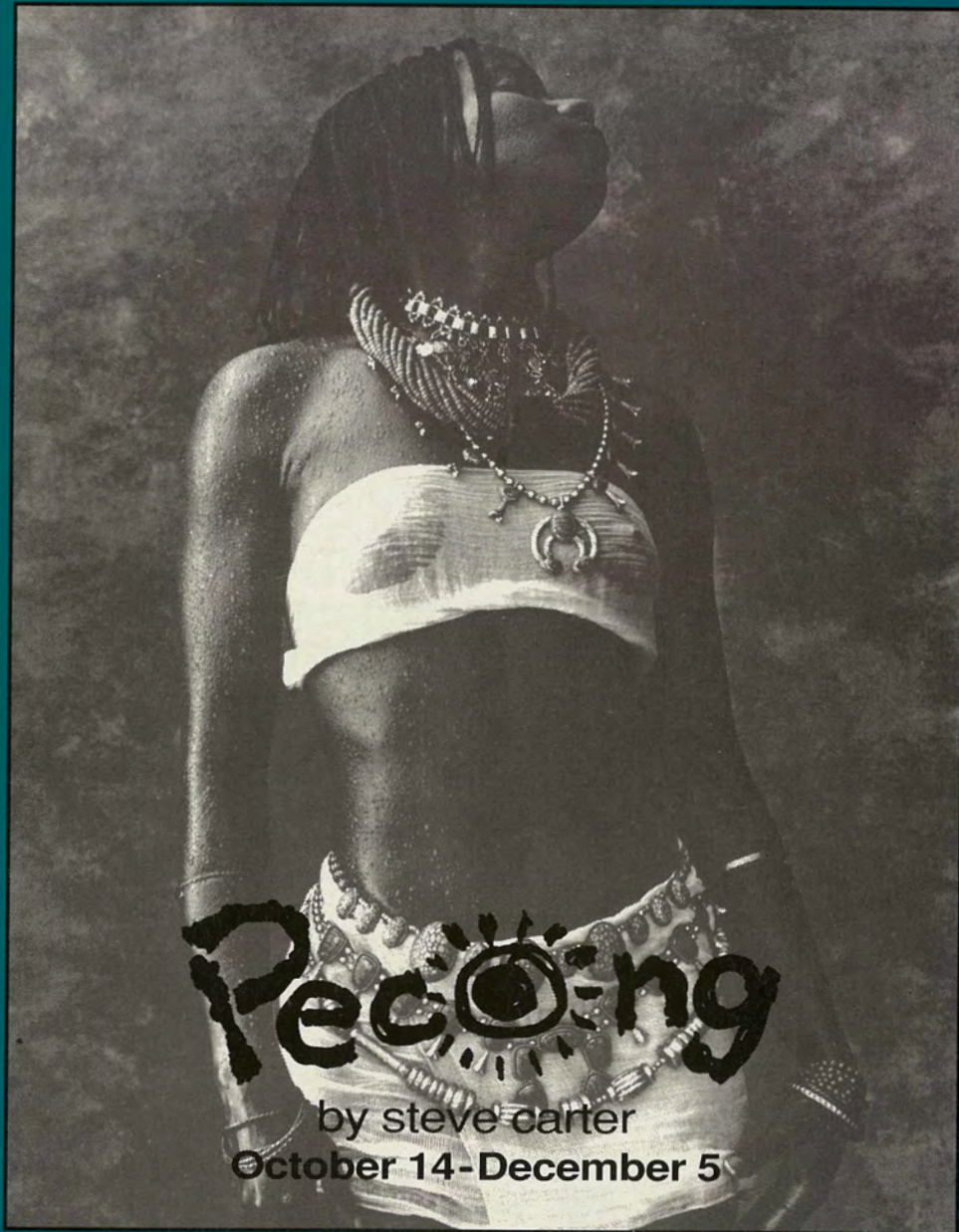


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NOVEMBER 1993



by steve carter
October 14-December 5



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CONTENTS

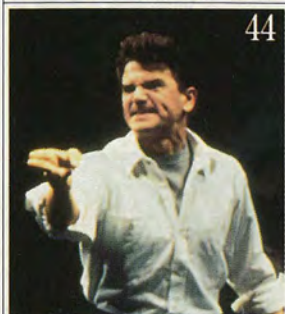
- 8 THE ARTS OF THE STATE
December in California
by David H. Bowman

P-1 PROGRAM INFORMATION

- 44 ALL ABOUT PAUL
Rudnick's hit play *Jeffrey* wows
audiences out West
by Gerard Raymond

- 49 ON TRAVEL
TOUTING TORONTO
Arts Abound to the North
by Albert Warson

- 58 IN FASHION
FEELINGS FIRST
by Barbara Foley



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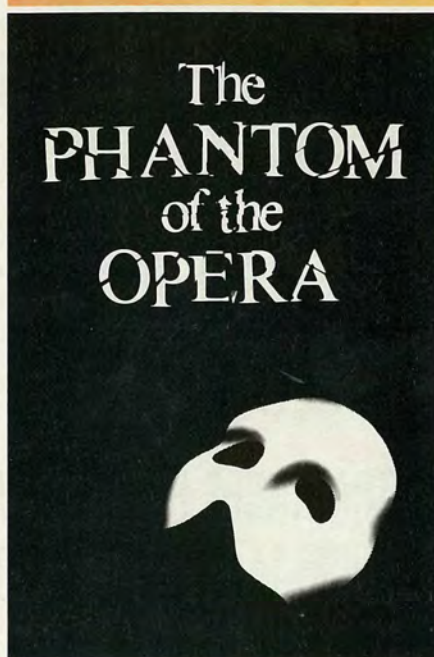
December in California — What's Coming Up in the Arts

THEATRE **Sunset Blvd.** Billy Wilder's classic 1950 movie *Sunset Boulevard* was a sly and cynical peep at 1940s Hollywood, and it was made by one who knew Tinseltown well. This mad and macabre tale of twisted pride gets the Andrew Lloyd Webber treatment next month, with book and lyrics by Don Black and Christopher Hampton and directed by Trevor Nunn. It stars Glenn Close as Norma Desmond, the comeback queen; George Hearn as Max von Mayerling, her erstwhile husband/director; and Alan Campbell as Joe Gillis, aka The Body at the Bottom of the Swimming Pool. We're ready for our close-ups, Mr. Webber! The American premiere of this budding blockbuster takes place, appropriately, on Avenue of the Stars. *Opens December 2 (prev. from 11/23), Shubert Theatre, Century City, Los Angeles (800) 447-7400.*

Phantom of the Opera. After busting blocks in Los Angeles for well over four years, *The Phantom of the Opera* finally arrives in San Francisco. Prepare for the most chandelier-shattering performances since the Great Earthquake of '06. Davis Gaines plays the poor demented Phantom in a town that understands what opera-mania can really do to a man. Lisa Vroman is Christine Daë and Raymond Saar her dashing Raoul. Look for the spectacular masquerade sequence, and the spine chilling love duet on the roof of the Paris Opera House. This is what spectacle is all about. *Opens December 12 (prev. from 12/2), Curran Theatre, San Francisco (415) 776-1999.*

Scapin. A.C.T. brings us a contemporary setting of Molière's 1671 comedy *Les Fourberies de Scapin* ("The Rogueries of Scapin"). Scapin is the direct descendant of the commedia dell'arte's Scapino, a wily valet who is

David H. Bowman is Arts and Entertainment Editor for Performing Arts magazine.



here employed by a master in love with a girl who had been stolen by gypsies and, well, you get the picture—classic French farce.

This is a new translation and adaptation by Shelley Berc and Andrei Belgrader, directed by Belgrader and with a score by Rusty Magee. *December 22 (prev. from 12/15)—February 13, Stage Door Theatre, San Francisco (415) 749-2ACT.*

Guys and Dolls. "Love for the new musical spread faster last night than fire through dry grass in a high wind." So wrote critic William Hawkins in New York's *World-Telegram & Sun* when *Guys and Dolls* premiered in November 1950. "*Guys and Dolls* brings Broadway in off the street," he continued, "so you can see and hear it sitting down. The show springs from Damon Runyon's stories. It recaptures what he knew about Broadway, that its wickedness is tinhorn, but its gallantry is as pure and young as Little Eva. It is all tender and rough at the same time, the way people who have never grown up very much can be tender and rough." Lorna Luft and David Garrison star in this award-winning revival of an American folk musical. *December 21–January 1, Orange County Performing Arts Center, Costa Mesa (714) 646-OCPS.*

Jesus Christ Superstar. Yet another Andrew Lloyd Webber show! The two stars of the 1973 film head the cast of this production: Ted Neely (Jesus) and Carl Anderson (Judas); the latter also performed the role on Broadway. Dennis DeYoung of the rock band Styx makes his theatrical debut as Pontius Pilate. *December 7–12, Flint Center, DeAnza College, Cupertino (408) 864-8816.*

Stories of the Season. Celebrating the ancient art of storytelling, Pacific Resident Theatre Ensemble turns its magical black box theater into a figurative campfire deep in the forest. There in the darkness we hear legends and fables come alive. *December 1–30, 705½ Venice Blvd., West Los Angeles (213) 484-9757.*

Above: Logos for two of Andrew Lloyd Webber's mega-hits for California's 1993-94 theater season. Sunset Boulevard premieres at L.A.'s Shubert Theatre on December 2, while The Phantom of the Opera opens at San Francisco's Curran Theatre on December 12.

by David H. Bowman

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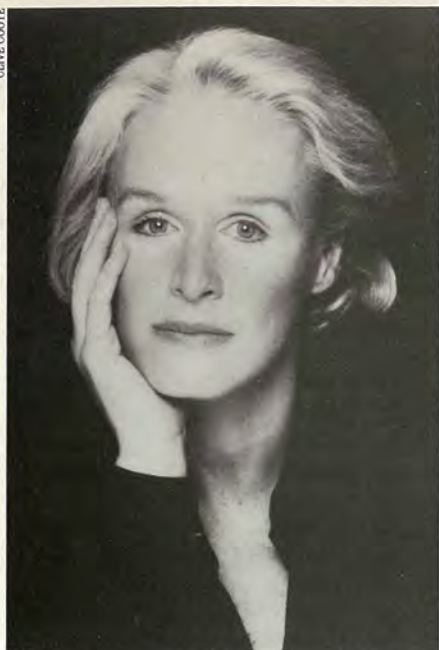
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Left to right: Glenn Close will star as Norma Desmond in the American premiere of *Sunset Boulevard* at the Shubert Theatre; Part of the record-setting crowd of would-be ticket buyers at the Shubert box office; L.A.'s zany social satirists, Culture Clash, open at the Mark Taper Forum December 5.

A Christmas Carol. Having trouble getting into the Christmas spirit this year? Visit with Scrooge, Marley, and those three withering wraiths for a good strong dose of the right stuff. Here are some of the more well-known *Christmas Carols*, but look around—there's sure to be one at a theater near you.

American Conservatory Theatre's A Christmas Carol, December 7–26, Orpheum Theatre, San Francisco (415) 749-2ACT.

