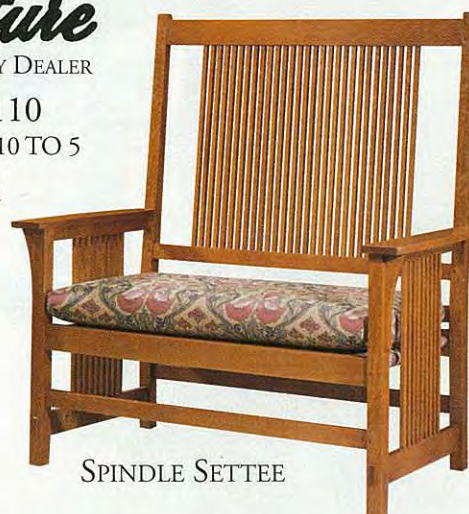
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Translated by Linda Gaboriau

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ABOUT A.C.T.



A.C.T.'s beautifully restored Geary Theater, originally built in 1909, is one of the finest performance venues in the United States.

AMERICAN CONSERVATORY THEATER nurtures the art of live theater through dynamic productions, intensive actor training in its conservatory, and an ongoing dialogue with its community. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Carey Perloff and Managing Director Heather Kitchen, A.C.T. embraces its responsibility to conserve, renew, and reinvent its relationship to the rich theatrical traditions and literatures that are our collective legacy, while exploring new artistic forms and new communities. A commitment to the highest standards informs every aspect of A.C.T.'s creative work.

Founded in 1965 by William Ball, A.C.T. opened

its first San Francisco season at the Geary Theater in 1967. In the 1970s, A.C.T. solidified its national and international reputation, winning a Tony Award for outstanding theater performance and training in 1979. During the past three decades, more than 300 A.C.T. productions have been performed to a combined audience of seven million people; today, A.C.T.'s performance, education, and outreach programs annually reach more than 250,000 people in the San Francisco Bay Area. In 1996, A.C.T.'s efforts to develop creative talent for the theater were recognized with the prestigious Jujamcyn Theaters Award.

Today A.C.T. is recognized nationally for its groundbreaking productions of classical works and bold explorations of contemporary playwriting. Since the reopening of the Geary Theater in 1996, A.C.T. has enjoyed a remarkable period of audience expansion and renewed financial stability. The company continues to produce challenging theater in the rich context of symposia, audience discussions, and community interaction.

The conservatory, led by Melissa Smith, now serves 3,000 students every year. It was the first training program in the United States not affiliated with a college or university accredited to award a master of fine arts degree. Danny Glover, Annette Bening, Denzel Washington, Benjamin Bratt, and Winona Ryder are among the conservatory's distinguished former students. With its commitment to excellence in actor training and to the relationship between training, performance, and audience, the A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program has moved to the forefront of America's actor training programs, while serving as the creative engine of the company at large. ■

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HOURS A DAY AT
ACT-SFBAY.ORG.**

by Tennessee Williams

The Glass Menagerie

directed by Laird Williamson

Mar 29-Apr 28

Geary Theater San Francisco

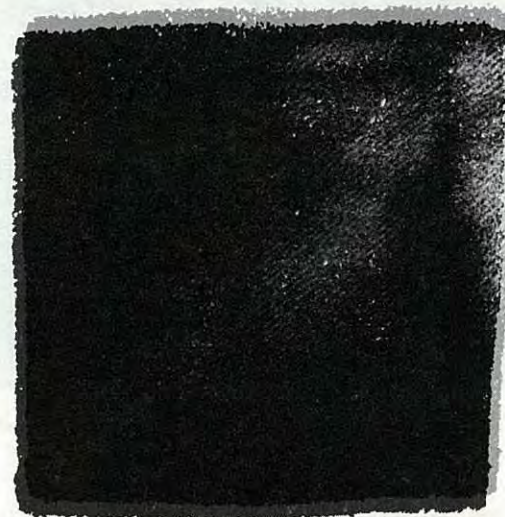
Tennessee Williams's masterpiece is a haunting autobiographical portrait of a disintegrating family—the faded southern belle, her adventure-hungry son, and the daughter who is as fragile as the little glass animals she treasures.

UNITED

American Conservatory Theater presents
the world premiere of

the difficulty of crossing a field

a new opera in seven tellings
performed by **kronos quartet**



music by **david lang**
libretto by **mac wellman**
directed by **carey perloff**
music direction by **peter maleitzke**

march 22-24
theater artaud
san francisco

Cast

Julia Migenes, Pam Dillard, Michelle Jordan, Frederick Matthews,
David Ryan Smith, Fred Winthrop, Jacob Ming-Trent,
Randall Gremillion, Marco Barricelli, and Lianne Marie Dobbs

An 80-minute opera in seven tellings, *The Difficulty of Crossing a Field* explores seven enigmatic and humorous perspectives on the mysterious disappearance of a slave owner in Selma, Alabama, in 1854.

This landmark collaboration features music by David Lang, composer and cofounder of New York's legendary new-music festival Bang on a Can, and a libretto by award-winning playwright Mac Wellman—performed by two major Bay Area companies, A.C.T. and Kronos Quartet.

The world premiere of *The Difficulty of Crossing a Field* is made possible by the generous support of Phyllis C. Wattis.

2001-02 / 35th anniversary

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american conservatory theater

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BLITHE SPIRIT

(1941)

by Noël Coward

Directed by Charles Randolph-Wright

<i>Scenery by</i>	Kate Edmunds
<i>Costumes by</i>	Beaver Bauer
<i>Lighting by</i>	Peter Maradudin
<i>Sound by</i>	Garth Hemphill
<i>Music Coach</i>	Peter Maleitzke
<i>Dialect Coach</i>	Deborah Sussel
<i>Wigs and Makeup by</i>	Rick Echols
<i>Casting by</i>	Meryl Lind Shaw
<i>Assistant Director</i>	Margo Hall

The Cast

(in order of appearance)

<i>Edith</i>	Jessica Turner
<i>Ruth Condomine</i>	Shona Tucker
<i>Charles Condomine</i>	Gregory Wallace
<i>Dr. Bradman</i>	Tom Blair
<i>Mrs. Bradman</i>	Joan Harris-Gelb
<i>Madame Arcati</i>	Lori Larsen
<i>Elvira</i>	René Augesen

Place and Time

The Condomines' house in Kent, England, in the early 1940s

Understudies

Edith, Ruth Condomine—Margo Hall
Charles Condomine, Dr. Bradman—Michael Gene Sullivan
Mrs. Bradman, Madame Arcati—Maureen McVerry; *Elvira*—Jessica Turner

Stage Management Staff

Julie Haber, *Stage Manager*
Francesca Russell, *Assistant Stage Manager*
Yamini Namjoshi, *Intern*

There will be one intermission.

Please silence all cellular phones and pagers.

Very special thanks to Rebecca Dines.

Special thanks to Ellen Novack and Robin Gurland.



The songs heard in this production are performed by the cast.

A.C.T. PRESENTS

Carey Perloff
Artistic Director

Heather Kitchen
Managing
Director

Melissa Smith
Conservatory
Director

This production is
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The actors and
stage managers
employed in this
production are
members of Actors'
Equity Association,
the Union of
Professional Actors
and Stage
Managers in the
United States.

NOËL COWARD AND *BLITHE SPIRIT*

by Alan Farley

I'm here for a short visit only
And I'd rather be loved than hated
Eternity may be lonely
When my body's disintegrated
And that which is loosely termed my soul
Goes whizzing off through the infinite
By means of some vague, remote control
I'd like to think I was missed a bit.

—Noël Coward, in *Not Yet the Dodo and Other Verses*

Despite the fact that he was largely self-educated, Sir Noël Coward brimmed with self-confidence throughout his life. Many critics have considered Coward's persona his greatest creation. As drama critic Kenneth Tynan said, "Even the youngest of us will know in 50 years' time what we meant by 'a very Noël Coward sort of person.'"

Coward was particularly confident about *Blithe Spirit*, writing in his memoir *Future Indefinite*, "I will admit that I knew it was witty, I knew it was well constructed, and I also knew that it would be a success."

How great a success, perhaps even Coward did not imagine—*Blithe Spirit* opened in London's West End on July 2, 1941, just two months after it was completed. It proved to be just what the British public wanted during the dark days of World War II. The play ran for 1,997 performances, setting the record for a straight play on the London stage (a record that stood until 1957, when it was surpassed by *The Mouse Trap*). Today, along with *Private Lives* (1930) and *Hay Fever* (1925), *Blithe Spirit* remains one of the most frequently produced of Coward's plays and is number one among amateur and stock companies around the globe.

Perhaps best known today as a playwright (and the man who wrote the song "Mad Dogs and Englishmen"), Coward was a man of multiple talents, considered by many to be the greatest all-around entertainer of the first half of the 20th century. Born in 1899 in a middle-class family in Teddington, Middlesex, England, he rose to become an international celebrity, on friendly terms with the British royal family. He was knighted in 1970, and died peacefully at his home in Jamaica in 1973.

Coward began his stage career as a child actor at the age of ten. His first great success as actor and playwright came in 1924 with *The Vortex*, a *succès de scandale* that dealt with drugs and boy toys and established Coward the playwright as the angry young man of the 1920s. His next hits were the comedy *Hay Fever* and the operetta *Bitter Sweet* (1929). In 1930 he wrote *Private Lives* for Gertrude Lawrence and himself; they played to sell-out runs in both London and New York. In 1935, he penned *Tonight at 8:30* (a collection of nine one-acts, played in repertory), which he and Gertie performed in 1936.

Though Coward wrote more than 50 plays, revues, and musicals, he also created numerous short stories, a best-selling novel, a book of verse, several films, and more than 500 songs. He had a wide range as a composer and lyricist, writing songs that appealed directly to the emotions ("I'll See You Again") and others targeted to the intellect ("Mad Dogs and Englishmen"). His prewar song "The Stately Homes of England" dealt with ghosts in a light-hearted way, while at the same time pointedly commenting on the declining conditions of the country's landed gentry. Of his wartime songs, the patriotic "London Pride" personified the stiff-upper-lip demeanor of the British, while his satirical numbers "Won't You Please Oblige Us with a Bren Gun" and "Don't Let's Be Beastly to the Germans" captured the concurrent "Dad's Army" state of affairs.

Coward was also an actor, producer, and director for stage, radio, television, and film. His film projects included *Brief Encounter*, written and produced by Coward, based on his one-act play *Still Life* from *Tonight at 8:30*. The 1945 release was number two on the list of the top 100 British films of all time compiled by the British Film Institute in 1999. And in 1943, he was awarded a special

For more
information about
Sir Noël, contact

**THE NOËL
COWARD SOCIETY**
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Hellesdon
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United Kingdom
www.noelcoward.net

Oscar, for the “outstanding production achievement” of the film *In Which We Serve*, a patriotic wartime drama he wrote, produced and codirected, and in which he starred.

In the 1950s, when postwar critics rejected the wit and charm of Coward’s boulevard comedies in favor of the gritty “low-life” (Coward’s words) drama of Britain’s new generation of “Angry Young Men,” he reinvented himself as a cabaret entertainer, based on his experience playing for troops during World War II. After several successful seasons in London, he brought his act across the Atlantic in 1955, becoming the highest-paid performer to play Las Vegas. With successful British revivals of *Private Lives* and *Hay Fever* in 1963–64, the tide turned again in Coward’s favor. In 1970 Sir Noël was awarded a special Tony for his “multiple and immortal contributions to the theatre.”

BLITHE SPIRIT

Blithe Spirit was Coward’s last major success as a playwright. Although he would write more than a dozen plays and musicals over the next 25 years, none ran nearly as long as that wartime hit.

Here is how it came about. When war broke out in September 1939, Coward decided to dedicate himself to “important work for the country.” He spent the next two years abroad working on various government assignments.

One evening soon after his return to London in April 1941, he came home from dinner to find that bombs had ripped apart his flat. A few days later, while he was dining in the Grill of the Savoy Hotel (where he had taken up residence while his flat was being repaired), bombs blew in the door of the restaurant. Shaken by the destruction of the Blitz, he soon set out for a seaside holiday with his close friend, actress and playwright Joyce Carey (she had met him when her mother played Coward’s mother in *The Vortex*). Carey was working on a play, and Coward had an idea for a light comedy “rattling at the door of [his] mind.” The first day of the holiday they spent several hours talking about his idea. The following morning, Coward sat down at his typewriter and began: “*Blithe Spirit*. A Light Comedy in Three Acts.” Six days later the play was finished.

In *Future Indefinite* Coward writes:

My gift for comedy dialogue, which I feared might have atrophied from disuse, had obviously profited from its period of inactivity. Beyond a few typographical errors I made no corrections, and only two lines of the original script were ultimately cut.



Sir Noël, pictured on the Christmas card he sent to Joan Bové (grandmother of cast member Joan Harris-Gelb) in the mid 1960s

OPPOSITE

Blithe Spirit in rehearsal at A.C.T.
(clockwise from top left): René Augesen (Elvira); Gregory Wallace and Shona Tucker (Charles and Ruth Condomine); director Charles Randolph-Wright; Lori Larsen (Madame Arcati)

Alan Farley, the senior producer for KALW Radio, has produced hundreds of programs about Noël Coward over the last 20 years. He has served as a consultant to the Noël Coward estate and has contributed to *The Complete Lyrics of Noël Coward* (Overlook Press, 1998). Farley is currently editing his radio interviews of Coward's colleagues and friends for publication.