San Diego Repertory's A Christmas Carol, November 27–December 26, Lyceum Theatre, Horton Plaza (714) 957-4033.

South Coast Repertory's A Christmas Carol, November 30–December 26, Costa Mesa (714) 957-4033.

Room Service. An unrecognized classic of the American theater, John Murray and Allen Boretz's *Room Service* is well known from its film versions—the 1938 one of the same name with the Marx Brothers, Lucille Ball, and Ann Miller, and the 1944 Frank Sinatra vehicle *Step Lively*. The plot — destitute producer attempts to save show — is an old one, but it's never been funnier. December 4–January 2, Montgomery Theatre, San Jose (408) 291-2255.

Leocadia. Michael York stars in Jean Anouilh's satirical tale of romantic love, as "acted" for radio by L.A. Theatre Works. A new translation by Timberlake Wertenbaker is given its American premiere, December 1–2, Guest Quarters Suite Hotel, Santa Monica (213) 660-8587.

Camelot. Robert Goulet, once enthroned in the knightly role of Lancelot, is now crowned King Arthur in this revival of Lerner and Loewe's paean to T.H. White's *The Once and*

Future King. December 28–January 9, Pantages Theatre, Hollywood (213) 480-3232.

The Sound of Music. Rodgers and Hammerstein were attacked for making this show like an old fashioned operetta—too sweet. On the whole, though, critics loved it, and so did the public—as proven by more than 1400 performances in its first run on Broadway. The movie then went on to become one of the highest grossing films in history. December 15–19, Pasadena Civic Auditorium (818) 449-7360.

ART Little Pictures. Nearly two hundred daguerreotypes, cartes-de-visite, stereographs, cabinet cards, tintypes, and autochromes dating from 1848 to 1920 go on view next month at the J.Paul Getty Museum. Drawn from the Museum's holdings of more than thirty thousand small photographs, this exhibit features works by such famous and founding photographers as William Henry Fox Talbot, Camille Silvy, Nadar, Gustave Le Gray, Eadweard Muybridge, and Mathew B. Brady. December 7–March 30, Getty Museum, Malibu (310) 459-7611.

Ante América. Twenty-six contemporary artists from North, Central, and South America present diverse approaches to the question of what it means to be "American." December 14–January 30, Center for the Arts Galleries, Yerba Buena Gardens, San Francisco (415) 512-1000.



Saint Anthony Abbot, by an artist known only as Master of Saint Veronica, is featured in "The Cult of Saints in the Middle Ages and Renaissance" at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Malibu.



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DANCE **Nutcrackers.** Fifty years ago, Americans rediscovered this delightful ballet and made it standard Christmas fare. Now it seems there isn't a ballet company in the world that doesn't have a version on the boards or hasn't at least taken aim. From deconstructed to "Currier-and-Ives-ed," *Nutcracker* productions continue to enthrall us. This year, *The Nutcracker* comes at us from the silver screen, too. Three powerful magics are at work here: Christmas, childhood, and, most important, the dance. Who can resist the spell?

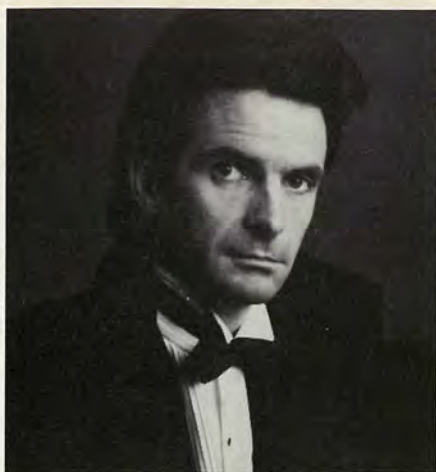
American Ballet Theatre gives us a world premiere of Kevin McKenzie's new production and promises a new ending. December 3-12, Orange County Performing Arts Center, Costa Mesa (714) 646-OCPS; December 21-31, Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, Los Angeles (213) 480-3232.

George Balanchine's production for the New York City Ballet has been turned into a feature-length motion picture starring Macaulay Culkin (formerly a student at the American School of Ballet). Check newspaper listings for a convenient theater.

California Ballet Company presents choreography by company director Maxine Mahon. December 10-24, Poway Center for the Arts and San Diego Civic Theater (619) 560-6741.

Moscow Classical Ballet returns to this country for the first time in over a decade with a new production. December 21-26, Cerritos Center for the Performing Arts (310) 916-8500.

Oakland Ballet's new production features



Kevin McKenzie's new production of The Nutcracker for American Ballet Theatre will premiere at the Orange County Performing Arts Center, December 3-12, and at L.A.'s Dorothy Chandler Pavilion December 21-31.

choreography by Artistic Director Ronn Gaudi. December 10-26, Paramount Theatre, Oakland (510) 465-6400.

San Francisco Ballet's beloved staging is the direct descendant of America's first full-length Nutcracker. December 14-31, War Memorial Opera House (415) 776-1999.



San Jose Cleveland Ballet presents Artistic Director Dennis Nahat's acclaimed interpretation. November 26-December 5, San Jose Center for the Performing Arts (408) 998-2277.

DanceTime! Dance Through Time is a theatrical dance company that specializes in researching, preserving, and authentically presenting Western dances of the past five hundred years. Featuring period costumes, and music and dialogue appropriate to the time, Dance Through Time's newly expanded signature program, *DanceTime!*, now also focuses on contemporary social dance as a barometer for dynamic and independent self-expression. December 3-4, Julia Morgan Theatre, Berkeley (415) 392-4400.

MUSIC **SF Symphony.** The Symphony welcomes its new music director-designate next month, Michael Tilson Thomas, currently principal conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra. He leads a program that includes his own composition *From the Diary of Anne Frank*, along with Fauré's *Pavane* and Mahler's First Symphony. Also next month, conductor Kent Nagano leads violinist Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg in Mozart's Concerto No. 5, K.219. December 1-31, Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco (415) 431-5400.

LA Philharmonic. Conductor Sian Edwards returns after her spectacular 1991 debut with the orchestra. Her program features Janáček's *Taras Bulba* and Mozart's Piano Concerto in E flat, K.271, Stephen Hough soloist.



San Francisco Ballet's beguiling production of The Nutcracker has sets and costumes by Jose Varona. Inset: The Moscow Classical Ballet returns for the first time in over a decade with a new production at the Cerritos Center for the Performing Arts, December 21-26

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Later in the month, Jukka-Pekka Saraste, principal conductor of the Helsinki Radio Symphony, makes his Philharmonic debut with Mozart's Piano Concerto in A, K.488, Zoltán Kocsis soloist, and Mahler's Sixth Symphony. *December 1–12, Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, Los Angeles (213) 850-2000.*

LA Chamber Orchestra. Iona Brown, former director of LACO, conducts and is violin

Holiday Concerts. From choral carols to sing-along *Messiahs*, Christmas has as many musical traditions as it does theatrical or dance ones, if not more. Below is just a taste of the selection, so ask your friends—there's holiday music being made everywhere.

A Baroque Christmas, with the LA Philharmonic, is led by harpsichordist Grant Gershon and features concertmaster Sidney Weiss as soloist in Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*.



Top: Iona Brown (center) conducts and is violin soloist with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra in "An Evening of Vivaldi." Above, left to right: Donald Sutherland, Mary Beth Hurt, Bruce Davidson and Stockard Channing star in MGM's *Six Degrees of Separation*.

soloist in "An Evening of Vivaldi," featuring concertos for flute, two horns, and piccolo, as well as *The Four Seasons*. Christof Perick, the Orchestra's current director, leads an all-Mozart program, including the *Jupiter* Symphony. *December 3–23, various locations around Los Angeles (213) 622-7001.*

Later, Manhattan Transfer joins the Orchestra for holiday concerts. *December 16–19, Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, Los Angeles (213) 850-2000.*

Candlelight Christmas, Handel's *Messiah*, Christmas Pipe Dreams, and A Night in Old Vienna are the SF Symphony's contributions

to holiday music this year. *December 5–31, Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco (415) 431-5400.*

A Holiday Celebration is the LA Master Chorale's annual Christmas music program. It precedes the ever-popular *Messiah* Sing-Along. *December 11–19, Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, Los Angeles (213) 626-0910.*

Big Hair Holiday is the SF Gay Men's Chorus's Christmas celebration, marking the group's fifteenth anniversary. *December 16–19, Center for the Arts Theatre, Yerba Buena Gardens, San Francisco (415) 512-1000.*

Winter Solstice Concerts features Windham Hill recording artists Nightnoise, Liz Story, and Alex DeGrassi. *December 18, Cerritos Center for the Performing Arts (310) 916-8500.*

The Gay Men's Chorus of LA presents A Holiday Celebration, featuring Britten's *Ceremony of Carols*. *December 18, Royce Hall, UCLA (310) 825-2101.*

FILM *Six Degrees.* John Guare's 1990 play *Six Degrees of Separation* opened in New York to rave reviews and then continued packing in audiences in London's West End and around the US. Clearly it touches something in modern urbanites, who understand how little we know our neighbors and at the same time how little it takes to bridge that ignorance. MGM's film version stars Stockard Channing, re-creating the role she originated on Broadway, Donald Sutherland, and Will "Fresh Prince" Smith. Fred Schepisi directs John Guare's film adaptation of his own play. *Check newspaper listings for a convenient theater.*

Remains of the Day. Merchant Ivory Productions brings to the screen Ruth Praver Jhabvala's adaptation of the award-winning novel by Kazuo Ishiguro. Anthony Hopkins plays the English butler devoted to his master, portrayed by James Fox. Emma Thompson and Christopher Reeve also star. *Check newspaper listings for a convenient theater.*

LECTURES *Levertov.* Poet Denise Levertov reads from her works and then participates in a public conversation with Michael Silverblatt, host of the "Bookworm" show of Santa Monica's public radio station KCRW. In "readings & conversations," The Lannan Foundation has created one of the most interesting lecture series around. *December 7, Center Green Theatre, Pacific Design Center, West Hollywood (310) 660-8587.* □

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Today, there are a number of new treatments that have the potential to limit the damage a stroke can do.

Perhaps the most

The worst headache of your life? Sudden loss of strength? Slurred speech? Numbness, or loss of vision? If you think you might have suffered a stroke, you should immediately seek medical attention.

innovative concept is the "six hour window"; the period of time just after a stroke first



A fundamentally new concept in stroke treatment is the so-called "six hour window," the time after a stroke hits in which treatment may make all the difference in the world.

hits in which treatment has an opportunity to make a difference. We now know that if people react quickly enough to the signs of stroke, we have a chance to substantially reduce the risk of long-term damage.

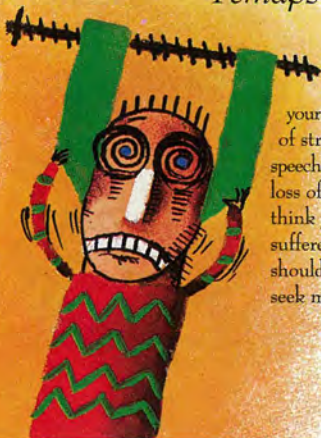
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in Northern California, The Stanford Stroke Center has become a national pioneer in

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available options to every patient.

But in order for any new stroke treatments to work, we all have to start thinking about strokes in a completely different way. Not just doctors, but all of us. Probably the best way to think about a stroke is as a kind



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Gabrielle Wagner, *Intern*

NEWS FROM THE AMERICAN CONSERVATORY THEATER

Scrooge Is Back!

This holiday season, A.C.T. presents the eighteenth annual production of Charles Dickens's classic fable, *A Christmas Carol*, adapted by Dennis Powers and Laird Williamson. The merriment begins on December 7 and runs through December 26 at the Orpheum Theater.

and the play deals with a lot of issues I think it's important for children to experience — charity, compassion, and the possibility for positive change. I also find *Carol* important because for many children it's their first exposure to the world of theater and the arts."



LARRY WERKLE

Scrooge (Lawrence Hecht) tallies his accounts in anticipation of a miserly Christmas in A.C.T.'s 1992 production of Dickens's classic, *A Christmas Carol*.

"I'm looking forward to playing Scrooge again," says Lawrence Hecht of his yuletide alter ego. Hecht, a veteran company member who played Dickens's famous frump last season, says Scrooge's discovery of compassion and joy at the hands of Tiny Tim "is so complete that on stage you can actually feel the children's delight in his new-found happiness."

A Christmas Carol will once again be staged by David Maier, a longtime company member and local actor and director. "Carol is not only a lot of fun," Maier says, "it has an underlying seriousness you don't notice at first. Dickens was always concerned with social injustice,

Families planning to attend *A Christmas Carol* can take advantage of the "Family Four Pack," which offers four tickets to the play for the price of two — a 50% savings on the regular price. Family Four Packs are available only for the evening performances of December 8, 15, 16, and for a limited number of seats at the December 12 matinee. Watch for other discount offers as December draws near. For more information call the A.C.T. box office at (415) 749-2ACT.

This season's production will also include the seventh annual Cyril Magnin Matinee, on December 8 at 1 p.m. Some one thousand youngsters will attend the

special performance, named in honor of the legendary, late San Francisco businessman and philanthropist who was one of A.C.T.'s major supporters and benefactors. A.C.T. works with city and county agencies and school districts in San Francisco, Oakland, and Berkeley to distribute complimentary tickets to children and teens who would not otherwise be able to see the production. The young audience will also include groups from homeless youth shelters, youth centers, and special community programs. Among the organizations regularly represented at the matinees are the San Francisco Boys and Girls Home, the Fred Finch Youth Center in Oakland, and the Central City Hospitality House.

Making *Pecong's* Music

Aware of the Bay Area's tremendous cultural diversity, A.C.T.'s artists frequently augment work in the rehearsal studio by turning to the community for inspiration, research, and artistic and scholarly expertise. An avid proponent of this practice is Associate Artistic Director Benny Sato Ambush. His work on past A.C.T. productions of *The Gospel at Colonus*, *Dark Sun*, and *Pigeon Egghead* (which spawned the Turtle Island Ensemble, a Native American theater company) proved that cross-cultural community involvement is undeniably enriching and invaluable for both a production and its audience, and his approach to *Pecong* continues this tradition.

Ambush describes his directing method as "walking into the dark to see what's there." There was a time, however, when he took a more academic route: "I used to toil over a script for hours, outlining every last detail. But in rehearsal it would never take long to realize I had been looking at nothing but the page and had bypassed the human elements — the energy of the actors and of the rehearsal space itself. Now I just get everyone together and we cultivate the vision as we go. Often it's a quite startling and exciting experience."

This process is particularly well suited

Continued on page P-20

The American Conservatory Theater

presents

PECONG

by steve carter

(1990)

<i>Directed by</i>	Benny Sato Ambush
<i>Scenery by</i>	Kate Edmunds
<i>Costumes by</i>	Richard W. Battle
<i>Lighting by</i>	Peter Maradudin
<i>Musical Director and Composer</i>	Wayne Wallace
<i>Pecong Composer</i>	David Rudder
<i>Sound by</i>	Stephen LeGrand
<i>Dance Coordinator, Cultural Consultant</i>	Halifu Osumare
<i>Casting</i>	Ellen Novack, C.S.A.
<i>Local Casting</i>	Meryl Lind Shaw

The Cast

(In Order of Appearance)

<i>Granny Root</i>	Barbara Montgomery
<i>Mediyah</i>	Rosalyn Coleman
<i>Cedric</i>	Leland Gantt
<i>Faustina</i>	Margarette Robinson
<i>Persis</i>	Renee Joshua-Porter
<i>Creon Pandit</i>	Graham Brown
<i>Sweet Bella</i>	Chanelle Schaffer
<i>Jason Allcock</i>	Michael Gene Sullivan

<i>Townspeople, Dancers, Miedo Wood Creatures</i>	Dolores Castro, Julia Dominguez, Nicol Foster, Jocelyn Jackson, Jermaine Johnson, Guieseppe Jones, Corrine Katz, Kendo, Raymond Kinnard, Michael McElvane, B. Chico Purdiman, Soyinka Rahim, Garrett J. Spooner, Selina Williams
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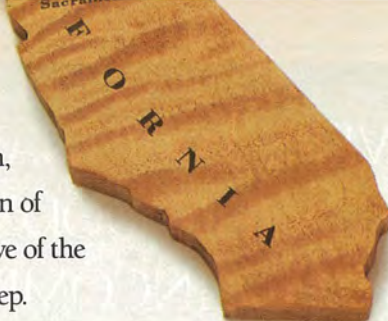
<i>Musicians</i>	Carolyn Brandy (Percussion, Violin) Guillermo Cespedes (Tres, Guitar, Percussion) David Frazier (Percussion) Mozel Zeke Nealy (Percussion) Jackeline Rago (Cuatro, Mandolin, Percussion) Dulce M. Arguelles (Tres, Guitar, Cuatro, Percussion)
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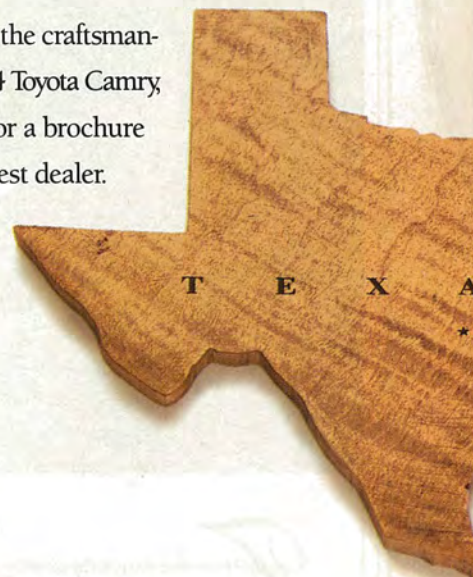
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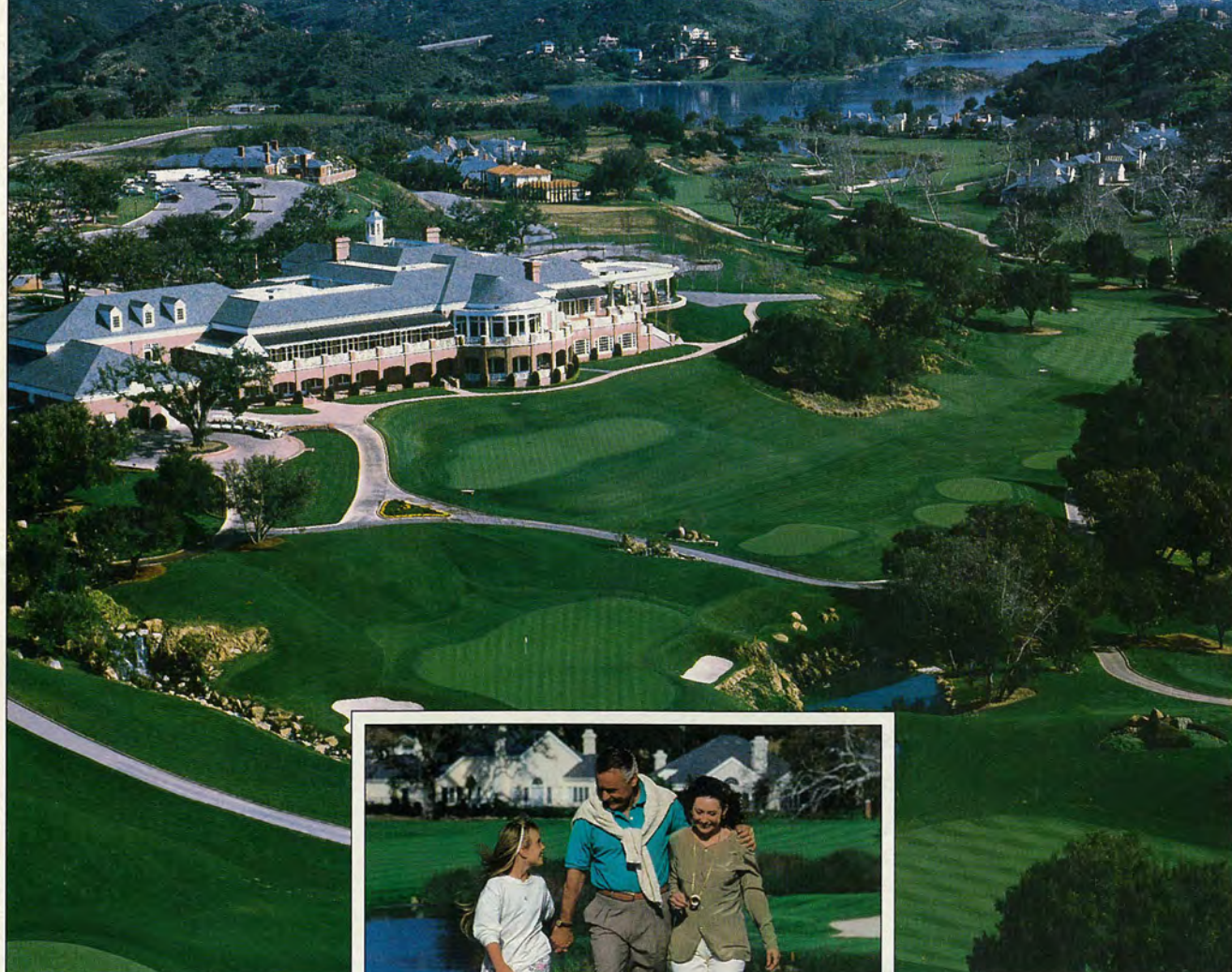


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Time: Well in the past.

Place: Trankey Island (Ile Tranquille), an island of the mind in the Caribbean,
and Miedo Wood Island, a dark and mysterious place.

There will be one intermission.