The idea for the subject of the play may have been a result of Coward's friendship with author Radclyffe Hall (author of the lesbian classic *The Well of Loneliness*), who, together with her great friend Una Troubridge, had visited a professional medium in hopes of contacting Hall's late lover, Mabel Batton. In fact, according to Terry Castle in *Noël Coward and Radclyffe Hall*, they contacted Batton through a young Indian girl, who communicated by rapping on a table in response to questions—much as happens in *Blithe Spirit*.

After an enormously successful run in Manchester, the play opened at London's Piccadilly Theatre. Coward later remembered:

[A] very curious opening night it was. The audience, socially impeccable from the journalistic point of view and mostly in uniform, had to walk across planks laid over rubble caused by a recent air raid to see a light comedy about death. They enjoyed it, I'm glad to say, and it ran from that sunny summer evening through the remainder of the war and out the other side. . . . Later on the play was produced in New York . . . where it ran for eighteen months, and I am prepared to say, here and now, with the maximum of self-satisfaction, that those six days in Port Meirion in May 1941 were not wasted.

Early in his career, Coward devised his plays with an eye to performance, and usually wrote what he called a "whacking good part" for himself. This was not the case with *Blithe Spirit*, although he did play Charles Condomine in the West End for two weeks and on tour in the United Kingdom for seven months in 1942–43. He was rueful about the part, as Judy Campbell, who played Elvira with him on that tour, remembered in a 1990 KALW interview:

[H]e wanted to play Charles Condomine and then when he came to do it, he said, "I had no idea what a bloody awful part it is! It is extremely long, and Cecil Parker [the original Charles] is quite brilliant to have sustained it on that level," he said, "because I do all the work, and you get all the laughs!" You know, Madame Arcati and the wives get all the laughs, and he said, "I'm there, never off the stage, doing all the work! Great mistake!"

Coward produced a film of *Blithe Spirit* in 1944; the movie was directed by David Lean and starred Rex Harrison (Charles), Kay Hammond (Elvira), Constance Cummings (Ruth), and Margaret Rutherford (Madame Arcati). Coward played Charles again on CBS Television in 1956, with Lauren Bacall as Elvira, Claudette Colbert as Ruth, and Mildred Natwick as Madame Arcati.

In 1964, Coward directed *High Spirits*, a musical version of his play, with music and lyrics by Timothy Gray and Hugh Martin. It played 375 performances on Broadway with his longtime friend Beatrice Lillie as Madame Arcati.

ELEGANT IMMORTALITY

An extremely patriotic Englishman, Coward had hoped with *Blithe Spirit* to help his distraught countrymen deal with issues of fear and death by making them laugh. While performing as Condomine in London, Coward found his commitment put to the test when he received the news that his close friend, the duke of Kent, had been killed in an air crash in Scotland:

*[M]y mind at first refused to believe it, which of course was foolish, because in those dark years we were all of us learning by bitter experience that it was only too easy to believe someone young and gay and kind was dead. They were dying all the time. . . . When I arrived at the theatre for the evening performance I was grateful to Fay Compton for warning me, just before I went on, to be on my guard against certain lines in the play which might surprise me, by their dreadful appositeness, into a betrayal of my feelings. She was right to warn me. *Blithe Spirit* certainly treats the subject of death lightly, and although I still maintain that death in the abstract is not nearly so solemn and lachrymose as many people would have us believe, it is not always possible to treat it with the proper disdain when the personal heart is quivering with a sense of loss.*

With a lifetime of extravagant, prolific success, Coward achieved his own kind of immortality, living on in the songs and plays that capture the essence of a wittier, more elegant time. "If I had to write my own epitaph," wrote Coward in 1960, "it would be: 'He was much loved because he made people laugh and cry.'" ■



Historical Note

Director Charles Randolph-Wright and A.C.T. Artistic Director Carey Perloff first discussed *Blithe Spirit* in 1999, while exploring possible projects to showcase A.C.T. core acting company member Gregory Wallace. “I knew I wanted to direct Gregory in a leading role,” says Randolph-Wright, “and Charles Condomine seemed perfect for him—he has that debonair sophistication the character requires. Also, because Charles is a writer, he is a person on the outside of society; he fits into society, but he doesn’t at the same time. I realized that the role could be a great fit for someone of color, because Charles is ultimately trying to prove himself in a world where he is unsure that he will ever win approval.”

Among Wallace’s models in preparing for the role of Condomine was writer Eric Walrond. Originally from British Guyana, Walrond spent time in New York during the 1920s, before—like many artists and writers of the Harlem Renaissance who expatriated to Europe—moving to France in 1929. Three years later, Walrond settled in London, where he remained until his death in 1966. A prolific and often political writer of fiction and prose, while in London he contributed several articles to Marcus Garvey’s publication *The Black Man*. Walrond was also known for his extravagant lifestyle, and in 1931 became part of the entourage of British steamship heiress Nancy Cunard (who lived with black musician Henry Crowder for several years and was a familiar figure in Noël Coward’s social set).

Wallace’s characterization is also inspired by the story of jazz pianist, singer, and notorious womanizer Leslie “Hutch” Hutchinson. Born in Grenada, Hutch also began his career in Harlem; he relocated first to Paris in 1924 and then to London three years later. Wildly popular with the British swinging set, he enjoyed a long string of high-society affairs (while his wife languished, largely ignored, in their home in Hampstead); Hutch’s more famous lovers included Lady Edwina Mountbatten (wife of one of Coward’s close friends), Tallulah Bankhead, film star Merle Oberon, and composer Cole Porter. Hutch appeared, with great success, in several revues written by Coward in the late 1920s, and performed with Coward at parties in the playwright’s home.

DIFFERENT GIFTS: THE MEDIUM THROUGH THE AGES

by Rod O'Neal

Scene from the
1922 film
Dr. Mabuse the
Gambler, depicting
a Spiritualist séance



©BETTMANN/CORBIS

There are different spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit gives them...
To one is given faith, to another healing...
To one is given prophecy, to another seeing spirits...
different ways of serving, but the same God is served.
1 Corinthians 12, 4-11

Ever since the *New York Times* bestseller *Out on a Limb*—Shirley MacLaine's autobiographical romp through the New Age—reincarnated as a hit TV movie in 1987, mediums have been everywhere. Turn on your television almost any night; if you don't tune directly into the dead with the Sci Fi channel's successful medium event, "Crossing Over with John Edward" (appearing five days a week, some days as often as four times), odds are good you'll encounter a psychic hotline ad. Or visit a major bookstore, where you may likely see Edward's *Crossing Over* (now in its 20th week as a *New York Times* bestseller), one of Sylvia Browne's many popular books (such as *Life on the Other Side: A Psychic's Tour of the Afterlife*), or another by George Anderson (*Lessons from the Light: Extraordinary Messages of Comfort and Hope from the Other Side*). Edward is so much in demand that the waiting list for a \$300 half-hour private session is three years. A private session with Anderson costs \$1,000.

Recent movies tell a similar tale. The enormous popularity of 1999's *The Sixth Sense*, in which a boy communicates with spirits who don't know they're dead, may have prompted Gallup to poll Americans in 2000 about our beliefs regarding the dead. Can they contact the living? Twenty percent believe they can. Another 22 percent think it's possible. That same year, the re-released *Exorcist* remained in theaters around the world for months. And in 2001, *The Others* captivated audiences with the story of a mother sheltering her children from the apparently malevolent intentions of what she concludes are ghosts after a series of bizarre experiences, including a séance with a medium very like Madame Arcati in Noël Coward's *Blithe Spirit*.

But *Blithe Spirit*'s somewhat befuddled medium first haunted the stage in 1941, decades before her New Age counterparts dared materialize. Indeed, people able to commune with the dead have appeared throughout history. One of the earliest accounts is from the Bible (1 Samuel 28), written probably in the 6th or 7th century B.C.E.: Israel's King Saul, no longer protected by Yahweh, grows so fearful on the eve of battle that he defies his own decree outlawing all conjurers of the dead ("necromancers") and demands a *séance* with the Witch of Endor to raise the ghost of the prophet Samuel to reveal his fate.

A millennium later, the Christian Church followed Saul's legal example and outlawed necromancy in the First Council of Nicea (4th century C.E.). Another millennium would pass, however, before the Church actively sought to eradicate this heresy with the Inquisition of the late Middle Ages and Renaissance, in which those found guilty were executed, most often by burning. Hundreds of thousands of so-judged witches—overwhelmingly women—found guilty of conversing with the dead were condemned to join them.

But Madame Arcati—you might object—is no Witch of Endor, no medieval hag, no Lady Macbeth bent on murderous schemes, no Salem-cursed devil worshiper doomed to fuel some pyre. Or is she? How different is this slightly daffy and inept, yet likeable medium conjured by Coward from the heretical necromancer of old? Modern historians of religion would not hesitate to classify Madame Arcati as a medium within the modern Spiritualist movement that began on March 31, 1848, in Hydesville, New York, near Rochester. A rapping noise so persistent that it had driven away the house's previous owner took on new meaning when sisters Catherine and Margaretta Fox discovered they could communicate with the raps using a simple code of one knock for "yes" and two for "no." A series of questions produced responses that slowly took the shape of a remarkable tale: that of a wandering peddler murdered by a previous occupant and buried in the cellar, a tale partially confirmed when portions of a skeleton were unearthed. Word got out. Crowds quickly grew too large for the small house, and the sisters, their rapping sessions, and the dead with their raps intact moved first to Rochester, then two years later, to New York City.

Almost as quickly, others—primarily women—discovered their ability to communicate with discarnate, or disembodied, spirits, as the dearly departed were called. As the focus through which these spirits communicated, these women (and a few men) became known as "mediums," the movement as Spiritualism. Spiritualist mediums gave public demonstrations, lectured on the theological implications of the communications they received, and were soon holding private *séances* (French for "sitting") with prominent members of all walks of American life from coast to coast—including First Lady Mary Todd Lincoln, who invited several mediums to the White House. The souls contacted soon advised the formation of "spirit circles" of family and friends to communicate with their beloved dead, and nightly *séances* became common occurrences in homes across the nation for the rest of the 19th century. Churches were founded. Societies were formed.

As increasing numbers of mediums, spirits, *séances*, and converts converged, more elaborate and impressive forms of communication emerged. Tables tilted and rocked, loud noises and disembodied voices filled lecture halls, and a peculiar fluid called "ectoplasm" materialized. Mediums fell into trance to discover that spirits could speak, write, even paint and sculpt, through them (activities known as "automatism"; the most common example, still used today², is "automatic writing"). Eventually, objects appeared out of thin air, spirits became visible to the unaided eye, and mediums floated out of their chairs.

Noël Coward with
Judy Campbell in
Blithe Spirit (1942)





Madame Arcati's historical counter-parts (clockwise from top left): British trance medium Eileen Garrett; an unknown phantom captured by Parisian "spirit photographer" Edouard Buguet (1874); British physical medium Miss Stella C., aka "The Electric Girl"; and Scottish materializing medium Helen Duncan (wearing cheese-cloth "teleplasm"), photographed during experiments at Britain's National Laboratory of Psychical Research (reprinted from Leaves from a Psychist's Casebook, by Harry Price, 1933.

SPARKS ACROSS THE POND

It was through the second-generation mediums that Spiritualism spread beyond the United States, first to London in 1852 with the arrival of Mrs. Hayden, who advertised her services in the *Times*. Her sittings may not have been as dramatic as some—she sat quietly, sometimes reading to herself, while rapping and table tilting went on about her—but they were convincing. Her clients ran their fingers down an alphabet board³, each rap indicating the next letter of the message, which often contained details of private matters Hayden could not possibly have known.

In 1855, David Dunglas Home arrived in England and eventually became one of the most celebrated Spiritualist mediums, welcomed at the courts of Louis Napoleon and the tsar. His manifestations went far beyond the by then common raps and tilting tables to include phantom hands, self-playing pianos, even bodily elongation. He was once reported to levitate out a third-floor window, hover above the street for several minutes, then return through a different window in the next room.

Within five years after the Fox sisters' discovery in Hydesville, the movement had spread to Germany and France, then quickly spanned the globe. Transmissions from the dead were published as books that became the foundation of a new philosophy and eventually a recognized religion. Much of society, including the scientific world,

was fascinated. In 1882, several prominent members of academia founded the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) in London to investigate Spiritualists' claims using the rigors of scientific method, and the field of parapsychology was born. William James, the eminent Harvard psychologist and philosopher, was among its many eminent members. His intensive research into psychic phenomena over three decades profoundly influenced his work as well as the development of the fledgling field of psychology.

A. R. Wallace, codiscoverer with Charles Darwin of the theory of natural selection, investigated Spiritualism over many years, concluding that its phenomena were as well substantiated as the facts of any other science. In the late 1890s, C. G. Jung held regular séances with his cousin, Holly Preiswerk, which served as the basis for his Ph.D. thesis and arguably influenced his theories of the archetypes of the unconscious. Author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (creator of Sherlock Holmes) was also a dedicated Spiritualist; he went public with his beliefs in 1918 and until his death was an active international lecturer for the Spiritualist cause, eventually known as the "St. Paul of Spiritualism."

¹ **Ectoplasm** is a viscous, usually light-colored fluid that was thought to emanate from, and to disappear back into, the body of a medium during a séance. Ectoplasm was most commonly used to explain the materialization of spiritual bodies; material objects were thought to levitate as the result of the gradual build-up of columns of ectoplasm beneath them.