Understudies

Mediyah—Renee Joshua-Porter; *Jason Allcock*, *Cedric*—Guiseppe Jones;
Granny Root—Margarette Robinson;
Sweet Bella, *Persis*, *Faustina*—Louahn Lowe*, Susan Patterson**

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Darcy Stephens — Intern

Ritual Consultant,
Spiritual Advisor
Luisah Teish

Dance Consultant
Wilfred Mark

Directing Associate
Abraham Celaya

Assistant Director
Meg Patterson

Assistant to the Director
Vickie Rozell

The director wishes to thank:

*David Rudder, Judith Bettelheim, Andy Narrell, Les Blanc, Daniel J. Crowley,
Gerald Krone, Len Carrington, Tomi Seon, and the Jouvey Dance Company.*

This project is funded in part by a challenge grant from the California Arts Council. Any findings, opinions, or conclusions contained herein are not necessarily those of the California Arts Council.

*From 10/12/93 - 10/24/93 **From 10/26/93-12/5/93

Cover Photo by Daniel DeSouza



What Is a Pecong?

*I admire your ambition, you'd like to sing,
But you'll never be a Kaiso King,
To reach such a height without blemish or spot
You must study Shakespeare, Byron, Milton and Scott,
But I'm afraid I'm casting pearls before swine,
For you'll never inculcate such thoughts divine,
You really got a good intention
But poor education.*

— The Lord Executioner,
to Atilla the Hun (1964)

According to playwright Steve Carter, the “pecong” — derived from the patois word *piquant*, for “zesty” or “spicy” — is a kind of verbal jousting engaged in by men of Afro-diasporic cultures, particularly in the Caribbean. Competitors playfully insult each other about anything and everything, including such traditional topics as their families, women, and manhood. The more outrageous the insult, the better.

The catch is, the insults must be known to be false. “If you accused somebody’s mother of being a prostitute in a pecong, and it were true,” says Carter, “you’d probably be ostracized.” Today’s post-colonial pecongs have a modern twist. “Where pecongs do have some truth to them,” adds Carter, “is when opponents insult each other — again, playfully — about their politics.”

An outgrowth of the oral traditions of African cultures, the pecong is related to several forms of African-American music, presaging rap, and is one form of the calypso, the traditional folk song of the islands of Trinidad and Tobago. The antecedents of calypso — known in its early forms variously as *kaiso* (from the Hausa language, once spoken by the largest tribal group in Nigeria), *carrou-seaux* (French), *ruso* (Creole), and *caliso* (Venezuelan Spanish) — were the praise and derision songs of the West African slaves brought to the islands in the late eighteenth century. The pecong itself grew out of the ribald *calinda* (or *kalenda*) chants of stickfighters, and became a popular fixture of calypso contests traditionally held at Carnival time. By the early part of this century, calypso battles became a standing event at formally organized Carnival competitions,

and individual singer-combatants became folk heroes with loyal followings, honored for their sharp wit and repartee, improvisational prowess, talent in dance and music, indifference to authority, and sexual accomplishment.

The Trinidadian police, offended by its often profane content and accompanying licentious dancing, repeatedly tried to ban the calypso — in the 1860s and again in the 1930s and ’40s — but its public popularity prevailed. In response to the censorship attempt of the ’40s, Atilla the Hun (a calypsonian extraordinaire) retorted:

To say these songs are sacrilegious,
obscene or profane,
Is only a lie and a dirty shame.
If the calypso is indecent then I
must insist,
So is Shakespeare’s Venus and
Adonis,
Boccaccio’s tales, Voltaire’s *Candide*,
The Martyrdom of Man by Winwood
Reid,
Yet over these authors they make no
fuss,
But want to take advantage of us.

Carter, who at one point instructed the actors in *Pecong* “to proceed in a rap manner,” says, “It’s all very connected, it’s all from the continent, from Africa. The pecongs that I know best, though, are the ones the Caribbean people used to hold at Carnival time in New York in the 1930s and ’40s. The leading calypso singers — who had strange names like

the Duke of Iron, Macbeth the Great, and Lord Invader — would ‘comp’ each other, that is, compete.

“The music is really rhythm in the background, something for them to chant to. These are not particularly melodic songs. When Harry Belafonte came to the fore, most real calypso singers looked down on him, because he was really an imitation. He wasn’t a true calypsonian, because calypsonians make up things on the spur of the moment.

“Things are done a little differently in Trinidad these days. One of the big cheeses down there is the Mighty Sparrow; he was beat out last year in the calypso competition by a guy who not only criticized Sparrow himself, which is to be expected, but also focused in on other things, chanting about politics, kind of slow and deliberate, not the usual up-tempo thing. So it changes from time to time.”

The winner of a pecong is usually determined by a committee, whose members are often influenced by the competitors’ crowd appeal, but Carter says he changed the rules in the play somewhat to add to the momentum of the drama. “I created the notion of a Grand King Calabash to give the characters something to strive for. The play is set on imaginary islands after slavery and colonization have disappeared. I didn’t want to involve these people in politics — they have no worries, everything is provided. Gossip is very important, and winning the pecong is the highest thing they aspire to. These are basically happy people, and suddenly they have to contend with an unexpected dark element. I don’t want them to think about anything else.”

— Elizabeth Brodersen

The Musical Language of *Pecong*

By Meg Patterson

The world of *Pecong* is above all a world of language and music. Its beat begins with a heartbeat that resonates through the body and soul. Its roots reach down into the earth, grounding each Trankey Islander so that the deep and beautiful rhythmic energy of the earth can rise up through each human trunk. Verbal dexterity is the most valuable commodity on this island. Storytelling and verbal jousting skill — the ability to have a quick and stinging comeback — are the measures by which people are judged. Those who possess the gift see their status, reputation, and wealth rise; to be unable to speak is the worst curse imaginable.

The language of the play is intrinsically intertwined with movement — a thought does not exist without a movement, and a movement does not exist without a sound. The story and *the way of telling the story* are liberated from reality and set free in the realm of the imagination. Steve Carter's poetic language links contemporary rap and hip-hop music to archetypal stories of the ancient world.

Although *Pecong* is set on "islands of the mind" in the Caribbean, the play is imbued with a feeling of Trinidad and Tobago because of the importance of the calypso rhythms, the pecong tradition, and the special sound of the language on those particular islands. The calypso fuses the musical styles and languages of all the nationalities that have populated these islands, drawing from African rhythms, incorporating Latin musical influence from nearby Venezuela and Guyana, and merging with the lyrical language of French (Creole), English, and Irish colonists to create a new international art form.

Pecong also gives us a vivid display of the symbiotic relationship between the musician and singer/actor/dancer that is part of the calypso tradition. The percus-

sive life of the drums and other instruments that "play" the musicians (many musicians feel that the music is actually playing them) forms a circular relationship with the body, the spirit, and the words of the performers, so that what we see has a unity of form in the moment far more pronounced than in the typical Western theater experience. Most impor-

competitions filled with innuendo and insult.

Pecong also reminds us of Shakespeare in the use of rhythms to convey information about emotional states. Actors often say that Shakespeare's iambic pentameter is based on a heartbeat, with each normal line having five "dump-dum" beats, and that when working on a script, the first clue to a change in action is a change in the meter. For example, the verse spoken by fairies and characters possessing magical powers is almost never in iambic pentameter, and when any mortal feels "outside of herself," her meter changes accordingly. Carter is much freer with these forms (and creates new ones as necessary), but uses the same strong connection of rhythm to action, with split-second shifts in meter to suit the surprising twists in the story.

Many contemporary musicians and theater artists recognize the power of language used as a percussive combat sport. In Sam Shepard's *Tooth of Crime*, we see a rock-and-roll competition in which the baddest rocker wins, and "speak-skill" is power. Winning the "style match" is like winning the pecong, and confers the same celebrity status. Shepard shows us many characters that discover who they are simply by "saying themselves" out loud.

Rappers L.L. Cool J and Kool Moe Dee had an ongoing unofficial competition for years to "win" the status of best rapper. Their challenges and insults ran back and forth through many albums, inciting passionate loyalty in their respective followers, until they finally called a truce.

In *Pecong* we see a fantasy, based on reality, of the calypso link in the chain of human expression. *Pecong's* celebratory fusion of the aural art forms — poetry and music — reexplores theatrical expression by giving us a uniquely African-American theater that breaks out of the conventions of European-inspired dramatic realism.



Carnival, by Melton Prior (1888)

tantly, calypso is an art form that springs from a community whose members all realize they are artists, without apology. Poetry here is not reserved for poets; everyone is a poet by birthright.

This is the power of language in a fresh form, which feels to us as Shakespeare's language might have felt to his first audiences. As in Shakespeare's work, there is the sense that even the poorest fool has a silver tongue, and that criticism and teasing are wrapped up in the prettiest rhyming packages to slip, undetected, by the victim. Many of Shakespeare's funniest scenes are tongue lashings and verbal



The Tongue Can Be Mightier Than the Sword

Verbal prowess seems to have been honored in all cultures and all times. The following excerpts — from Love's Labor's Lost by William Shakespeare, The Tooth of Crime by Sam Shepard, Pecong by Steve Carter, "I'm Bad" by rapper L.L. Cool J, and "Suckers" by his rival Kool Moe Dee — demonstrate man's universal desire to wield a well-turned phrase in struggles for dominance:

Love's Labor's Lost

COSTARD: I Pompey am, —
 BOYET: You lie, you are not he.
 COSTARD: I Pompey am, —
 BOYET: With libbard's head on knee.
 BIRON: Well said, old mocker: I must needs be friends with thee.
 COSTARD: I Pompey am, Pompey surnamed the Big, —
 DUMAIN: The Great.
 COSTARD: It is, "Great," sir: Pompey surnamed the Great;
 That oft in field, with targe and shield, did make my foe to sweat:
 And travelling along this coast, I here am come by chance,
 And lay my arms before the legs of this sweet lass of France.

The Tooth of Crime

HOSS: I'm a cold killer Mama — I got blood on my jeans...
 I got the fastest action in East L.A.
 I got the fastest action in San Berdoo
 And if you don't believe it lemme shoot it to you
 Now watch me slide into power glide — supercharged down the line
 There ain't no way for you to hide from the killer's eye
 My silver studs, my black kid gloves make you cry inside
 But there ain't no way for you to hide from the killer's eye
 I'm a cold killer Mama — and I've earned my tattoo
 I got a Pachooko cross hangin' over you
 I got whiplash magic and a rattlesnake tongue
 My John the Conqueroot says I'm the cold gun.

Pecong

CEDRIC: I raise me sweet voice, loud and clear
 and issue challenge to all who can hear
 I say to all assemble here
 and far and near,
 "In melodious combat, come and meet me
 and see if you is the one
 who can lose he life,
 he home, he wife,
 he fork, he knife,
 he stress, he strife.
 The time most rife,

me son,
 for tryin' to defeat me.
 Defeat me? Hah! Never!
 I am the Mighty, Royal, Most Perfect,
 Grand King Calabash...forever!

"I'm Bad"

L.L. COOL J: I'm bad. Cool J. Cool J. Cool J...
 I'm like a soldier at war.
 Making sure you don't try to battle me no more.
 I got concrete rhymes, been rappin' for ten years
 And even when I'm rappin I've been sincere...
 The best rapper you heard is L.L. J
 Hey Kamakazi, look at what I done
 I used to rock in my basement, now I'm Number One...
 I'm the pinnacle.
 That means I reign supreme.
 And I'm notorious, I'll crush you like a jellybean.