² A contemporary case in point is Linda Polley (wife of "spiritist" medium Gerald Polley), of Fargo, ND, who claims to have helped the spirit of John Lennon write 50 new tunes for a posthumous album, which she says Lennon hopes will raise energy for the troubled spirit realm. Their spiritual collaboration is the subject of the recent British documentary *Where Has Eternity Gone?*; clips of the channeled tunes can be heard at www.justfree.com/music/spiritist/.


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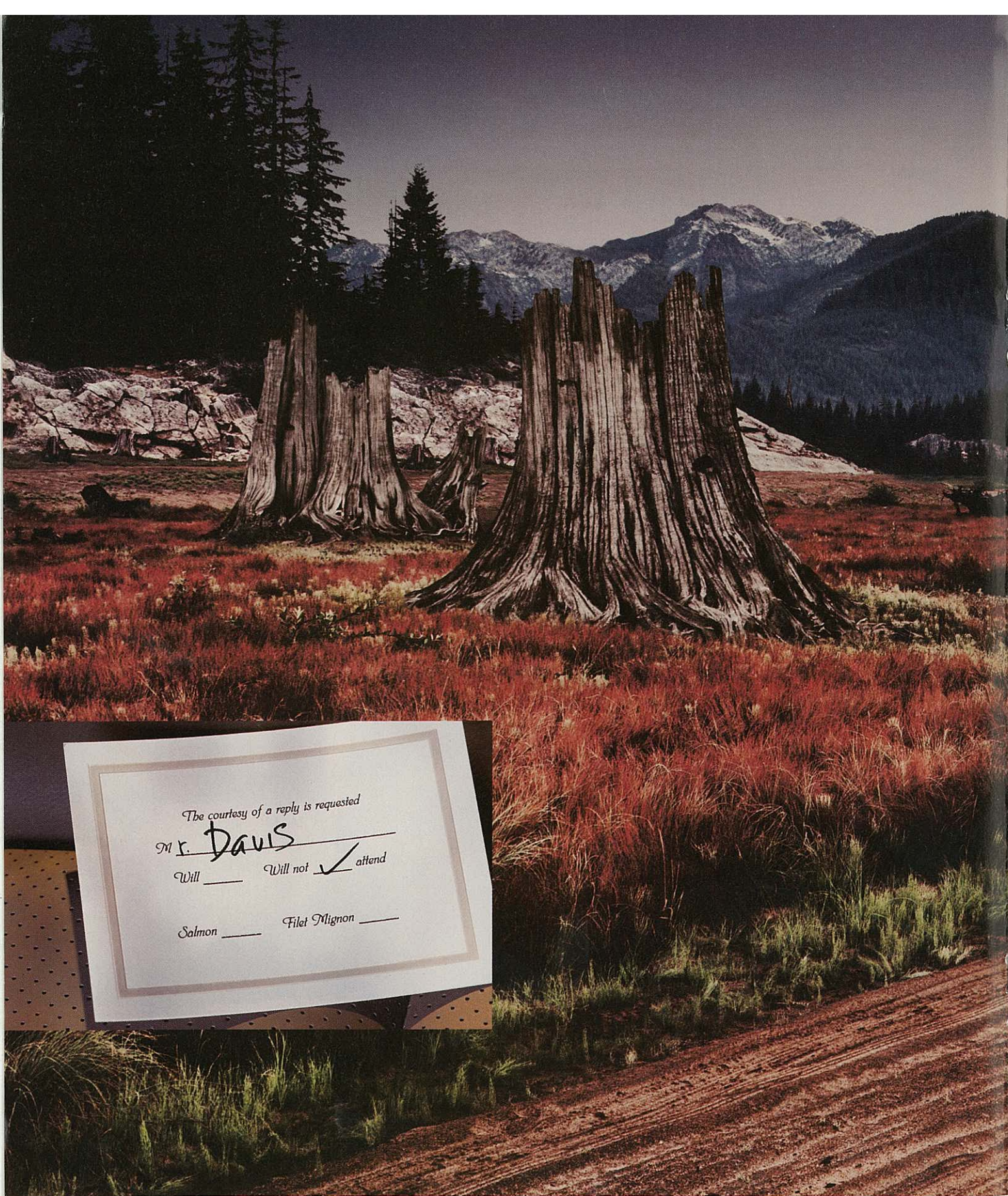
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Relative values

Two members of the UK's leading theatre family, Vanessa Redgrave and her daughter, Joely Richardson (left), are to appear on the West End stage together for the first time when they star in Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan* this month. The Redgrave family's talents have now spanned three centuries, writes London theatre critic and author, Sheridan Morley. 'They are there to remind us, from generation to generation, that theatre is about something more than making money or having fun, though they are nowadays not entirely averse to that either. Like the Fondas, they are the changing, living, sometimes self-denying conscience of showbusiness past, present and future.'

The one and only Janie Dee

Janie Dee's role as the cross-Channel swimmer who experiences the downside of fame, Edythe Herbert, in *My One and Only*, reunites her with a long-standing love – the music of Ira Gershwin. The award-winning actress and singer, familiar to audiences on both sides of the Atlantic as Jacie Triplethree in Alan Ayckbourn's *Comic Potential*, tells *theatregoer* 'I always go with what my heart tells me to do' – most appropriate in this Valentine month!



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One to Watch

Watch out for 22-year-old Lyndsey Marshall as the not-so-innocent housemaid who has been giving established stage stars Zoë Wanamaker and Anna Chancellor a run for their money in David Mamet's *Boston Marriage*.

Front of house

West End news: Jerry Hall in *Picasso's Women*; Martin Clunes as Tartuffe; and is *Fargo*'s Frances McDormand heading for the UK?

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THE FLAME KEPT ALIVE

While the movement lost a great deal of its energy in the early 20th century in much of the world, including the United States, Spiritualism thrived in Great Britain. In 1937, the Archbishop of Canterbury, alarmed by Spiritualism's rising popularity, formed an investigative committee whose final report estimated 520 societies in the Spiritualists' National Union and nearly twice that many outside the group's ranks. By 1941, when Noël Coward was writing *Blithe Spirit*, Spiritualism in Britain had reached its high water mark.

As the Archbishop's reaction illustrates, the growth of Spiritualism engendered not only curiosity and conversion, but also serious opposition. Especially after World War II, when its own membership began to decline significantly, the Catholic Church responded to Spiritualism with vigorous hostility, portraying mediums as dangerous, demon-possessed pretenders to sacred communion, and warning that séances threatened the spiritual and mental health of participants.

In 1944, a prominent Spiritualist medium, Helen Duncan, was imprisoned, tried, and convicted under the Witchcraft Act of 1735. Her publicly debated ordeal eventually led to the acceptance of Spiritualism as a legitimate religion in Great Britain, the exemption of Spiritualist mediums from the Witchcraft Act, and the passing in 1951 of the Fraudulent Mediums Act, which enabled Spiritualists to practice their religion openly and legally, without fear of imprisonment (or burning).

Some attribute Spiritualism's enormous rise in popularity in Britain during the 1920s and '30s to the movement's ability to inspire the religious imagination of soldiers caught in the nightmarish horror of World War I trenches, many of whom returned from the front with eerily similar stories of ghostly legions materializing to lend Britain aid in its hour of need. Others cite the overwhelming grief of innumerable bereaved family members who sought the consolation of Spiritualist rituals, which promised communion with loved ones lost in the war. Whatever the reason, we find in *Blithe Spirit*'s wartime success a British populace flocking to theaters for the peculiar and familiar solace of Madame Arcati's supernatural exploits, finding consolation in the comic relief and subtle hope offered by Coward's comedy.

We sadly know something today of the grief and despair that Coward and his Blitz-stricken compatriots experienced when *Blithe Spirit* was first produced in 1941. It should come as no surprise, then, that the *New York Times* recently reported that some of the families of the victims of the September 11 attacks have turned for comfort to mediums—as well as to clergy, psychotherapists, neighbors, and their fellow bereaved.

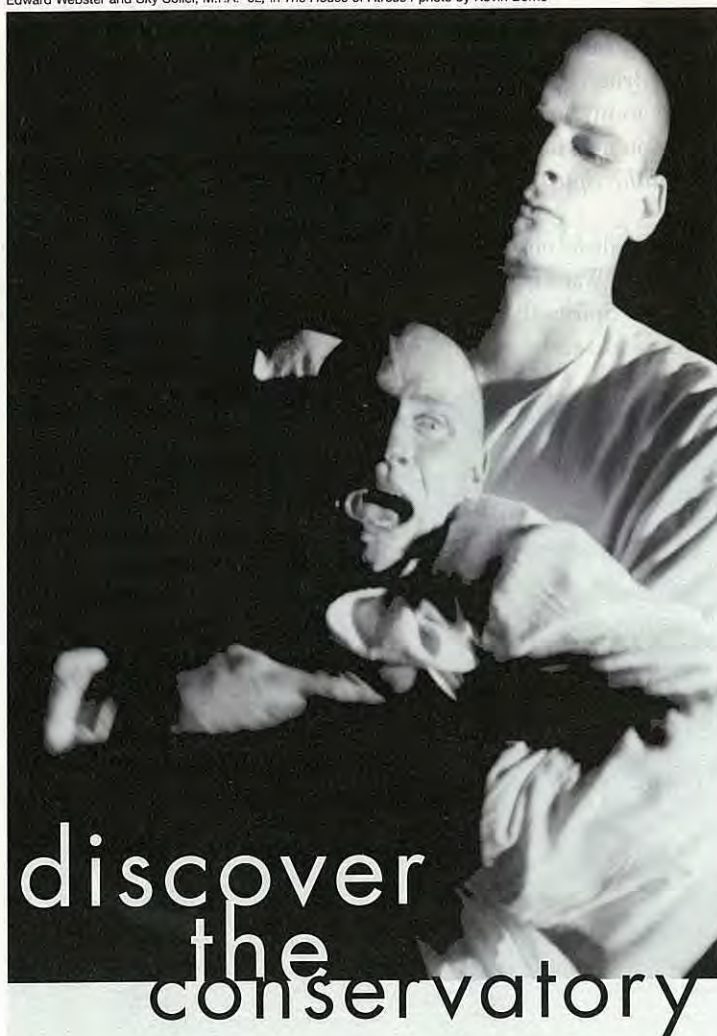
In this present context, the three thousand years that separate Madame Arcati from the Witch of Endor amount to a brief span indeed. ■

³ If this reminds you of the **Ouija board**, you're right. "Ouija," derived from the French and German words for "yes" (*oui* and *ja*), developed as an adaptation of the original Fox sisters' code for interpreting raps applied to an alphabet board. In 1853 French Spiritualist M. Planchette refined the idea as a large piece of paper with a heart-shaped wedge (now known as a "planchette"), with wheels on two ends and a pencil attached to the third. One or more people would place their fingers on the planchette, which would move to draw pictures or form words. The modern Ouija board, which now bears numbers and letters, was developed in 1892 by Elija J. Bond and William Fuld in Baltimore; Parker Brothers bought all rights to the concept in 1966. The Ouija board has been one of Parker Brothers' most successful properties, exceeded only by the game of *Monopoly*.

This famous photograph of the "Brown Lady" of Raynham Hall, in Norfolk, England, appeared in *Country Life* magazine in 1936. Psychic investigator Harry Price concluded: "The negative is entirely innocent of faking."



Rod O'Neal, a Bay Area astrologer and spiritual teacher, is a doctoral student in the Philosophy, Cosmology, and Consciousness Program of the California Institute of Integral Studies, examining the spiritual movements of the 19th and 20th centuries.



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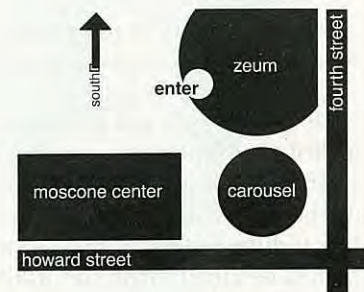
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GALLERY AT THE GEARY: ABOUT AVAILABLE LIGHT

Find yourself with some extra time before a performance or during intermission? Want to expose yourself to more fine art, but don't make it to art galleries as often as you'd like? Now you need look no further than the Geary Theater itself. A.C.T. invites you to visit the second floor of the theater (just outside the auditorium doors, along the north bank of windows, and by the elevator) to view original artwork by a diverse range of artists in a series of rotating exhibits throughout the 2001-02 season.

Currently on view is a series of recent photographs by San Francisco-based photographer Dianne Boate. Much of Boate's colorful work is inspired by her extensive travels. It was upon her return from a long European excursion in 1986 that Boate was selected for her first solo exhibit by the Joseph Dee Museum of Photography, which displayed 30 of her travel prints and self-portraits. "I am inspired every day to hunt for the treasures that surround and all too often elude us," says Boate, whose journey as a photographer has been intimately linked with her personal exploration of the tragedy of great loss and the mystery of impermanence. "By 1992, my two adult sons had passed away. So at a time when some people are wrapping things up, I had to start over, re-examining everything in my life. I experienced the exhilaration of having my first photo exhibit along with the pain in my heart knowing my son was dreadfully ill. The camera and I became close friends, searching together for the hidden delicacies that give one's life structure and meaning."

There will be a reception honoring the artist at the Gallery at the Geary on March 7 from 5 to 7 p.m. Each artwork purchase benefits A.C.T. For more information about Dianne Boate, please contact Margaret Danielak at (626) 683-9922 or visit the artist's Web site at www.danielakart.com.