"Suckers"

(In response to L.L. Cool J)

KOOL MOE DEE: I can send the crowd into pandemonium
 lyrically...
 Other rappers aren't as good as me
 That's why they try to be me
 And what they become is a facsimile.
 Suckers!...
 You'll never amount to what I am
 'Cause I'm Kool Moe Dee, better known as
 The Man.
 No matter how you suckers feel
 I am the best, 'cause I'm for real.
 Suckers! Suckers! Suckers!

* * *

These excerpts from Shakespeare's The Taming of the Shrew, Pecong and "I Got a Man" by rapper Positive K show that the tongue can be a potent weapon in love, as well as war:

The Taming of the Shrew

PETRUCHIO: Come, come, you wasp; i' faith, you are too angry.
 KATHERINE: If I be waspish, best beware my sting.
 PETRUCHIO: My remedy is then, to pluck it out.
 KATHERINE: Ay, if the fool could find it where it lies.
 PETRUCHIO: Who knows not where a wasp does wear his sting?
 In his tail.
 KATHERINE: In his tongue.
 PETRUCHIO: Whose tongue?

KATHERINE: Yours, if you talk of tails:
and so farewell.

PETRUCHIO: What, with my tongue in your
tail? nay, come again. Good Kate; I am a
gentleman.

KATHERINE: That I'll try....

PETRUCHIO: A herald, Kate? O, put me in thy books!

KATHERINE: What is your crest? a coxcomb?

PETRUCHIO: A combless cock, so Kate will be my hen.

KATHERINE: No cock of mine; you crow too like a craven.

Pecong

MEDIYAH: Oh, God! But you is a pretty piece of flesh!

JASON: Thank you, Missy. Is so woman all the time tell me. Thank you,
God, for lettin' a woman be the last thing I see 'fore I pass.

MEDIYAH: Pass? But, you is too pretty to die... You could tell me you
name 'fore you make all you good-bye and t'ing.

JASON: In life I was Jason Allcock from Tougou Island.
Known the entire length and breadth of Tougou as, "Jason
The Ram," born Calypsonian, extraordinaire.

MEDIYAH: And tell me, Mr. Jason Allcock, you pretty ram-goat, what
you doin' here in this wild, lickle piece of spit in the
ocean... You feelin' young and strong?

JASON: Yes!

MEDIYAH: You feel for give me lickle tumble?

JASON: All the time!

MEDIYAH: You feel for make me body sing with you music?

JASON: Like you the cuatro and I the picker!

MEDIYAH: You feel for make you mouth run rampant all over me terrain?

JASON: Woman, you have me hotter than Satan fire! Bring yourself over
to me. Let me have at you.

"I Got a Man"

SHE: I'm not one of those girls that go lookin' around.

HE: I'm not dumb, baby, so don't play me like a clown.

SHE: I'll admit I like how you're kickin'.

HE: Now you're talkin', baby, that's the ticket.

SHE: Now don't get excited — I already told ya, I got a man....

HE: Well look, I'll treat you good.

SHE: My man treats me better.

HE: I'll talk sweet on the phone.

SHE: My man writes love letters.

HE: I'll tell ya that I want ya, and tell ya that I care.

SHE: My man says the same, except he's sincere.

HE: Well I'm clean cut and dapper, that's what I'm about.

SHE: My man buys me rings, and he takes me out.

HE: Well you can keep your man!...

SHE: Now you can persist and play dumb all night, ain't
nothin' gonna change.

HE: Yeah, baby, sure you're right.

SHE: ...I got a man.

HE: But your man ain't me.



*Special thanks for their help with the preparation of this article to
Wayne Wallace, Al Eaton, Laura Nicholls, Nancy Reed, and Julian
Lopez-Morillas.*

Original sketch of Jason by costume designer Richard W. Battle.



When the Spirit Moves

By Elizabeth Brodersen

"[I]n the beginning God and His woman went into the bedroom together to commence creation," writes Zora Neale Hurston in Tell My Horse: Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica. "That was the beginning of everything and Voodoo is just as old as that. It is the old, old mysticism of the world in African terms."

That mysticism infuses the world of *Pecong*, which director Benny Sato Ambush describes as a place "where the sacred and secular inhabit the same space, populated by powerful figures who mediate between the two, where the paranormal is just the way things are."

To help him invoke the Afro-Caribbean traditions represented in *Pecong* in a spirit of authenticity and respect, Ambush asked Luisah Teish, priestess of Oshun (the Yoruba goddess of love) and author of *Jambalaya: The Natural Woman's Book of Personal Charms and Practical Rituals*, to act as ritual consultant and spiritual advisor to the production.

In *Jambalaya*, Teish explains that as many as twenty million people were transported from West Africa to the Americas for sale. As a result, large concentrations of Yorubas were established in Brazil and Cuba; Dahomeans and Congos in Haiti; the Ashanti in the English Islands; Dahomeans and Yorubas in Trinidad; and Fons, Wolofs, and Congos in North America. While these groups spoke and dressed differently, they shared similar gods and rituals, with a common belief in nature worship and ancestor reverence.

Once in the West, the African belief system was subordinated to Christianity and merged with the practices of indigenous peoples, as well as the pagan traditions of servant-class Europeans who made their way to the Caribbean: the Spanish evil eye, French gypsies' cabalistic secret societies, and English witchcraft. This integration gave birth to powerful ritual systems critical to the daily life and freedom struggle of slaves all over the Americas: Macumba and Candomble in Brazil, Lucumi in Cuba, Sante-ria in Puerto Rico, and Voodoo or Hoodoo in Haiti and New Orleans.

African spirituality is holistic, rooted in



Statue of a female ancestor, by an artist of the BaLuba people (The British Museum).

a profound respect for nature. "As African people," says Teish, "we believe that nature is alive, conscious, receptive to our input, and responsive to our needs. We can affect that consciousness in such a way that we can relate to the forces of nature, because we all come from the same source. I am at the same time the single cell at the bottom of the ocean, the

stardust out in space, and the part of creation that chose to take this human form and accept its definitions and limitations."

In the West African world view, all nature contains energy from the *Da*, "the energy that carries creation, the force field in which creation takes place," writes Teish. "Both the rock and the human are composed of energy provided by the *Da*... This energy can be extracted from and infused into rocks and humans by various ritualistic means."

According to Teish, the power of the word, or *Nommo* force (a term used by the Dogon of Mali), is a *Da*, which "awakens all 'sleeping' forces, and strengthens weak ones, according to the will of the speaker. Words uttered in a particular sequence, rhythm, and tone can bring a rock to 'action,' cause rain to fall, or heal a sick person a hundred miles away. When properly played, the drums are also *Nommo*. They send messages to the Universal Intelligence and receive answers."

Paramount to these beliefs is the loving reverence of human ancestors (*egungun* or *egun* in Yoruba)—particularly maternal spirits and the spirits of one's elders. There is no death as we understand it in the West, but a person's essence separates from the flesh and continues to exist and to act. Ancestors have no material form and can be in all places at the same time, but they continue to have sensory experience. They can see and hear and have emotions and desires, and their sole concern is the welfare of their descendants, with whom they still communicate, whether directly, in dreams, or through ritual possession. Spirits are everywhere, know everything, and are responsible for all things.

Teish elaborates: "We just didn't pop out of thin air yesterday. We inherit our bodies, our predispositions, our talents, and, to a certain extent, our personalities from a long line of human beings. Our ancestors' intelligence survives in another dimension, and under proper ritual conditions we have access to it.

"The only thing that has happened to Granny Root [Mediyah's grandmother in

the play] is that what we know of as 'Granny Root' has left the body. Her consciousness, memory, knowledge, and attitude are not lost, do not disappear, are not neutralized in a monastic heaven. They are active still. In helping Rosalyn Coleman prepare for the role of Mediyah, I followed very closely behind her as she walked around the room, because she needed to learn to be *skin sensitive* to the presence of Granny Root. When one has spirit accompaniment, there is a feeling of not being alone."

The protection and guidance of the spirits is not automatic, but must be invoked by the performance of appropriate rituals—offering ancestors proper burial, celebration in song and dance, and placation with sacrifice and food. It is each individual's responsibility to provide for her ancestors, and thereby replenish her personal power, or *ache*. Failure to do so is an abuse of *ache*, and may incur the wrath of the ancestors, and of the gods.

Also fundamental is the ritual worship of the gods, or *orishas*. While each locality in the Americas developed its own pantheon of deities, Teish describes certain archetypes from Mother Africa common to all: Ellegua or Elegba, the divine trickster-linguist, who translates communication between humans and the gods; Obatala, supreme deity of the Yoruba pantheon, the androgynous creator, peacekeeper and judge; Yemaya-Olokun, the nurturing mother of the sea, intuition, and dreams; Oya-Yansa, the warrior queen, with the power of earthquake and wind; Oshun-Erzulie, goddess of love, art, and sensuality; Chango or Shango, god of masculinity and thunder (whose cult predominates in Trinidad); and Ogun, the architect and father of technology. The serpent deity, Damballah, in certain cultures reigns as the supreme power, and is, according to Hurston, "the father of all that is powerful and good," "the great source," whom the other gods must first ask for permission and power to take action.

In helping Ambush and the cast of *Pecong* evolve a spiritual system for the people of Trankey and Miedo Wood Islands, Teish preferred not to follow the dictates of one particular culture over another. "When I read the script," she says, "I see traditions

of Trinidad, Haiti, New Orleans, and even South Carolina. We make cultural notations on universal principles—people all over the world have done ancestor reverence work. Now, maybe in Africa the offering is made with coconuts, among Native Americans with corn, and among the Chinese with rice, but at the core they're all recognizing that those who go before us make us what we are.

"So in this production, where we have mythical islands, it's my preference to create generic rituals. Although we aren't adhering closely to cultural specifics, there are some characters in the play that are very close to certain archetypes. We don't have to call the ram-headed one Chango, but there is clearly a lot of thunder and lightning here. I wouldn't necessarily ask Jason to carry a double-headed axe, which would be associated with the Lord of Thunder in Nigeria, but he does have to display a fiery temperament. Our ancestors looked at the forces of nature and personified them, so you are not going to find a mild-mannered god of thunder, or a mild-mannered volcano goddess. We all have an understanding, whether we articulate it or not, of these archetypes. They are real."



It was important to Ambush to avoid the evil stereotype of "voodoo" propagated by Hollywood and popular media. "In its home state," says Teish, "the very word *vodun* means 'life principle.' Both life and death are part of the life principle; the good and the bad both come from the one. God created the Devil, right? The difference between sorcery and magic is situational. Under slavery, people had to go into deep war mode, and defensive magic

became very strong and popular. That doesn't mean the healers went to sleep, but in the Haitian revolution, the woman that would have spent her time making healing teas had to spend her time making poison to kill the slave master. The fact that what appeared to be a group of unorganized, ignorant, supposedly inferior slaves had the wherewithal to defeat Napoleon Bonaparte's army allows people to attribute to them a demonic power.

"When slaves started poisoning and cutting the throats of slave masters and making juju to become invincible, their stories became the popular folklore, which the next generation believed and emulated, mutating the original principles. Once that process is romanticized and further popularized by the media, which loves terror, it is difficult to find proportion again.

"When you impose a foreign idea on the consciousness of another people, it can warp. Like the *cochon gris*, the cult of the grey pig in Haiti that Zora talks about, where people roam the countryside executing folks. Well, in pre-colonial Africa, there was a judiciary body that dealt with people who committed crimes against society, and that judiciary had a body of executioners, just like the State of California has the gas chamber. You upset the culture of those people, transplant them to another land, and impose on them the Christian crucifixion, and suddenly you have them executing in Christ's name."

Teish points out that concepts of good and evil are not cut and dried. "I prefer the word 'dangerous.' There are no absolutes, but the violation of law requires certain responses. Granny Root intends to wipe out a blight against her family name, but Mediyah goes off the deep end. Mediyah violates her contract with creation—which requires that she use her *ache* to the best of her ability—by giving her power up to Jason. If she had not done that, this would be a very, very different story. But given who she is and what she is supposed to do, once she makes that choice, the events that follow could only be gruesome."

Above: "*Gyawm Atiko*," symbol of courage and determination, used by the Akan people of Ghana to decorate funerary cloths.



Mother/Word¹

Black Theater in the African Continuum: Word/Song as Method

By Paul Carter Harrison

When you go into any culture, I don't care what the culture is, you have to go with some humility. You have to understand the language, and by that I do not mean what we speak, you've got to understand the language, the interior language of the people. You've got to be able to enter their philosophy, their world view. You've got to speak both the spoken language and the metalanguage of the people.

— Wole Soyinka [Nigerian playwright, poet, essayist, and Nobel laureate]

In the small hours of a Bahia night, a group of black American writers was summoned to the hotel room of [American journalist] Verta Mae Grosvenor by the insistent persuasion of a young Bahian poet who zealously wished to share his poems with the American visitors. Verta Mae knew intuitively it wouldn't work as the Americans listened politely to the young Brazilian's efforts to communicate the interior values of his poetry in halting, albeit passionate, English. Suddenly, with an alarming sense of inhospitality, Verta Mae interrupted the proceedings and exhorted the young poet to render the poems in his native language. He hesitated at first, since no one in the room spoke Portuguese, particularly Afro-Brazilian Portuguese. However, prompted by the consensus of the American visitors, the poet began his narrative with the familiar word/song generic to storytelling in most black cultures, his incantations invoking images shaped by polyrhythm, repetition, and occasional vamps that onomatopoeitically awakened the spirit of consanguinity, sweeping the American visitors along as willing participants in a ritualistic mode allowing access to the deeper significations of the poet's experience. The very immanence of the poet's word/song transcended the artificial barrier of alien-tongue and gave the visitors a sense of having shared in a narrative ritual that had peeled away layers of cultural distance. And in response to its beneficence, we smiled gratefully.

Word!

Mother/word!!

¹Mother/word as in fore/word or first/word or the word as in truth.

Ritual is the affective technique common to most theatrical exercises in the black world. Within these exercises, the word is not simply a mechanism of discourse. It is, rather, a creative elixir — Nommo force — that activates the dramatic mode (context of experience) and reveals the symbolic gesture of the Mask (characterization). Embedded in this mode are references to a common experience, myths and significations that define the collective moral universe. The lessons of myth are secured in the inner world of experience, ... which often requires strong rituals to reconcile past knowledge to contemporary realities... [Critic] Jay Wright notes that, in traditional societies, ritual "reveals the communal significance of experience. To understand what we mean by historical experience you must understand the necessity for desire, the rage of vision in Afro-America." The word, then, must have the power to reach beyond objective reality, to touch the spirit and awaken the soul...

...Close inspection of language in the African diaspora — save, perhaps, the hybrid form of nineteenth-century European speech retained in Liberia — reveals the common verbal impulse to make the word sing, irrespective of alien-tongue or corruptions of original syntax. What is important here... is that the resulting actions of language — spoken or gesticulated — have meaningful correspondences in both the physical and spiritual worlds. It is not uncommon, then, to discover in the art forms of the black world a language that is mythopoetic and intensified or amplified by an orphic sonority. A scat song, for example, is a rhythmic elaboration of language

that, much like "talkin' in tongues," probes the "numinous shadow" for light and the meaning of objective reality, and produces, as [cultural theorist] Wilson Harris has noted in *The Womb of Space*, "metaphoric imagery that intricately conveys music as the shadow of vanished but visualized presences."

...To probe the metaphysical world for symbolic correspondences to objective reality, the contemporary black theater artist requires an unrelenting discipline, the rigor of the traditional African carver, whose apparently naturalistic forms are intensely potent expressions imparting, as [art historian] Isidore Okpewho says, "tangible meaning to those visible and spiritual presences which give context to daily life and thought" — in much the same way that the music of Ellington, Monk, and Mingus produces what the late poet Larry Neal called an "acoustic iconography" transcending sociological explication... Rather than the duplication of experience, which invites uncritical response to the mundane, we discover in their musical forms a rigorous excavation of significant communal values and an illumination of hidden impulses.

Until recently, black theater in the United States, unlike the culturally informed ritual exercises of Africa, was merely the reproduction of material life, with little content beyond obvious protestation or abject solicitation of the dominant culture for recognition — and even authentication — of the black experience. In "Black Theater in Search of a Source," an introductory essay to the anthology *Kuntu Drama*, I sought to identify the formal/ritualistic style of the black church as a paradigm for Afro-

Continued on page P-13



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AT SELECT THEATRES

American dramaturgy, an alternative to the reigning theatrical form. Exploring the sacred experience for aesthetic reference seemed more than reasonable, since most people of African descent are first and foremost responsive to spiritual values, even when they are not affiliated with organized religion. Few blacks in America are able to resist the groundswell of feeling and transport when the spirit is aroused in the formal exercises called church. Irrespective of affiliation — Holiness, African Methodist, Episcopal, Baptist, Pentecostal in Puerto Rico, Candomble in Brazil, Macumba in Cuba, Pocomania in Jamaica, even Catholic or conservative Presbyterian — profound spiritual feelings cannot be suppressed "when the Saints come marchin' in!" And while the church experience may appear to be unchanged in form, the execution of the ritual is never static or otherwise predictable, largely due to the irrepressible magical incantations of the preacher's performance style.

Secular rituals — even one as spiritually rousing as *The Gospel at Colonus* — cannot generate as much power as the organized church experience, where word/song becomes the force that brings order to the congregation's collective vision, inspiring a sense of transformation of mind/body that leads, potentially, to productive action. Still, such an exercise, at least in form, should be a natural source of inspiration for the secular ritual we call theater. In a recent interview, [playwright] Amiri Baraka...examined the cultural implications of a religiously or spiritually informed aesthetic:

...I think that what the Afro-American has always been trying to evolve is an art that comes out of the basically dionysian, basic African spirit possession, because the Black church has always been about spirit possession. You know, they say the spirit will not descend without song. So you got to have music to make the spirit come down, and you gotta get the spirit, you gotta actually get the frenzy, you gotta get happy like they say, to actually have participated in that religious experience.

Further liberation from realism, with its static appraisal of the black experi-

Continued on page P-20

You are invited to:

A.C.T. PERSPECTIVES

A Series of Public Symposia

II

Oral Traditions Old and New:
Pecong and the Cultural Roots of New
World Literary Forms

Opal Palmer, Lecturer, African-
American Studies Department,
U.C. Berkeley; Author and Storyteller

Paul Carter Harrison, Playwright-in-
Residence and Professor, Theater/Music
Department, Columbia College Chicago;
Editor, *Kuntu Drama* and *Tbtem Voices*

N. Gregson Davis, Chair and Goldwin
Professor of Comparative Literature,
Cornell University

Moderator: Benny Sato Ambush,
Director of *Pecong*

November 15, 1993
7:00 – 9:00 p.m.
Stage Door Theater

III

Translation and Adaptation: Playwrights
Reinterpret the Classics

Paul Schmidt, Translator, Chekhov's *The
Cherry Orchard* and *Uncle Vanya* and
Brecht's *Saint Joan of the Stockyards*

Joan Holden, Principal Playwright,
San Francisco Mime Troupe; Translator,
Beaumarchais' *The Marriage of
Figaro* and Fo's *The Pope and
the Witch* for A.C.T.

Moderator: Carey Perloff, Director of
Uncle Vanya

December 6, 1993
7:00 – 9:00 p.m.
Marines Memorial Theater

*Speakers for the following symposia
to be announced:*

IV

Contemporary Approaches to Molière
and *Commedia dell'Arte*

Part 1 — January 9, 1994
6:00 – 8:00 p.m.
Stage Door Theater

Part 2 — February 7, 1994
7:00 – 9:00 p.m.
Marines Memorial Theater

V

Reinterpreting the Greeks:
New Approaches to Ancient Drama

April 18, 1994
7:00 – 9:00 p.m.
Location TBA

VI

Is There a Common Mythic Base in Con-
temporary American Culture?

May 9, 1994
7:00 – 9:00 p.m.
Location TBA

A.C.T. Perspectives is funded by the
National Endowment for the Humanities
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Panelists subject to change without notice.

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Discussion on
PECONG

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Join A.C.T. Associate Artistic Director
Benny Sato Ambush with musicians, story-
tellers, and scholars of Afro-Caribbean cul-
ture to discuss the cross-cultural influences
in Steve Carter's enchanting retelling of the
Medea myth.

The discussion will begin at approxi-
mately 6:00 p.m., following the Sunday mati-
nee of *Pecong*. Admission is free of charge.



A Passionate Playwright

Steve Carter, like his Mediyah, is a creative force to be reckoned with, a force driven by a fervent love...for the theater. During a recent visit to A.C.T., he graciously shared with us the origins of his theatrical passion and the inspiration for his vengeful lady.

Writing Beyond Life

Carter, sixty-three, describes himself as "the youngest of America's oldest living playwrights and, having seen a play for the first time in 1938, probably the youngest of America's oldest living playgoers." He has written some twenty-seven plays, including *Eden*, *Nevis Mountain Dew*, *Dame Lorraine*, *One Last Look*, *Terraces*, *Primary Colors*, *Shoot Me While I'm Happy*, *Spieler '36*, *Root Causes*, *Mirage*, and *The Inaugural Tea*. *Eden* won Carter an Outer Critics' Circle Award as the 1976 season's most promising playwright and an Audelco Award as best play of the year. Carter has also received fellowships from the Rockefeller and Guggenheim Foundations and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Born and raised in New York City, Carter's love affair with the theater began in 1937 with a trip to Broadway to see *Amphitryon 38*, starring Lunt and Fontanne. "I didn't know what the play was about, and I didn't know those were two famous people I was looking at," he remembers, "but I was intrigued by the magic of the production, the scenery coming down from the heavens."