"COOL HOLLYWOOD BLONDES" COMING TO THE GEARY THEATER

Hollywood's Golden Age produced its share of golden blondes. A.C.T., in conjunction with the *Chronicle* Film Series, will showcase several of them in "Cool Hollywood Blondes," a special program that will appear at the Geary Theater on three Monday nights in March and April. Tippi Hedren, legendary star of the Hitchcock classics *Marnie* and *The Birds*, kicks off the series March 11. Janet Leigh, unforgettable in *Touch of Evil*, *The Manchurian Candidate*, and, of course, *Psycho*, will appear onstage March 18. And on April 8, Cheryl Crane will talk about her mother, Lana Turner, the most dangerous of the Hollywood blondes. Clips will be screened from each artist's famous roles, followed by onstage interviews conducted by *Chronicle* film critics Edward Guthmann, Ruthe Stein, and Mick LaSalle.

Each event begins at 7:30 p.m. (Bars open at 6:30) Tickets for each evening's presentation will be \$18; or attend all three events for \$45. Student tickets will be available for \$10 on the day of the event, subject to availability (valid student ID required). Proceeds from the series will benefit the A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program. For more information, call the A.C.T. Box Office at 415 749-2ACT or click act-sfbay.org.

The Chronicle FILM SERIES

A NEW LOOK FOR THE A.C.T. PROGRAM

Last year Stagebill, the publisher of A.C.T.'s acclaimed performance programs since 1995, acquired *Performing Arts* magazine, a California publisher of programs for the performing arts. As part of Stagebill's efforts to consolidate its West Coast operations, the company has transferred the production of programs for its California venues, including A.C.T., to *Performing Arts*'s operation in Los Angeles. We'd love to hear what you think about our program's new look and content. Drop us a line at A.C.T. Publications, 30 Grant Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94108, or e-mail us at jwerner@act-sfbay.org.



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A.C.T. PROFILES



CAREY PERLOFF (*Artistic Director*) is thrilled to be experiencing her tenth season as artistic director of A.C.T. Known for directing innovative productions of classics and championing new writing for the theater, Perloff has staged for A.C.T. the American premieres of Tom Stoppard's *The Invention of Love* and *Indian Ink*; new A.C.T.-commissioned translations of *Hecuba*, *The Misanthrope*, *Enrico IV*, *Mary Stuart*, and *Uncle Vanya*; the world premiere of Leslie Ayvazian's *Singer's Boy*; and acclaimed productions of *The Threepenny Opera*, *Old Times*, *Arcadia*, *The Rose Tattoo*, *Antigone*, *Creditors*, *Home*, and *The Tempest*. In the 2001-02 season she directs the first American production of Harold Pinter's *Celebration* and *The Room* and Michel Tremblay's *For the Pleasure of Seeing Her Again*, as well as the world premiere of David Lang and Mac Wellman's *The Difficulty of Crossing a Field* (featuring the Kronos Quartet) and the A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program's world premiere production of Marc Blitzstein's *No for an Answer*. Last summer, her play *The Colossus of Rhodes* received its world premiere at Lucille Lortel's White Barn Theater and was a finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn Award.

Before joining A.C.T., Perloff was artistic director of Classic Stage Company in New York, where she directed the world premiere of Ezra Pound's *Elektra*, the American premiere of Pinter's *Mountain Language* and *The Birthday Party*, and many classic works. Under Perloff's leadership, Classic Stage won numerous OBIE Awards for acting, direction, and design, as well as the 1988 OBIE for artistic excellence. In 1993, she directed the world premiere of Steve Reich and Beryl Korot's opera *The Cave* at the Vienna Festival and the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

Perloff received a B.A. in classics and comparative literature from Stanford University and was a Fulbright Fellow at Oxford. She was on the faculty of the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University for seven years and teaches and directs in the A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program. She is the proud mother of Lexie and Nicholas.



HEATHER M. KITCHEN (*Managing Director*), now in her sixth season at A.C.T., emigrated to the United States from Canada in 1996 to begin her partnership with Artistic Director Carey Perloff. Since that time, A.C.T.'s annual budget has grown by 50 percent and staff size has increased dramatically. As managing director, Kitchen has overseen the company's recent expansion and been instrumental in fortifying the company's infrastructure to better support A.C.T.'s artists and employees. Kitchen began her career as a stage manager in 1975, and after 15 years in theatrical production became general manager of Citadel Theatre in Edmonton, Canada's largest regional theater. She currently serves on the board of the Commonwealth Club of California and is a past member of the San Francisco Leadership Board of the American Red Cross, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, San Francisco and the Peninsula, and the executive committee of the League of Resident Theatres (LORT). She has also participated on peer review panels for Theatre Communications Group, the Canada Council of the Arts, and *Forbes* magazine's Business and the Arts Awards. Kitchen is a graduate of the University of Waterloo and the renowned Richard Ivey School of Business at The University of Western Ontario.

MELISSA SMITH (*Conservatory Director*) oversees the administration of the A.C.T. Conservatory's Master of Fine Arts Program, Young Conservatory, Summer Training Congress, and Studio A.C.T., in addition to serving as the master acting teacher of the M.F.A. Program. Before joining A.C.T., Smith served as director of the program in theater and dance at Princeton University, where she taught acting, scene study, and Shakespeare for six years. Also a professional actor, she has performed in regional theaters and in numerous off-off Broadway plays, including work by Mac Wellman and David Greenspan. Smith holds a B.A. in English and theater from Yale College and an M.F.A. in acting from the Yale School of Drama.

JAMES HAIRE (*Producing Director*) began his career on Broadway with Eva Le Gallienne's National Repertory Theater. He also stage-managed the Broadway productions of *And Miss Reardon Drinks a Little* and *Georgy* (a musical by Carole Bayer Sager), as well as the national tour of Woody Allen's *Don't Drink the Water*. Off Broadway he produced Ibsen's *Little Eyolf* (directed by Marshall W. Mason) and Shaw's *Arms and the Man*. Haire joined A.C.T. in 1971. He and his department were awarded Theater Crafts International's award for excellence in the theater in 1989, and in 1992 Haire was awarded a lifetime achievement award by the Bay Area Theatre Critics' Circle.

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WHO'S WHO



REN  AUGESSEN (*Elvira*), an A.C.T. associate artist and core company member, made her Geary Theater debut last season in *The Misanthrope* and appeared earlier this season in *The Beard of Avon* and *Celebration* and *The Room*. She has performed in New York in *Spinning into Butter* at Lincoln Center Theater, *Macbeth* (with Alec Baldwin and Angela Bassett) at the

Public Theater, *It's My Party...* (with F. Murray Abraham and Joyce Van Patten) at the Arc Light Theater, and *Overruled* with the Drama League. Regional theater credits include *Mary Stuart* (directed by Carey Perloff) at the Huntington Theatre Company; several productions, including the world premieres of *The Beard of Avon* and *The Hollow Lands*, at South Coast Repertory; and productions at the Great Lakes Theatre Festival, Baltimore Center Stage, the Los Angeles Shakespeare Festival, Yale Repertory Theatre, and Stage West. Film and television credits include *The Battle Studies*, "Law & Order," "Guiding Light," "Another World," and Hallmark Hall of Fame's *Saint Maybe*. Augesen is a graduate of the Yale School of Drama.



TOM BLAIR (*Dr. Bradman*) has worked extensively in Bay Area theater, including *Enrico IV*, *The Threepenny Opera*, *Tartuffe*, *Indian Ink*, *The Guardsman*, *The Royal Family*, and *Othello* at A.C.T.; *Holiday* and *Caine Mutiny Court Martial* at San Jose Repertory Theatre; *Wilder/Wilder/Wilder* and *Molly Sweeney* at Marin Theatre Company; *Revenger's Tragedy*

and *The Tale of Lear* at Berkeley Repertory Theatre; and *Mr. Rickey Calls a Meeting* at Sacramento Theatre Company. Other regional theater credits include productions at the Kennedy Center, Cleveland Play House, Blackstone Theatre in Chicago, and 15 years at Milwaukee Repertory Theater. Blair has also directed plays at many regional theaters and in Japan, and has appeared in feature films and on television. He most recently played Mr. Meyers in *Spinning into Butter* at TheatreWorks and Col. Pickering in *My Fair Lady* at the Berkshire Theatre Festival.



JOAN HARRIS-GELB (*Mrs. Bradman*) recently performed in *A Christmas Carol* at A.C.T. Stage credits include Miranda in the world premiere of David Hirson's *Wrong Mountain* at A.C.T. and on Broadway, Eleanor Widener in the original Broadway company of *Titanic*, and Mrs. Walker and others in the original Broadway company of *The Who's Tommy*. She also performed in *Big*

River on Broadway. Gelb has performed her solo show, *Mother, Where Were You When I Woke Up Screaming and My Bed Was on Fire in the Middle of the Night?* all over New York City. Her television credits include *The Last Day in the Life of Brian Darling* for HBO, *Women Aloud*, and "Law & Order."



LORI LARSEN (*Madame Arcati*) makes her A.C.T. debut in *Blithe Spirit*. A Seattle native, she has spent most of her 30-year career on that city's various stages. She most recently played Elizabeth I in *The Beard of Avon* at Seattle Repertory Theatre. She also appeared in Amy Freed's *The Psychic Life of Savages* at Seattle's Empty Space Theatre, which she helped create in the

1970s and where she has performed in 35 productions. Recent credits include *Wit*, *Indiscretions*, *Quills*, *Cymbeline*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *Kindertransport*, and *Othello*. Theater credits also include productions at the Long Wharf Theatre, Madison Repertory Theatre, and Source Theatre Company, and tours to Russia, Switzerland, and Norway with *The Oresteia*. Larsen also worked as an opera director in the '90s, directing *Tales of Hoffman*, *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, *Tosca*, *Rigoletto*, and *La Boh me* for Seattle Opera, as well as appearing in *The Daughter of the Regiment*. The last time she played in San Francisco (1987), she performed in *Open Couples/Eve's Diary*, by Dario Fo, at the Eureka Theatre. Larsen also played Mrs. LeFleur on "Northern Exposure."



SHONA TUCKER (*Ruth Condomine*) has appeared at A.C.T. in *Tartuffe* and *Insurrection: Holding History*, both directed by Charles Randolph-Wright. She recently appeared in *Constant Star* (directed by Tazewell Thompson) at Arena Stage. Off-Broadway credits include productions at the Public Theater, Circle in the Square, Playwrights Horizons, Manhattan

Theatre Club, and the New York Shakespeare Festival, as well as *A Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* (OBIE Award) and *Investigation of the Murder in El Salvador* at the New York Theatre Workshop. She has worked at many regional theaters, including Syracuse Stage, Seattle Repertory Theatre, the Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Milwaukee Repertory Theater, the Acting Company, the Goodspeed Opera House, Actors Theatre of Louisville, and Arena Stage. Screen credits include "Third Watch," *Boys on the Side*, Woody Allen's *Alice*, "New York Undercover," and "One Life to Live." Tucker received her B.S. from Northwestern University and M.F.A. from New York University and has been honored with a Fulbright Scholarship and an AUDELCO Award for excellence in black theater.



JESSICA TURNER (*Edith*) is a third-year student in the A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.) Program and made her Geary Theater debut in *The Beard of Avon*. Her regional theater credits include Marina in *Pericles* and the title role of *Sleeping Beauty* with Shakespeare in Santa Fe; Celia in *As You Like It*, Good Angel in *Doctor Faustus*, and Lady Bona in *Henry VI, Part III* with the Wisconsin

Shakespeare Festival; Belle in *A Christmas Carol* at Dallas Theater Center; and Helen of Troy in *The Trojan Women* with

The Western Stage. Her favorite M.F.A. roles include the title role of *Hedda Gabler*, Bobbie in *No for an Answer*, and Young York in *Richard III*.



GREGORY WALLACE (*Charles Condomine*) an A.C.T. associate artist and core company member, has been seen at A.C.T. in Harold Pinter's *Celebration* and *The Room*, "Master Harold"...and the boys, *The Misanthrope*, *Edward II*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Tartuffe*, *Insurrection: Holding History*, and *Angels in America* (Bay Area Theatre Critics' Circle Award). Other theater credits include *Our Country's Good* on

Broadway, *A Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* at the New York Theatre Workshop, *As You Like It* at the Public Theater, *Much Ado About Nothing* at the Alliance Theatre, *The Screens* at the Guthrie Theater, *The Learned Ladies* at the Williamstown Theatre, *King Lear* at the Whole Theater, *The Queen and the Rebels* at Center Stage, and *The Beaux' Stratagem* at Berkeley Repertory Theatre. Screen credits include Peter Sellers's *Cabinet of Dr. Ramirez*, *The Beverly Hillbillies*, *Dark Goddess*, "Crime Story," and *Internal Affairs*. A graduate of the Yale School of Drama, Wallace teaches and directs in the A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program.



MARGO HALL (*Understudy/Assistant Director*) worked as an assistant director to Charles Randolph-Wright on the A.C.T. production of *Tartuffe*. She has appeared at A.C.T. in *Hecuba* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and performed in *Oak and Ivy* (directed by Randolph-Wright) at Arena Stage. She is an original member of Campo Santo, where she was last seen in the world premiere of Philip Gotanda's

Floating Weeds. Acting credits also include *References to Salvador Dali Make Me Hot*, by Jose Rivera; *Polaroid Stories*, by Naomi Iizuka; and *Hurricane*, by Erin Cressida Wilson. She debuted as a director with the world premiere of *Joyride* (from the novel *Grand Avenue* by Greg Sarris) and is currently directing Sarris's new play, *Mission Indians* with Nancy Benjamin. Directing credits also include productions for Campo Santo, *Word for Word*, and *Intersections* Directions and codirecting (with Rhodessa Jones) Wilson's *The Trail of Her Inner Thigh*. Hall received her M.F.A. from Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C..



MAUREEN McVERRY (*Understudy*) has been seen at A.C.T. in *The House of Mirth*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Shlemiel the First*, *Pygmalion*, *Dinner at Eight*, *Scapin*, and *The Pope and the Witch*. Recently she was in *A Flea in Her Ear* at San Jose Repertory Theatre and portrayed Alice Waters in the musical *Fanny at Chez Panisse*. In Los Angeles she has worked at the Geffen Playhouse and LATC. In San Francisco

she has been featured in *Oh Kay!*, *Noises Off*, *The Curse of the Werewolf*, and several shows at Marin Theatre Company, the Magic Theatre, and the Eureka Theatre Company. Since 1994 she has sung her evolving cabaret show, *Very McVerry*, at various venues and took part in the 100th-birthday party for Noël Coward at the Plush Room in 1999. Film and television credits include *Nine Months*, *The Dead Pool*, *True Believer*, *Big Business*, *Good Luck*, "Full House," and the soon-to-be-released *High Crimes*.



MICHAEL GENE SULLIVAN (*Understudy*) has appeared at A.C.T. in *The First Picture Show*, *Machinal*, *Pecong*, and five seasons of *A Christmas Carol*. He is also a 14-year veteran of the Tony Award-winning San Francisco Mime Troupe (SFMT), where last year he wrote and directed SFMT's hit *1600 Transylvania Avenue*, which was recently performed at the Verbal Heroes

Festival in Berlin. Other credits include productions off Broadway and at Berkeley Repertory Theatre, the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, the Kennedy Center, and festivals in Hong Kong, Israel, South Korea, Canada, and Belgium. His Bay Area Theatre Critics' Circle Award-nominated one-person show, *Did Anyone Ever Tell You—You Look Like Huey P. Newton?* will tour the Midwest this fall.

CHARLES RANDOLPH-WRIGHT (*Director*) directed *Insurrection: Holding History* at A.C.T. in 1998 and *Tartuffe* in 1999. He recently directed the smash hit revival of *Guys and Dolls* at Arena Stage; the production is now on tour throughout the country. His play *Blue* completed a sold-out run at the Roundabout Theatre in New York last summer. He cowrote and directed the new hit musical *Me and Mrs. Jones* at Philadelphia's Prince Music Theater and is cowriting and directing *Ball*, a new musical set in the world of street basketball. Past theater projects include directing *Oak and Ivy* at Arena Stage; cowriting and directing *The Diva Is Dismissed* (NYSF/Public Theater and Los Angeles) and *Homework* (New York, Los Angeles); directing the 20th-anniversary production of *Hair* at the United Nations; and productions at Lincoln Center, New York Theatre Workshop, Manhattan Theatre Club, Classic Stage Company, the Mark Taper Forum, Crossroads, and Carnegie Hall. Screenplay credits include *Shades of Grey*, which he is currently writing for HBO, *Women's Maintenance Project* (Hart/Sharp Entertainment), *Fool's Hill* (Walt Disney Pictures), *Homework* (cowritten with Kim Coles, 20th Century Fox) and *White Chocolate* (cowritten with John Leguizamo). His extensive television credits range from producing and writing Showtime television's critically acclaimed series "Linc's" to directing the European Freestyle campaign for Nike. An honors graduate of Duke University, Randolph-Wright is a founding member of the Wright Foundation of South Carolina. www.Randolph-Wright.com.

KATE EDMUNDS (*Scenic Designer*) has designed many productions for A.C.T., including *The Misanthrope*, *The House of Mirth*, *Long Day's Journey into Night*, *Juno and the Paycock*, *Hecuba*, *Old Times*, *Antigone*, *Uncle Vanya*, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, *Oleanna*, *Arcadia*, and *Othello*. Locally, she has designed many shows for Berkeley Repertory Theatre, including *Twelfth Night*, *The Revenger*, *The Misanthrope*, *Endgame*, *Sight Unseen*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Heartbreak House*, *Slavs!*, and, most recently, *The Heiress* and *How I Learned to Drive*. She has also designed extensively throughout the United States at a wide range of regional, off-Broadway, and Broadway theaters, and her designs have garnered many local and national awards. A graduate of the Yale School of Drama, Edmunds teaches scenic design at UC Berkeley.

BEAVER BAUER (*Costume Designer*) has designed costumes for A.C.T. productions of *The Beard of Avon*, *The Misanthrope*, *Edward II*, *Tartuffe*, *Insurrection: Holding History*, *The Royal Family*, *The Matchmaker*, *Uncle Vanya*, *The Learned Ladies*,

Good, Twelfth Night, A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum, Feathers, A Lie of the Mind, and The Floating Light Bulb. Most recently she designed *Rhinoceros* at Berkeley Repertory Theatre and *Blue* (written by Charles Randolph-Wright) at Arena Stage and the Roundabout. She has also designed for the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, Eureka Theatre Company, Shakespeare Santa Cruz, Lamplighters, San Jose Repertory Theatre, Magic Theatre, Pickle Family Circus, Classic Stage Company, Theater of Yugen, and the Riviera and Desert Inn Hotels in Las Vegas. From 1972 to 1984 she worked for Angels of Light, a troupe that specializes in cabaret and theater, and in 1995 she designed a circus that traveled to Moscow and Japan. Bauer has won several Bay Area Theatre Critics' Circle Awards.

PETER MARADUDIN (*Lighting Designer*), a member of A.C.T.'s artistic council, has designed the lighting for more than 30 A.C.T. productions, including *The Beard of Avon, Celebration* and *The Room, "Master Harold"...and the boys, Enrico IV, The House of Mirth, The Threepenny Opera, Tartuffe, Long Day's Journey into Night, and Mary Stuart.* He also designed the lighting for *The Kentucky Cycle* and *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* on Broadway and *Hurrah at Last, Ballad of Yachiyo, and Bouncers* off Broadway. Regional theater designs include more than 250 productions for companies across the United States; other recent Bay Area productions include *The Oresteia* and *The First Hundred Years* for Berkeley Repertory Theatre and *By the Bog of Cats* for San Jose Repertory Theatre. He is the founding principal designer of Light and Truth, a San Francisco- and Los Angeles-based lighting design consultancy for themed entertainment and architecture.

GARTH HEMPHILL (*Sound Designer*) is in his fifth season as A.C.T.'s resident sound designer. He has designed more than 100 productions, including, for A.C.T., *The Beard of Avon, Celebration* and *The Room, "Master Harold"...and the boys, Enrico IV, Glengarry Glen Ross, The Misanthrope, Frank Loesser's Hans Christian Andersen, Edward II, The House of Mirth, The Invention of Love, The Threepenny Opera, Insurrection: Holding History, A Christmas Carol, Mary Stuart, Old Times, and A Streetcar Named Desire* (Bay Area Theatre Critics' Circle Award). He has earned Drama-Logue Awards for his work on *Jar the Floor, A Christmas Carol* (South Coast Repertory), *The Things You Don't Know, Blithe Spirit, New England, Lips Together, Teeth Apart, Fortinbras,* and the world

premiere of Richard Greenberg's *Three Days of Rain.* Hemphill is a principal partner of GLH Design, Inc., a local design firm.

RICK ECHOLS (*Wigs and Makeup*) has worked on more than 250 A.C.T. productions since 1971. He designed *Cyrano de Bergerac, A Christmas Carol, and The Taming of the Shrew* for A.C.T. and public television, as well as many other television and major film productions. He also designed for the original *Cinderella* at the San Francisco Ballet, Christopher Walken's *Hamlet* for the American Shakespeare Festival, and *Angels in America* for the Eureka Theatre Company. Echols also works for the San Francisco Opera and teaches in the A.C.T. Conservatory, as well as occasional hairstyling at the Oscars. In 1996, he returned to A.C.T. after almost five years with *Les Misérables* on the road with the national tour and on Broadway.

JULIE HABER (*Production Stage Manager*) most recently stage-managed *James Joyce's The Dead* at A.C.T. and the Huntington Theatre Company; at A.C.T. she has also stage-managed *"Master Harold"...and the boys* and Richard Nelson's *Goodnight Children Everywhere.* For 20 years Haber was the company stage manager for South Coast Repertory, where she worked on more than 70 productions. Other credits include productions at Berkeley Repertory Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse, Santa Fe Festival Theatre, the Guthrie Theater, and Yale Repertory Theatre. She holds an M.F.A. from the Yale School of Drama and has taught stage management at Yale, UC Irvine, and California Institute of the Arts.

FRANCESCA RUSSELL (*Stage Manager*) is in her fifth season at A.C.T., where she stage-managed *A Christmas Carol* earlier this season. She has also worked on previous A.C.T. productions of *Celebration* and *The Room, Fool Moon, Texts for Nothing, "Master Harold"...and the boys, Goodnight Children Everywhere, 2 Pianos, 4 Hands, High Society, Mrs. Warren's Profession, The Royal Family, Machinal, Shlemiel the First, and Evenings at the Geary* with Betty Buckley and Wesla Whitfield. She has worked on shows throughout the Bay Area and in San Diego, including Danny Scheie's production of *Cymbeline* at Shakespeare Santa Cruz, Mabou Mines' *Peter and Wendy,* and three seasons with San Jose Repertory Theatre. She has also spent seasons with Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Shakespeare Santa Cruz, Aurora Theatre Company, the California Shakespeare Festival, and La Jolla Playhouse.

THANKS TO OUR SPONSOR: MRS. ALBERT J. MOORMAN

Blithe Spirit is sponsored in part by a generous contribution from Mrs. Albert J. Moorman. Mrs. Moorman's dedicated commitment to A.C.T. dates back more than 25 years, when she and her late husband (who served as vice president of the board of trustees of the California Association for A.C.T. and later on the board of trustees of the American Conservatory Theater Foundation) first became involved with the company. Mrs. Moorman has continued to support the artistic life of A.C.T. since the death of her husband in 1994. (Her daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Michael Fremont, are also enthusiastic theatergoers.) Last season she sponsored A.C.T.'s production of *The Misanthrope*.

In 1948, Al and Bette Moorman moved to the Bay Area, where an inspired performance by Tallulah Bankhead sparked a love affair with the Geary Theater and with live performance that was to last more than half a century. Mr. Moorman joined McCutchen, Doyle, Brown & Enersen in 1960 and served as managing partner of the firm from 1976 until 1985, longer than any other individual in the firm's history. Moorman's enthusiastic lobbying on behalf of A.C.T. contributed significantly to the increased success of the company's local fundraising efforts, while his leadership as chairman of the board's nominating committee helped to create and sustain a level of excellence and service in A.C.T.'s principal governing body. Moorman also served on the boards of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the National Corporate Theatre Fund, on the Committee for Art at Stanford University, and on the advisory committee of the Allied Arts Guild. A.C.T. has named a rehearsal studio after Mr. Moorman as a lasting tribute to his invaluable contribution to the life of the theater and the arts in the Bay Area.

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AN INVITATION TO JOIN THE PROSPERO SOCIETY

Named after the wise and benevolent magician in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, A.C.T.'s Prospero Society has been established to honor those who wish to honor A.C.T. by including the organization in their estate plans.

For more information, contact Michele Casan at (415) 439-2451, or send an e-mail to mcasau@act-sfbay.org.

All inquiries will be held in strictest confidence.

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES

A.C.T.'s administrative and conservatory offices are located at 30 Grant Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94108, (415) 834-3200. On the Web: act-sfbay.org.

BOX OFFICE AND TICKET INFORMATION

Geary Theater Box Office

Visit us at 405 Geary Street at Mason, next to the Geary Theater, one block west of Union Square. Box office hours are 12-8 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, and 12-6 p.m. Sunday and Monday. During nonperformance weeks, business hours are 12-6 p.m. daily.

Online

Tickets are also available 24 hours/day on our Web site at act-sfbay.org. Seating quality is consistent with that available by phone or in person; "virtual reality" tours of the Geary Theater are available online. A.C.T.'s popular **E-mail Club** (accessible through the Web site) offers members reminders of upcoming shows, special offers and last-minute ticket discounts, and the latest company news.

Charge by Phone or Fax

Call (415) 749-2ACT and use your Visa, MasterCard, or American Express card. Or fax your ticket request with credit card information to (415) 749-2291.

Purchase Policy

All sales are final, and there are no refunds. Only current subscribers enjoy performance rescheduling privileges and lost-ticket insurance. If you are unable to attend at the last minute, you can donate your tickets to A.C.T. The value of donated tickets will be acknowledged by mail. Tickets for past performances cannot be donated.

Mailing List

Call (415) 749-2ACT or visit our Web site to request subscription information and advance notice of A.C.T. events.

Ticket Prices

Ticket prices range from \$11 to \$61.

Subscriptions

Full-season subscribers save up to 29% and receive special benefits including performance rescheduling by phone, and more. Call the A.C.T. Subscription Hotline at (415) 749-2250 or visit A.C.T. online.

Discounts

Half-price tickets are sometimes available on the day of performance at TIX on Union Square. **Half-price student and senior rush tickets** are available at the box office 90 minutes before curtain. **Matinee senior rush tickets** are available at noon on the day of the performance for \$10. All rush tickets are subject to availability, one ticket per valid ID. **Student and senior citizen subscriptions** are also available. A.C.T. also offers one **Pay What You Wish** performance during the run of each production.

Group Discounts

For groups of 15 or more, call Edward Budworth at (415) 439-2473.