"I've known I wanted to be something in the theater since I was about ten. My mother's cousin worked backstage at theaters as a handyman, so he got a lot of tickets that he would just give to her, and she took me along."

"When I was about nine, I got caught playing hooky from school. My punishment was to spend ten days at home after school for every day I had cut. The only

thing I passed on the way home was the library; the saving grace was, my mother let me stop there and get a book, so long as I was home seven and a half minutes after the two-o'clock bell. Just because it was something to do, really, I would run in and grab whatever was there, saying

went home and took apart my mother's new table-model Magnavox and put a set on it. Mother wasn't too happy — she hadn't even paid for it yet — but she went to a pawn shop and bought me a wind-up Victrola.

"One day, to keep my friends looking at one of my sets and admiring what I had created, I made the figures talk. I figured out then that words had the power to hold people. That finished it — I knew I was going to be a playwright."

"When I finally started seeing plays I chose to go to, I discovered Tennessee Williams. I saw the original productions of *Glass Menagerie*, which remains my favorite, and *Streetcar*, which is right behind it. I wasn't enthralled by Marlon Brando or Jessica Tandy, but by Williams' words — they weren't talking like anybody I knew. I realized that theater was supposed to be something different from what you ordinarily hear. You're supposed to see something illuminating on the stage, something different that you won't see out on the street. It's all right for those people who write life, but I like to write a little beyond life."

Carter attended New York's High School of Art and Music, where he majored in art with

the intention of becoming a scenic designer. After working with various community theater groups for several years, he hooked up with Maxwell Glanville's American Community Theater in 1961. Professionally too timid at first to admit he was a playwright, he designed costumes, operated lights and sound, built props and sets, taught body movement, and participated in street theater. When the ground-breaking Negro Ensemble Company (NEC) was formed in 1967, he joined as a volunteer.

Carter dates his professional theater career from that year, when he received his first review — from John O'Connor in the *Wall Street Journal* — of *One Last*



steve carter

'Hurry up! I've got to be home!'

"The first book I picked up was a classic comic of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*; it caught me, and I went back to get the real book. I didn't know what half the words meant, but I knew that something had happened."

"I started to duplicate all the plays I saw in miniature, and I became quite good at that. All of my sets were scale models: the females were four inches tall, the males four and a half. Then I found a book on stage design — that's how I found out what I was doing was called 'stage design' — and I came across the word 'turntable.' I knew what *that* was. I

Look, produced at the Old Reliable Theater Tavern. "I was working down in the stock room of Talon Zippers at the time," he remembers, laughing. "When the big boss saw the review, he tried to move me upstairs. He didn't think it would look too good if one of the two black men who worked there, whose name was in the paper, was sweeping the sidewalk. But I wouldn't let them move me, because I worked in the stock room. I had my duplicating machine, all the paper... I mean, I was using that job strictly for stationery purposes! Besides, I wasn't ashamed to sweep the sidewalk. I did a good job of it."

In 1969, carter's theater career took over, and he left his day job to work full time for the NEC. He served there in numerous capacities over the years, including costume designer, production coordinator, set designer, director of playwrights' and actors' workshops, and playwright-in-residence. He has also taught for two and a half years as teaching playwright-in-residence at George Mason University. In 1981 he became the first playwright-in-residence at Chicago's Victory Gardens Theater, where *Pecong* had its world premiere in 1990; he remains affiliated there, commuting between Chicago and his native New York City.

Mythic Inspiration

When asked about the themes that inspire his work, carter simply says, "I write what I feel like writing." He points out that only five of his plays are based on Caribbean or American themes: *One Last Look*, *Eden*, *Nevis Mountain Dew*, *Dame Lorraine*, and *Pecong*. He is interested in exploring the roots of injustice; his *Spiele '36* is about the United States' capitulation to Nazi demands that Jews be excluded from the 1936 Olympic games, and he is currently working on

a new play about wife abuse.

As for *Pecong*, carter says he has always liked Euripides' *Medea*. "As a young person, I actually saw Judith Anderson do the Robinson Jeffers translation," he explains, "and it always stayed with me. Then in 1988, when I was here working with the Ensemble Theater Company [of Marin County], I was sitting in a pool in Marin and overheard Michelle Swanson [then head of the Company] say that she had never really seen a black *Medea*."

"I went straight up to the house and started typing a scene between Granny Root and Mediyah and Jason. It seemed to me that Jason was a stupid man — he should have known who he was messing with. All the myth tells us is that Jason wants to marry somebody else, without explaining how he and Medea got together. If you only look at that, without knowing what's gone before, and you take them as quintessential man and quintessential woman, well, yes, you do think that something should happen to him."

"I believe in writing, as I call them, 'men without apology.' All of my men are scrupulously honest — they always tell the women at the beginning of everything just what their intentions are. There are men who tell them, and women who don't listen. That's the cause of all the conflict — nobody's really *hearing*."

"I don't think I've ever written a dishonest character, because I like to think of myself as a person who tells everybody everything. Every woman I've ever had dealings with, I've told her at the very beginning that she has to be satisfied with being second in my life. I already have a wife, and that is writing. Not only is she a wife, but she is a perfect mistress. Theater occupies my mind a good 85% of the time, and after that comes devotion to my family. Then if there's time for anything left over, I will indulge, but really it is writing that consumes me. Of course, it's up to the woman whether or not she wants to have anything to do with me after that!"

Although carter's mother is from Trinidad, he has combined elements, particularly language and ritual, from several different islands to create the world of *Pecong*, so that it would be

more "pan-Caribbean." "My mother, like the rest of my family," he says, "is from the New York Caribbean. Once they left Trinidad and settled in New York, their culture became something else. Different customs were developed, and the Caribbean traditions became rather strange to them. She came to this country when she was three, and has only been back once, when she was already over sixty."

"I've noticed that some people who have left the islands develop a sense of being 'insular.' When I was in London in 1976 to direct *Bread*, by Mustafa Matura, who is also from Trinidad, I found that some actors from certain other islands would not audition for me, because they assumed that I would never pick them, since Trinidadians are supposedly known for their dislike of Jamaicans and Barbadians. Then there were others who had cut themselves off from the islands and become British, speaking with British accents. One told me, 'My wife is British, my children are British, and so am I.' And I just looked at him and thought, 'But you're not!'"

Carter also admits to a fascination with the purity of Medea/Mediyah's revenge, a concept he says is fundamental to Caribbean culture and religion. An avowed Scorpio, he wears the badges of his sun sign all over his person — scorpion rings, glittering scorpion bracelets, a bolo tie bearing the image of the insect with a deadly sting — and claims to possess "all the humble traits of that much maligned sign."

"I was taught to be very revenge-minded," he says. "Like Granny Root, I believe in revenge, and severe revenge. If you really want to be avenged, you have to have tunnel vision; you can't be worried about who you're going to hurt, even if some innocent people might suffer. I've been known to go down the street casting the evil eye, myself...not that anything ever happens." He laughs. "One person, however, who did something she wasn't supposed to do with one of my works...did die...suddenly...on my birthday!"

—Elizabeth Brodersen

Carter says he believes, "passionately," that the biography of every playwright should end: "I'm currently hard at work on this new play that..." He is!

This scorpion goldweight represents the Akan (of Ghana) proverb: "When the scorpion stings you mercilessly, you have to kill it in the same spirit."





WHO'S WHO



GRAHAM BROWN, a native New Yorker, began his acting career at Howard University. He was a founding member of The Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis and the Negro Ensemble

Company. On Broadway he has been seen in *The River Niger* and *The Man in the Glass Booth*. Other recent credits include the King of France in *Henry V* at Theater for a New Audience, Antigonus in *The Winter's Tale* at the Public Theater, Moody in *Golden Boy* at Candlewood Playhouse, and *The Talented Tenth* and *Black Eagles* at the Manhattan Theater Club. He created the roles of Barton in Steve Carter's *Eden* and Jared in his *Nevis Mountain Dew*, which won Brown a Los Angeles Drama Critics' Circle Award.



ROSALYN COLEMAN is happy to return to A.C.T. A member of Gallery Repertory and Circle Repertory Lab Company, she was last seen on the beach of the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center work-

ing feverishly on Evert Eden's *The Interrogation*. Winter months held her close to her West Village home in Larry Kramer's *The Destiny of Me*. On Broadway, she has performed in *The Piano Lesson* and *Mule Bone*. Her regional theater credits include *A Sunbeam* with Mary Alice at the Pittsburgh Public Theater, *The Suppliant Women* at the New York Shakespeare Festival, and performances at the Yale Repertory Theater, American Stage Festival, Arena Stage, Shakespeare Theater at the Folger, and Seattle Repertory Theater. For the past two years Coleman has donated her talents to the 52nd Street Project as Mur the Cat, A Tree in Brooklyn, and a Mother of Cockroaches. She has appeared on television frequently on the daytime drama "Loving," and has begun work on a film version of *The Eclipse*, a performance piece she wrote and performed at the Manhattan Glass Company and the Shooting Gallery.

LELAND GANTT lists among his film credits *Malcolm X*, *Presumed Innocent*, and *The Super*. His television credits include "Law and Order," the NBC mini-series "Hoover vs. The Kennedys," "America's Most Wanted,"



and "One Life to Live." His off-Broadway performance in *Let Me Live* earned him nominations for both the Drama Desk and Audelco awards. His regional credits include appearances

with Seattle Repertory Theater, Baltimore's Center Stage, Virginia Stage Company, Theater Virginia, Pittsburgh Public Theater, New Jersey Shakespeare Festival, and Cleveland's Great Lakes Theater Festival. Among his regional credits are *Othello*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Pericles*, *Fences*, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, and *T-Bone N' Weasel*.



GUIESSEPPE JONES is a graduate of A.C.T.'s Advanced Training Program (ATP) and a Professional Theater Intern. While in the ATP his studio roles included Baylor in *A Lie of the Mind*,

Orestes in *The Libation Bearers*, and Rodrigo Tellez Giron in *Fuente Ovejuna*. Most recently he was seen as Herakles in *A String of Pearls*, directed by Olan Jones and Mary Edith Burrell at the Marsh. His many opera credits include *Aida*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Il Trovatore* at the Sacramento Opera, and *The Magic Flute* at the North Bay Opera.



LOUAHN LOWE graduated in May from A.C.T.'s Advanced Training Program, where her favorite roles were Clytemnestra in *Electra*, Portia in *Julius Caesar*, and Babakina in *Ivanov*. She spent

last summer at the Colorado Shakespeare Festival, where her favorite role was Perdita in *The Winter's Tale*, and is excited to be bringing an African-American Juliet to schools, parks, and recreation centers around California when she joins the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival's upcoming tour of *Romeo and Juliet*.