Gift Certificates

A.C.T. gift certificates can be purchased in any amount online, by phone or fax, or in person at the box office.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

Geary Theater Tours

A.C.T. offers guided tours (\$8, \$6 subscribers and seniors, \$4 students) of the Geary Theater on selected Wednesday and Saturday mornings. For information, call (415) 749-2ACT or visit A.C.T. online.

Student Matinees

Matinees are offered at 1 p.m. to elementary, secondary, and college school groups for selected productions. Tickets are \$10. For information call (415) 439-2383.

A.C.T. Extras

For information on A.C.T. Prologues, Audience Exchanges, and *Words on Plays* audience guides call (415) 749-2ACT or visit A.C.T. online at act-sfbay.org/interact.

ASL

American Sign Language-interpreted performances are offered to selected productions throughout the season for Deaf audience members. For performance dates and times, visit act-sfbay.org/community or subscribe to A.C.T.'s Deaf community e-mail list by sending an e-mail to deafcommunity@act-sfbay.org. Deaf patrons may purchase tickets by calling (415) 749-2ACT or via TTY at (415) 749-2370.

Conservatory

A.C.T. offers instruction in a wide range of theater disciplines. The **Master of Fine Arts Program** offers a rigorous three-year course of actor training, culminating in a master of fine arts degree. The **Summer Training Congress** is an intensive program for those with some performing arts background. **Studio A.C.T.** offers evening and weekend classes, including Corporate Education Services, to enthusiasts at every level of experience. The **Young Conservatory** is a broad-based program for students 8-19. Call (415) 439-2350 for a free brochure.

Costume Rental

More than 10,000 costumes, from handmade period garments to modern sportswear, are available for rental. For information call (415) 439-2379.

Parking

A.C.T. patrons can park for just \$9 at the **Hilton San Francisco** for up to five hours, subject to availability. Enter on Ellis Street between Mason and Taylor. Show your ticket stub for that day's performance upon exit to receive the special price. After five hours, the regular rate applies. The **Downtown Center Garage**, located at Mason and O'Farrell, offers an evening special: arrive after 5:30 p.m. and exit before 9:30 a.m. for just \$12.50.

Valet Parking

On-site valet parking is available for \$20 at every A.C.T. performance, provided by Black Tie Parking.

AT THE THEATER

The Geary Theater is located at 415 Geary Street. The auditorium opens 30 minutes before curtain.

A.C.T./F.Y.I.

A.C.T. Merchandise

Posters, sweatshirts, t-shirts, note cards, scripts, and *Words on Plays* are available for purchase at the Geary Theater Box Office.

Refreshments

Bar service is available one hour before the performance in the main lobby, Fred's Columbia Room on the lower level, and the Sky Bar on the third level. You can avoid the long lines at intermission by pre-ordering food and beverages in the lower- and third-level bars. Food and drink are not permitted in the auditorium.

Beeper!

If you carry a pager, beeper, cellular phone, or watch with alarm, please make sure that it is set to the "off" position while you are in the theater. Or you may leave it and your seat number with the house manager, so you can be notified if you are called.

Perfumes

The chemicals found in perfumes, colognes, and scented after-shave lotions, even in small amounts, can cause severe physical reactions in some individuals. As a courtesy to fellow patrons, please avoid the use of these products when you attend the theater.

Emergency Telephone

Leave your seat location with those who may need to reach you and have them call (415) 439-2396 in an emergency.

Latecomers

A.C.T. performances begin on time. Latecomers will be seated before intermission only if there is an appropriate interval.

Listening Systems

Headsets designed to provide clear, amplified sound anywhere in the auditorium are available free of charge in the lobby before performance. Please turn off your hearing aid when using an A.C.T. headset, as it will react to the sound system and make a disruptive noise.

Photographs and recordings of A.C.T. performances are strictly forbidden.

Rest rooms are located in the lower lobby, the balcony lobby, and the uppermost lobby.



Wheelchair seating is available on all levels of the Geary Theater. Please call (415) 749-2ACT in advance to notify the house staff of any special needs.

AFFILIATIONS

A.C.T. operates under an agreement between the League of Resident Theaters and Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States. A.C.T. is a constituent of Theatre Communications Group, the national organization for the non-profit professional theater. A.C.T. is a member of the League of Resident Theaters, Theatre Bay Area, Union Square Association, San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, and San Francisco Convention & Visitors Bureau. A.C.T. is a participant in the National Theatre Artist Residency Program, administered by Theatre Communications Group, the national organization for the American theater, and funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts.

A.C.T. logo designed by Landor Associates.



The director is a member of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers, Inc., an independent national labor union.



A.C.T. is supported in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

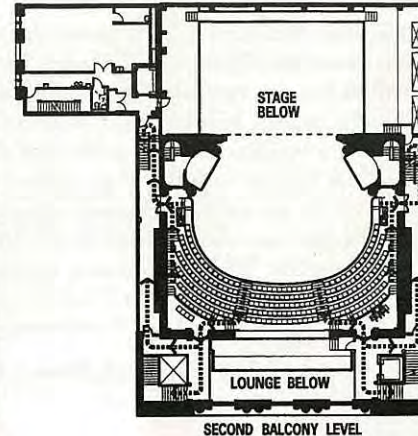
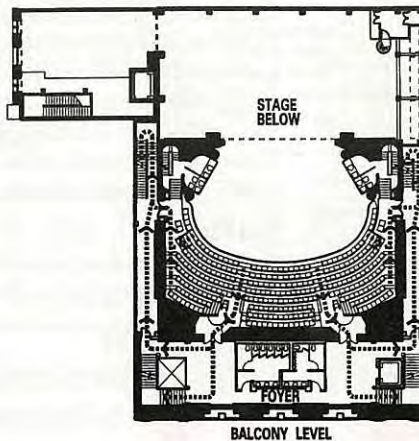
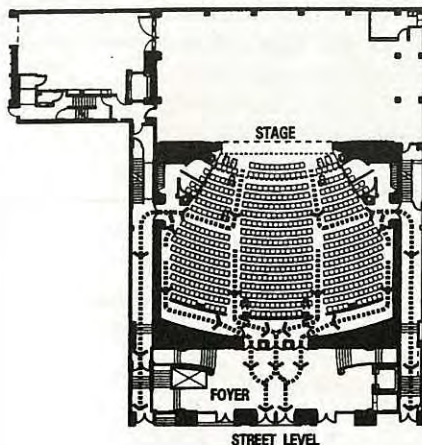


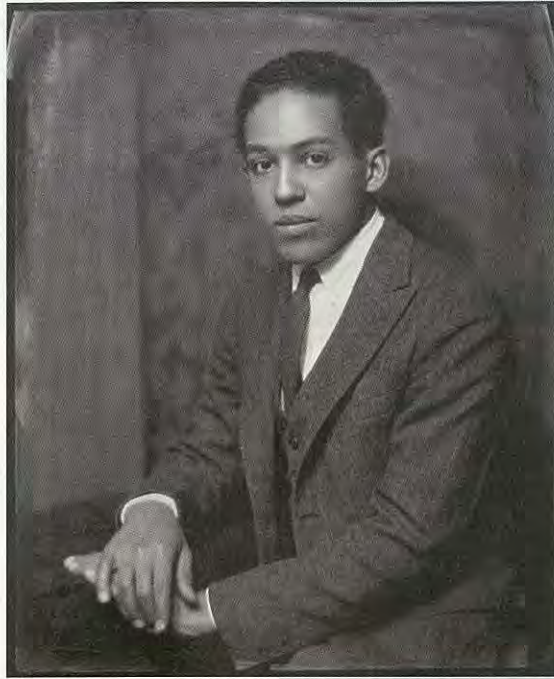
A.C.T. is sponsored in part by a grant from the Grants for the Arts/San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund.



A.C.T. is funded in part by the California Arts Council, a state agency.

GEARY THEATER EXITS





COURTESY GEORGE EASTMAN HOUSE

Photo of Langston Hughes by Nickolas Muray, 1923

"That's American"

Langston Hughes (1902-1967)

With the production of his *Black Nativity* at San Francisco's Lorraine Hansberry Theatre, we are reminded that this is the 100th anniversary of the birth of Langston Hughes. In honor of the great poet, we reprint an early work of his, written as a theme, or essay, for a class he took while still a student at Columbia University in 1922.

Theme for English B

The instructor said,
*Go home and write
 a page tonight.
 And let that page come out of you —
 Then, it will be true.*

I wonder if it's that simple?
 I am twenty-two, colored, born in Winston-Salem.
 I went to school there, then Durham, then here
 to this college on the hill above Harlem.
 I am the only colored student in my class.
 The steps from the hill lead down into Harlem,
 through a park, then I cross St. Nicholas,
 Eighth Avenue, Seventh, and I come to the Y,
 the Harlem Branch Y, where I take the elevator
 up to my room, sit down, and write this page:

It's not easy to know what is true for you or me
 at twenty-two, my age. But I guess I'm what
 I feel and see and hear, Harlem, I hear you:
 hear you, hear me — we two — you, me, talk on this page.

(I hear New York, too.) Me — who?
 Well, I like to eat, sleep, drink, and be in love.
 I like to work, read, learn, and understand life.
 I like a pipe for a Christmas present,
 or records — Bessie, bop, or Bach.
 I guess being colored doesn't make me *not* like
 the same things other folks like who are other races.
 So will my page be colored that I write?
 Being me, it will not be white.
 But it will be
 a part of you, instructor.
 You are white —
 yet a part of me, as I am a part of you.
 That's American.
 Sometimes perhaps you don't want to be a part of me.
 Nor do I often want to be a part of you.
 But we are, that's true!
 As I learn from you,
 I guess you learn from me —
 although you're older — and white —
 and somewhat more free.

This is my page for English B.

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OUR ANNUAL BEST OF LOS ANGELES



A New Eye on

Holly

Hidden Treasures

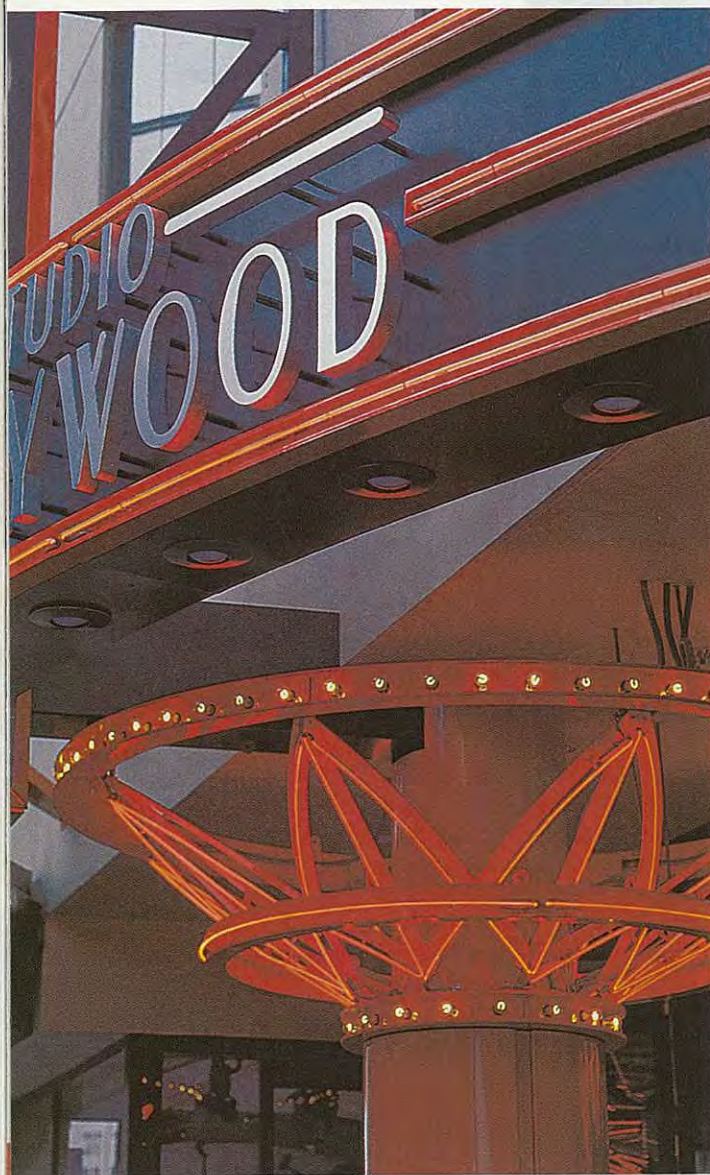
TEXT BY NORM CHANDLER FOX
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID DAIGLE

Los Angeles is a megalopolis that keeps reinventing itself all the time. Right now, much of the action is focused on Hollywood, where more than a billion dollars is in the pipeline to develop and renovate a world-renowned community that had fallen on hard times.

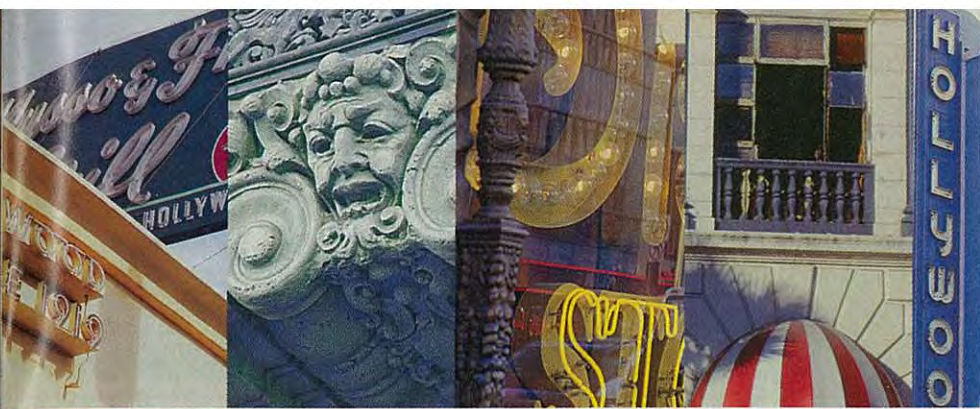
But like a once-famous actress who succeeds in making a comeback, the 2002 version of Hollywood is indeed ready for a close-up! To paraphrase Marcel Proust, the voyage of discovery is to look at the same place with a new set of eyes.

You can always buy a guidebook and set out on your own, but a much more enjoyable way to do it is a cultural walking tour of Hollywood. Launched last summer, **Red Line Tours** offers one- and two-hour-long trips and exclusively permits interior glimpses into certain landmark buildings (Hollywood Tour Center at the Stella Adler Theatre, 6773 Hollywood Blvd. [323] 402-1074). Tour patrons receive live audio headsets which pick up the docent's running commentary and block out the sometimes maddening street noise.

So, whether you're a visitor to Los Angeles or a longtime resident, whether you're on a guided walking tour or on your own, spend some time enjoying the glamour of the old and the grandeur of the new Hollywood.



Above: Studio Hollywood Gift Shop at Hollywood & Highland. Details, left to right: Egyptian Theatre, Max Factor Building, Hollywood & Highland, live theater star on The Walk of Fame, ornamental grillwork at 1652 N. Cherokee, Hollywood & Highland, Egyptian Theatre, Musso & Frank Grill, El Capitan Theatre, El Capitan Theatre, Hollywood Music and Movies.



wood

on the Boulevard

HOLLYWOOD'S EVOLUTION

Hollywood was born in 1883 when real estate developer Harvey Wilcox bought 120 acres of property, which he named at the suggestion of his wife. The town flourished in the early part of the century, as movie companies from the East Coast saw an opportunity to film year-round in the mild climate of Southern California. Besides having studios and mansions, the community developed a "main street," **Hollywood Boulevard**, which from the 1920s through the 1940s was regarded as the "Fifth Avenue of the West" due to its upscale retailers.

As part of the Boulevard's improvement project of 1958, **The Walk of Fame** was created to immortalize the names in concrete of Hollywood's elite and to unify the town's entertainment district. (As of today, The Walk is the third most visited site in L.A.'s metropolitan area, just behind Universal Studios and Disneyland.) There are currently 2,800 stars on the sidewalks of Hollywood and 24 more are added each year. Icons for film, television, radio, recording, and live theater represent each star's medium. Opera fans like me are proud to note that Plácido Domingo has recently acquired a star under the "live theater" rubric on The Walk.

THE GRAND MOVIE PALACES

Built during Hollywood's Golden Age of the 1920s, these opulent and exotic movie palaces were meant to entice the middle classes away from live theater. Many had live stage shows along with the movie to justify the \$1.50 admission price!

The first movie palace was the **Egyptian Theatre** (6712 Hollywood Blvd.), which opened in 1922 with Douglas Fairbanks' *Robin Hood*. The motif was inspired by ancient Egypt, and before performances, "Egyptian" guards patrolled the roofline while harem girls ushered patrons to their seats. This theater gave birth to the movie premiere, replete with a red carpet, celebrities introduced while alighting from limousines, and searchlights crossing the sky. The American Cinematheque renovated and reopened this theater in 1998.

In 1926, the **El Capitan** (6838 Hollywood Blvd.) opened for live theater. It was designed in the ultra-ornate Churrigueresque style. Over 120 live plays were produced here, including *No, No, Nanette*, *Anything Goes*, and *Ab, Wilderness*. In 1942, the theater covered by a sleek moderne façade and became the Hollywood Paramount, a movie house. When this theater fell into disrepair, the Walt Disney Company bought it and began a two-year,

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* At the turn of the century, Annie Oakley was represented by the firm in a libel case against *The Cleveland Press*. Arter & Hadden was involved in the investigation of the wreck and representation of the owners and underwriters of the Great Lakes freighter *The Edmund Fitzgerald*. The firm currently does work for "Nine Inch Nails," a world-famous industrial music group.

Photo Credits: Annie Oakley, from *Annie Oakley*, by Shirl Kasper / Edmund Fitzgerald from *Gales of November* by Robert J. Hemming. Gear photograph by Bob Heine Photography.
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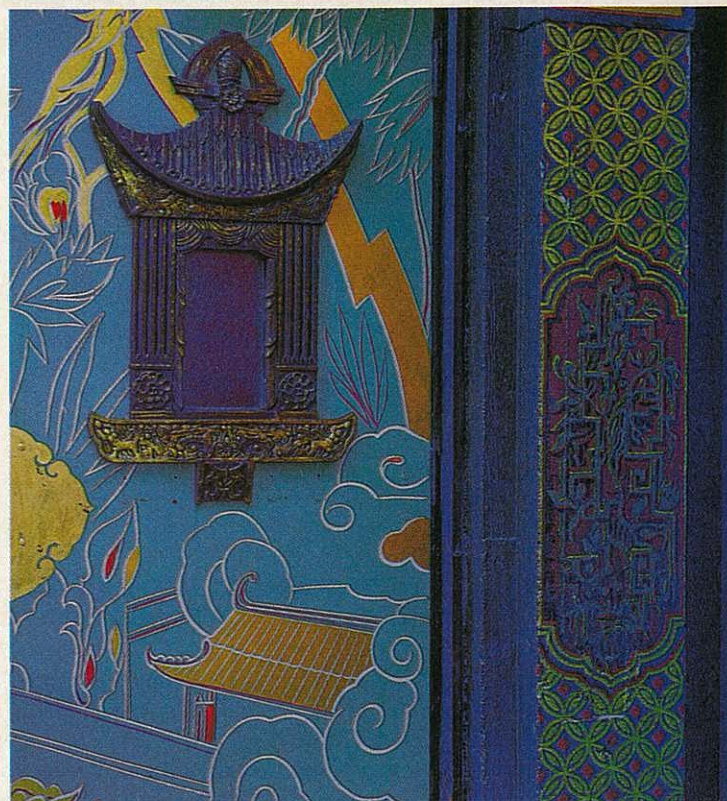
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The El Capitan re-opened in 1991 as a
movie theater with occasional live Disney
entertainment.

Sid Grauman, with partners Mary Pick-
ford and Douglas Fairbanks, opened his
Chinese Theatre (6925 Hollywood Blvd.)
in 1927. Built as a kind of museum to
Chinese arts, architecture, and culture,
Grauman's theater used imported Oriental
antiques, usherettes dressed in ancient
Chinese gowns, and incense to perfume
the auditorium. After accidentally walking
through wet cement, Grauman conceived
the idea of celebrities putting their foot-
prints, handprints, and signatures in
cement in the theater's forecourt.

REMEMBERING OLD HOLLYWOOD

Just south of Ripley's Believe It Or Not
Odditorium on the southeast corner of

the intersection of Hollywood and High-
land is the exquisite art deco **Max Factor
Building** — which is to be transformed
this year into the Hollywood History
Museum. Factor coined the term "make-
up" and had specially decorated rooms
that would complement the complexion
and hair colors of such stars as Claudette
Colbert, Jean Harlow, Lana Turner, and
Rita Hayworth.

Across the street, look at the two-story
Beaux Arts building with concrete arches
and the bright awnings of **Hollywood
Music and Movies** (6763 Hollywood
Blvd.). The town's first nightclub, the
Montmartre Café, opened on the second
floor in 1922. It was here that Charlie
Chaplin, Marion Davies, and Rudolph
Valentino cavorted nightly, and Joan
Crawford was discovered after winning a
Charleston dance contest.

A few doors west is the **Snow White**



At left: The Chinese Theatre. Details, left to right: El Capitan Theatre, Chinese Theatre, Hollywood Wax Museum, Pig 'n' Whistle Restaurant, El Capitan Theatre, Chinese Theatre, former Woolworth's store.

Café (6769 Hollywood Blvd.), which was opened by Walt Disney himself in 1949 after Disney claimed that he couldn't find a decent cup of coffee in town. Look inside to see reproductions of the original murals from the film *Snow White*.

NEW REFLECTING OLD

The new **Hollywood & Highland** complex is a 1.2 million-square-foot, five-level venue with movie theaters, restaurants, boutiques, a live broadcast studio, and containing the 3,500-seat **Kodak Theatre** — which is bringing the Academy Awards back to Hollywood next month. The Academy Walk entrance is framed with arches containing panels with the names of every "Best Picture" since inception, and leaving room for future winners up until the year 2071.

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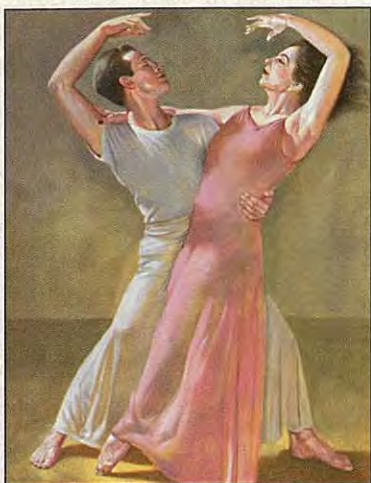
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Right: Egyptian Theatre. Details, left to right: Max Factor building, original speakeasy uncovered at the Stella Adler Theatre, El Capitan Theatre, Max Factor Building, grillwork on Hollywood Blvd.



& Highland is the **Babylon Court**: a monumental pagan temple archway with black and white (and grey) surrounding friezes of ancient deities, facing gigantic columns topped by crouching elephants. It's a reproduction of one of the most famous movie sets of all time, from D.W. Griffiths' 1916 masterpiece *Intolerance*.

WHERE TO STAY

The Renaissance Hollywood Hotel was not open at press time, but the **Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel** (7000 Hollywood Blvd., [323] 466-7000) was built in 1926 and has a wonderful courtyard lobby in Spanish Colonial style. It boasts newly renovated guest rooms, a gallery of historic

photos on the mezzanine, and the Blossom Room, where the very first Academy Awards ceremony was held in 1929.

WHERE TO DINE

Now in its 83rd year, **Musso & Frank Grill** (6667 Hollywood Blvd., [323] 467-7788) has a wood-paneled setting and well-seasoned waiters. Try the sautéed sandabs, juicy grilled lamb chops, and sublime rice pudding. Helped by Musso's enormous martinis, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Dorothy Parker, William Faulkner, and Raymond Chandler formed an "Algonquin Round Table West" at this restaurant in the early '40s. One can only expect that tradition to be revived, too. □

2X2: TERPSICHORE'S TREASURES

continued from page 10

red short tutus, red toe shoes, and tight bodices, their insolent legs punctuating the tone of social affront, their feet flexing in this newfound but elegant anarchy. Here is truly the Balanchine epitaph in action, where an observer can "see the music and hear the dance."

The first full-evening abstract ballet, *Jewels* was inspired by Van Cleef & Arpels' famous gems. No matter that Balanchine founded a 20th-century aesthetic with an American slant, he never moved far from his roots within the Imperial Maryinsky of Russia; its glittery tiaras and exquisite baubles were inevitably part of the choreographer's tool kit.

But *Jewels* finds its highest peak in "Rubies," while "Emeralds," to music of Fauré, really doesn't boast such definition and coherence, and "Diamonds," to Tchaikovsky, is lovely as an example of the recurring *Swan Lake* ghosts that haunted Balanchine (and which he finally honored in his staging of the second act). In "Diamonds," look for the swooning ballerina en pointe, leaning against her partner, her head cowering inside folded arms that undulate like the Swan Queen's protective wings.

While Robbins was a many-faceted dancemaker, he could arguably go down in dance history for his ingenious settings of Chopin piano music. With *Dances* he suffused our consciousness with the composer's humanity — his limpid grace, veiled melancholy, quiet joy, gentle humor. Indeed, Robbins defined a genre: the piano ballet. Ever afterward it was called that by others — any number of whom mined the same gold, if not with his sensitivity or inspiration.

Set to a group of Chopin études, waltzes, mazurkas, a nocturne, and a scherzo for five women and five men, *Dances* abounds in elusive gesture; its power can hold a spectator rapt. In a fine performance, with the caliber of dancing that projects all manner of exquisite nuance, one often doesn't hear a breath being drawn in the audience. It is these personal, intimate fragments of interaction that tell whole chapters about the human condition — and bequeath Robbins his laureate.

Kudos to Tomasson for spreading the wealth. □

Donna Perlmutter, a recipient of the ASCAP/Deems Taylor Award, is a widely published journalist and critic who writes regularly for Performing Arts Magazine.

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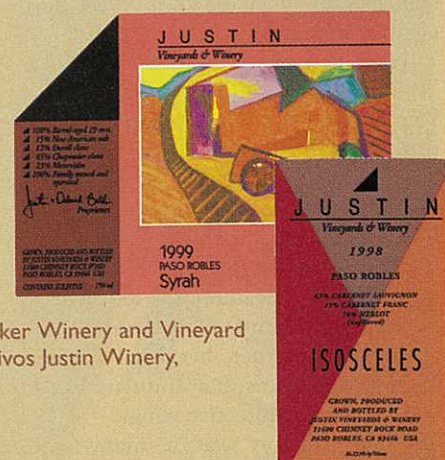
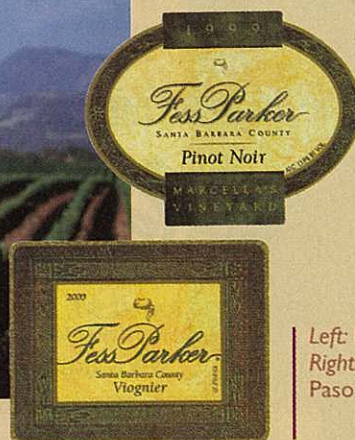
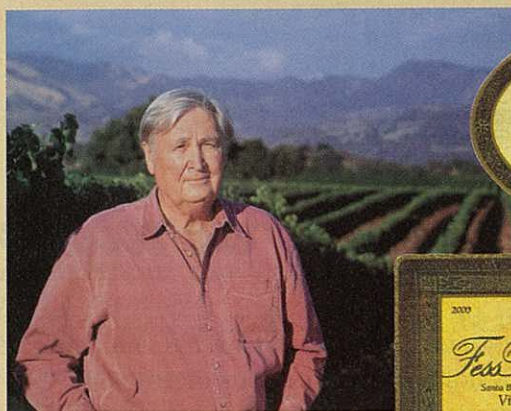
(BETWEEN MISSION & CAPP)



WINES FROM OUR OWN BACKYARD:

The Best of Southern California

by Dennis Overstreet



Left: Fess Parker Winery and Vineyard
Right: Los Olivos Justin Winery,
Paso Robles

For most of the world, California's fine wines can be summed up in one four-letter word: Napa — as in the Valley. Yet, over the past decade, many splendid wines have arisen from relatively unheralded viticultural areas of the state, including our own backyard: Southern California. For the purposes of this discussion, that's a pretty big backyard, extending from the Temecula or Rancho California area southeast of Los Angeles right up to Paso Robles, which is just over 100 miles northwest of Santa Barbara.

Southern California is perceived as a uniformly arid and desert-like region where water is a precious resource and the only way to grow greenery is to irrigate heavily. In reality, there are plenty of varied microclimates that have proven hospitable to the cultivation of wine vineyards.

At the beginning and end of the day, and all through the night, the constant atmospheric flow off the Pacific Ocean conspires with Southern California's coastal mountain ranges to provide the cool, foggy lowland conditions favored by such "northern" grapes as Chardonnay, Riesling, and Pinot Noir. Southern California's warmer, drier hillside microclimates are often ideal for ripening not only the classic California Cabernets but also the Rhône varieties, especially Syrah, as well as the Italian Sangiovese. Because Southern California is such a vast area with so many distinct microclimates, it's safe to say that the region is nowhere near fulfilling its wine-growing potential. And that's an exciting prospect.

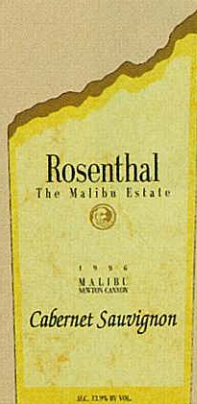
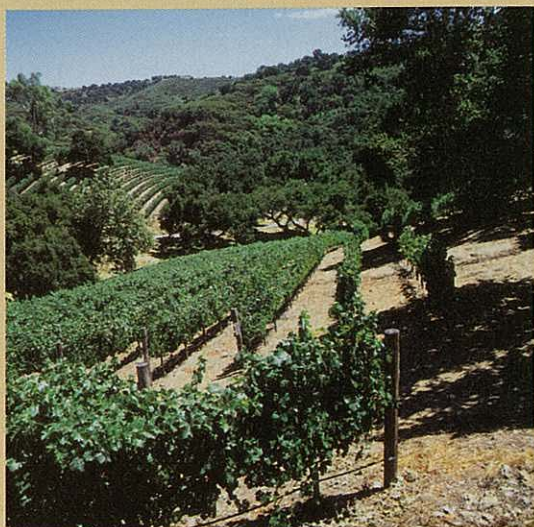
The wines of Southern California tend to reflect the

area's wide-open, up-front, media-oriented culture. What it may lack in subtlety, it more than makes up for in personality and style. As a rule, you'll find riper Rieslings and bolder, more assertive Cabernets, Zinfandels, and Syrahs.

Not surprisingly, numerous captains of local industry have taken up the wine business. One of my favorites is Tom Jones, the former head of Northrop Grumman Corporation. With all the determination and know-how he used to develop the stealth bomber, he started a winery, **Moraga Vineyards**, at his Bel Air estate and has created a fabulous Bordeaux-style Cabernet Sauvignon blend and an excellent Sauvignon Blanc.

Several prominent Los Angeles restaurateurs have also converted their passion for wine into second careers as viticulturists and winemakers. Michael McCarty, founder and proprietor of **Michael's of Santa Monica**, has his own Malibu vineyard, which produces a Bordeaux blend and other superbly crafted reds. Manfred Krankl, who built the La Brea Bakery and Campanile Restaurant into highly successful businesses, produces very fine Syrahs, Pinot Noirs, and Chardonnays at his **Sine Qua Non Winery** in Ventura. And **Michael Bonaccorsi**, the sommelier at Wolfgang Puck's world-famous restaurant Spago, now located in Beverly Hills, began making wonderful Chardonnays, Pinot Noirs, and Syrahs in the 1999 vintage with grapes from Santa Barbara County.

Here are a few more of my top Southern California picks: **Babcock Winery & Vineyards, Lompoc** — Winemaker Bryan Babcock is considered one of the hottest young tal-



The Malibu Estate,
Malibu

ents around. Among his wines are a Sauvignon Blanc called Eleven Oaks, various single-vineyard Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs, a Gewürztraminer as well as Italian (Sangiovese and Pinot Grigio) and Spanish (Tempranillo and Albariño) varietals.

Fess Parker Winery & Vineyard, Los Olivos — Founded by the actor who's most famous for his roles as Davy Crockett and Daniel Boone on television and located in the Santa Ynez Valley of Santa Barbara County, this winery features Rhône varieties such as Syrah and Viognier, as well as Burgundian varietals such as Pinot Noir and Chardonnay grapes grown on the estate itself and other vineyards in Santa Maria and the Santa Rita Hills. (A geographical aside: Santa Rita is a quintessential Southern California wine-growing region, situated at the western end of the Santa Ynez Valley close to the Pacific. Another top Southern California locale is the Edna Valley, south of San Luis Obispo. It, too, attributes its cool, vine-friendly climate to ocean breezes; hence the excellence of local Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs.)

Justin Winery, Paso Robles — This

classy operation features a Meritage (Bordeaux-style blend) called Isoceles. The Paso Robles area, warmer and drier than other local viticultural zones, is home to some very fine Zinfandels, Syrahs, and Cabernet Sauvignons.

The Malibu Estate, Malibu — The creation of real estate and hotel developer George Rosenthal, it's located at elevations of around 1,500 feet and produces an outstanding Bordeaux-style Cabernet Sauvignon blend.

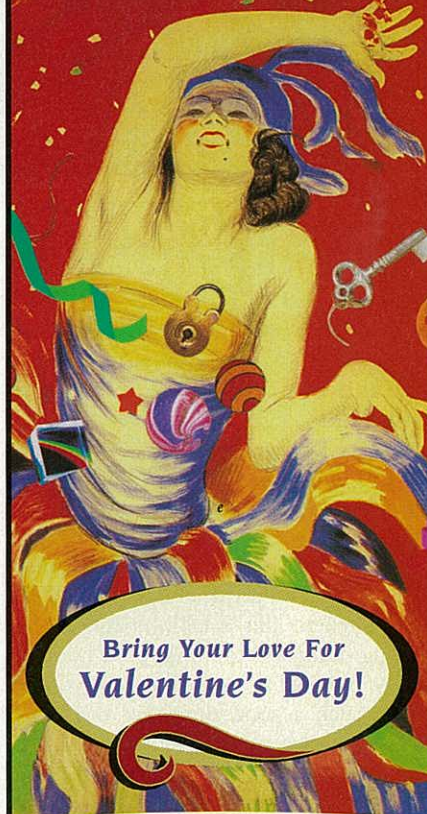
Other top Southern California producers: — Alban Vineyards, Arroyo Grande; Andrew Murray, Los Olivos; Au Bon Climat and Qupé, Santa Maria (Jim Clendenen is the winemaker); and Zaca Mesa, Los Olivos. □



Dennis Overstreet is the author of Overstreet's New Wine Guide (Clarkson Potter/Publishers; Random House). He has been in the fine wine business for nearly 30 years as owner of The Wine Merchant, Beverly Hills.

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SCALA'S BISTRO — Now about to celebrate its seventh anniversary, this lively spot, only a few blocks from the theater district, continues to be one of our most popular restaurants. I hadn't been here since former chef Donna Scala departed, and I was anxious to sample the cuisine of the current executive chef, Staffan Terje. My verdict is that the food is now even better than I remember. Designed with tile floors, mahogany booths, stenciled 20-foot ceilings, mirrors, art deco lighting, and an open kitchen, this establishment has an inviting burnished glow. At peak hours, it can be somewhat noisy, but everyone is having such a good time that they don't seem to notice. Over a dozen wines are offered by the glass, and the list of wines is extremely reasonable. The servers are among the city's best, so let them guide you through the large and tantalizing menu.

I start with a giant bowl of garlicky mussels steamed in wine served, as in Europe, with a mound of crisp French fries and lemon aioli. There is also a dish of greaseless fried calamari and shrimp with fennel, tender grilled octopus with a chili vinaigrette, and a slab of velvety seared foie gras. And for a memory of the Italian Riviera, try the sumptuous puréed salt cod with onions and potatoes. Other nifty starters include a persimmon salad with baby greens and candied walnuts or a roasted beet and avocado salad topped with crumbled Roquefort cheese. And for something completely different, how about a small pizza crowned with a delightful combination of pear, caramelized onion, and Gorgonzola?

Penne arrives under a delicious topping of bacon, chilis, and pecorino cheese, while

a dish of spinach gnocchi is feathery light beneath a mantle of tomato and basil. There's also rigatoni in a rich duck and olive sauce and sweet squash-filled ravioli in butter and sage. Chef Terje handles fish beautifully, as exemplified by the juicy seared salmon with buttermilk mashed potatoes or the lovely petrale sole in brown butter and capers. If you're yearning for lusty flavors, try the garlicky grilled pork chop with artichokes or a great lamb shank with a pomegranate glaze. There's also a memorable beef braised in Burgundy wine accompanied by celery purée.

Save room for desserts like a perfect caramelized apple tart with apple brandy ice cream or a piquant quince sorbet. Unfortunately, the bread pudding is too heavy, but the huckleberry and almond cake is light and wonderful. And if you're an inveterate chocoholic, then you must order the chocolate extravaganza, consisting of dark chocolate cake layered with milk chocolate mousse and chocolate pecan brittle — all topped with chocolate brownie ice cream. What a way to go! Since the kitchen remains open until quite late, this is a perfect choice for after-theater supper as well.

SCALA'S BISTRO, Sir Francis Drake Hotel, 432 Powell St. (betw. Post and Sutter), San Francisco, (415) 395-8555. Open for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and supper daily. Without alcohol, two can dine for \$85 including tax and tip.

ASIA DE CUBA — When hotelier Ian Schragger purchased and remodeled the Clift Hotel, I knew it would look hip and urbane. However, I was unprepared for designer Philippe Stark's truly astounding rendering of this restaurant. The place is breathtaking

with its burnt-red walls, soaring ceilings, ultra sexy lighting, tall curved booths, and dramatic adjoining bar. It looks like one of the places in which the heroines of *Sex and the City* would congregate regularly. Executive chef Maria Manso has created a vivid menu that crosses Asian and Latino dishes with flair. Huge portions are meant to be shared family-style, which makes it fun to come with a group. The servers couldn't be more amiable, and despite a very nice wine list, I prefer imbibing the specialty drinks like the rum-infused Havana Iced Tea or the vodka and lychee martini.

For appetizers, I try wonderful lobster potstickers, spicy Thai rare beef salad with coconut and orange, juicy scallop and crab cakes with a fiery chipotle remoulade, and grilled foie gras seasoned with Chinese five-spice and mango salsa atop French toast. My sole disappointment is a rapidly flavored tuna tartare despite the addition of currants, almonds, olives, and coconut.

As main courses, don't miss the spicy Peking duck atop vinegar noodles, tender grilled ostrich steak with patties of plantains, seared rare tuna with garlicky Argentine chimichurri sauce, or the lovely marinated lamb on Japanese eggplant. A whole catfish is stuffed with crabmeat and wok-fried until crisp, and I enjoy an unusual pork chop marinated in rum atop crunchy bok choy. There are two side dishes that are required tasting for the table: flavorful black bean croquettes and the mashed potatoes filled with chunks of lobster.

Desserts are rich fantasies, such as the dark chocolate and espresso flan, coconut sticky bun topped with fortune cookie ice cream and toffee sauce, or coconut cake layered with chocolate fudge and rum-flamed bananas served with caramel ice cream. For the truly indulgent, order the appropriately named "Bay of Pigs" which is a gargantuan banana split: bananas topped with ice cream, cake, fudge sauce, cookies, and peaks of whipped cream — it can easily serve six.

ASIA DE CUBA, Clift Hotel, 495 Geary St. (cor. Taylor), San Francisco, (415) 929-2300. Open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner daily. Without alcohol, two can dine for \$120 including tip and tax. □

Norm Chandler Fox is Food & Travel Editor for Performing Arts Magazine.

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