BARBARA MONTGOMERY's many stage credits include *Beef No Chicken* at Yale Repertory Theater and *The Isle Is Full of*



Noises at the Hartford Stage Company (both by Nobel Prize winner Derek Walcott), *One Mo' Time* at the Arena Stage, *No Place To Be Somebody* at A Contemporary Theater in Seattle, *Oedipus Rex*

at the Coconut Grove Playhouse in Miami, *The Blacks* at the Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, and Steve Carter's *Eden* (Negro Ensemble Company), *Terraces* (Old Reliable), and *Nevis Mountain Dew* (Arena Stage). On Broadway she has appeared in *Raisin*, *Kennedy's Children*, *The First Breeze of Summer*, *The Tap Dance Kid*, *The Incent Black*, and *My Sister, My Sister*. Off-Broadway credits include innumerable productions at the New York Shakespeare Festival and *Macbeth* and *As You Like It* at La Mama E.T.C. She has performed in festivals from Spoleto, Italy, to Persia and has received an Obie Award for distinguished performance and three Audelco Awards. On television she has been seen in "Amen," "Married People," "Polly," "Polly One More Time," and "The Women of Brewster Place."



SUSAN PATTERSON's credits include two seasons with the California Shakespeare Festival, where she was seen as Silvia in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Celia in *As You Like It*, and Ophelia in *Hamlet*. She has also appeared at Berkeley Repertory Theater as Celia in *Volpone*, Marin Theater Company in the world premiere of *A Dream of Wealth*, and the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival as Hero in *Much Ado About Nothing*. She also has many television and film credits.



RENEE JOSHUA-PORTER, a native New Yorker, trained at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts and is a member of the Circle Repertory Laboratory in New York. She has toured nationally as the Lady in Purple in *For Colored Girls*, performing extensively off Broadway and at prisons and education centers.

She is currently at work on several independent films and television projects.



MARGARETTE ROBINSON's Bay Area acting credits include Fannie Fine in *The Roof's on Fire* directed by Ellen Sebastian for BRAVA! for Women in the Performing Arts; Mrs. Anderson in

Albert Takazaukas's production of *Love Diatribe* at the Magic Theater; Big Mama in *Shakin' the Mess Outta Misery* and Madame Morgan in the world premiere of *Go Down Garvey* (both directed by Anthony J. Haney for TheatreWorks); and performances in the Oakland Ensemble Theater productions of *The Colored Museum*, *The Sustahs*, and *Ain't Supposed to Die*, and in *Moon on a Rainbow Shawl*, *Home*, and *Zooman and the Sign* at the Lorraine Hansberry Theater. Regional credits include *Devotees in the Garden of Love* and *Procedure* at Actors Theater of Louisville. Robinson has been seen on the television series "Midnight Caller" and "Jesse Hawkes" and in the film *Street Music*. Most recently she was seen in the Eugene O'Neill series, *Four Plays of the Sea*, performed aboard the *C.A. Thayer*.



CHANELLE SCHAFFER made her mainstage debut as a featured vocalist in last season's *The Duchess of Malfi*. A graduate of A.C.T.'s Advanced Training Program and a Profes-

sional Theater Intern, Schaffer's studio credits include Sally in *A Lie of the Mind*, Ajax/Priam in *Tróilus and Cressida*, and Lyubov Ranevsky in *The Cherry Orchard*. Regionally, she has appeared as Joanne in *Godspell*, Marta in *Company*, Kate in *The Pirates of Penzance*, Queequeg in the American premiere of *Moby Dick* at Massachusetts Repertory Theater, and as a featured vocalist in *Sophisticated Ladies* at the Lorraine Hansberry Theater. Schaffer received a B.A. with distinction in music and social sciences from Stanford University. She has performed as a solo cabaret artist throughout the Bay Area, in Boston and Oslo, and at the Grand Hotel in Stockholm.

MICHAEL GENE SULLIVAN, making his A.C.T. debut with *Pecong*, is a veteran member of the Tony Award winning San



Francisco Mime Troupe. In addition to writing and directing for the Troupe, he has performed nationally and internationally in its productions of *Back to Normal*, *Social Work*, *Rats*,

Ripped Van Winkle, *I Ain't Yo Uncle*, as David and Selim in the Obie Award-winning *Seeing Double*, and as Rufus Napoleon Brown-Street Entrepreneur in last summer's critically acclaimed *Offshore*. As a longtime member of the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, his credits include Ferdinand in *The Tempest*, Fenton in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Amiens in *As You Like It*, and Cherubino in *The Marriage of Figaro*. Other regional credits include Daniel in *Once on This Island* and Valentine in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* at TheatreWorks, as well as appearances at the Lorraine Hansberry Theater (where he is Associate Artistic Director), Eureka Theater Company, Berkeley Shakespeare Festival, San Diego Repertory Theater, Oakland Ensemble Theater, Berkeley Repertory Theater, and San Jose Repertory Theater. Sullivan has also been seen off Broadway at the Kennedy Center, the Israel Theater Festival, and the Canadian Popular Theater Festival.

DULCE M. ARGUELLES (*Tres, Guitar, Cuatro, Percussion*), a native of Havana, Cuba, is a multi-instrumentalist who has performed and recorded in classical, Cuban, Latin jazz, and Latin American music. A recipient of a California Arts Council Folk Arts grant, she is also a multi-image producer and has designed soundtracks for award-winning productions. She is a founding member of Alta-zor, co-director of Combo Solar and Orquestra Sazón, and is also a member of Raices AfroCubana.

CAROLYN BRANDY (*Percussion, Violin*) is a Bay Area composer, performer, and teacher. She has toured nationally and recorded three albums with *Alive!*, the women's jazz group she co-founded. She has worked with notable artists such as Ed Kelly, Eddie Marshall, Faye Carol, Flora Purim and Aierto, and Paquito D'Rivera, among others. She was commissioned by CitiCelebration for *Skin Talk: An Ancestral Ballet of Women*, performed at the Palace of Fine Arts in 1990, and by the Redwood Cultural Work for *Skin Talk: Heart Beat of the Ancestors* in 1993. She has received grants from the California Arts Council and the Rockefeller Foundation and holds a

B.A. in music from Holy Names College.

MOZEL ZEKE NEALY (*Percussion*), originally from Florida, has studied African music and instrument making for the past twenty-five years with masters from Haiti, Cuba, Brazil, Senegal, and the Congo. He has toured with several leading Bay Area dance companies; worked with Kathleen Dunham, Dizzie Gillespie, Jean-Leon Destine, and Francis Ford Coppola; and taught in many public schools and universities.

GUILLERMO CESPEDES (*Tres, Guitar, Percussion*), is originally from Cuba. He is Musical Director of Conjunto Cespedes, a twelve-piece Afro-Cuban ensemble. A multi-instrumentalist, Cespedes is a California Arts Council artist-in-residence at La Peña Cultural Center. He teaches Afro-Cuban music in this country and in Spain.

DAVID FRAZIER (*Percussion*), a Bay Area percussionist, has performed in A.C.T.'s *Right Mind*, directed by George Coates, and in Coates's *Actual Show*. The many musicians he has worked with include Lonnie Hewitt, Martha Young, Joe Henderson, Idris Muhammed, and the band Raices AfroCubana. Frazier has recorded a self-titled album with Batimco, his Latin fusion band. He holds a B.S. in theological ethnomusicology from the New College of California.

JACKELINE RAGO (*Cuatro, Mandolin, Percussion*), a native of Venezuela, has studied Afro-Venezuelan music and folklore. She is a virtuoso multi-instrumentalist who initiated cuatro studies at the age of five and mandolin studies at the age of seven with Professor Angel Guanipa. She later continued mandolin studies with Ivan Adler at the Caracas Symphonic Orchestra Conservatory. In 1982 she came to the Bay Area to pursue her studies at the Music & Arts Institute of San Francisco, where she graduated in 1989 with a B.A. in music, majoring in classical mandolin. She has been director of several Afro-Venezuelan musical groups, including Campana and the contemporary world music group Manjo Jam, and is a member of the all-woman, Latin American, original-music group Altazor. From 1989 to 1992 she was an artist-in-residence of the California Arts Council at La Peña Cultural Center in Berkeley. Among the awards Rago has received are grants from the Rockefeller Foundation and a Bay Guardian Goldie Award. Last August she won first prize for acoustic guitar in the second annual Spitzers Music Contest in San Francisco.



PECONG DIRECTORS, DESIGNERS, AND STAFF

HALIFU OSUMARE (*Dance Coordinator, Cultural Consultant*) choreographed A.C.T.'s 1989 production of *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* and last season's *Miss Evers' Boys*. She is on the dance faculty at Stanford University and was Program Coordinator of Stanford's Committee on Black Performing Arts from 1986 to 1990. Recently she published *Black Choreographers Moving: A National Dialogue*, a book based on her experiences as the founding director of the annual three-city national dance festival, Black Choreographers Moving Toward the 21st Century (BCM). Osumare has worked as a solo dancer with the Rod Rodgers Dance Company of New York City, performed at Broadway's old ANTA Theater and Lincoln Center, taught at the University of Ghana in West Africa and the Ballet Academy of Stockholm, and is founder and former Artistic Director of CitiCentre Dance Theater (formerly Everybody's Creative Arts Center) in Oakland. Osumare is noted particularly as a director and choreographer of the works of poet and playwright Ntozake Shange. She directed Shange's *For Colored Girls* in 1987 at the Theater Arts Department of San Francisco State University and *From Okra to Greens — A Different Kinda Love Story* at the University of Mississippi in 1985 and choreographed *Spell #7* and *Boogie Woogie Landscape* at the Lorraine Hansberry Theater.

RICHARD W. BATTLE (*Costume Design*) trained at Wayne State University in Detroit and San Francisco State and is on the faculty of the Mills College drama department. His freelance design credits include *The Nutcracker* and *Hansel and Gretel* for the Oakland Ballet, and work for the Oakland Opera, Oakland Ensemble Theater, San Francisco Ballet, Lamplighters, and TheatreWorks.

WAYNE WALLACE (*Composer and Musical Director*), a trombonist, keyboardist, and vocalist, was educated at San Francisco State College and La Escuela de Artes in Havana, Cuba. As a composer, Wallace has worked with Santana, Sister Sledge, Tito Puente, Stacy Lattisaw, Lenny Williams, and many others. His recording, arranging, and performing credits include work with Chris Isaak, Klique, Narada Michael Walden, Cojunta Cespedes, Pearl Bailey, Eartha Kitt, Ray Charles, Natalie Cole, Gladys Knight, The Temptations, and The Smothers Brothers. Wallace has received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Zellerbach Foundation.

ALICE ELLIOTT SMITH (*Production Stage Manager*), who this season stage-manages *Pecong* and *Uncle Vanya*, is in her sixteenth season at A.C.T., where she has been the company's master scheduler, production coordinator of Plays in Progress, director of staged readings, associate director of the Troubadour program, director of the studio production *Ah Wilderness!*, and co-director of *Morning's at Seven*, *Picnic*, and the Plays in Progress production of *Rio Seco*. In recent seasons she has stage-managed *Private Lives*, *The Lady's Not for Burning*, *The Floating*

Light Bulb, *Faustus in Hell*, *A Lie of the Mind*, *Diamond Lil*, *Woman in Mind*, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, *Judevine*, *Hapgood*, *Burn This*, *Food and Shelter*, *Dark Sun*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *The Cocktail Hour*, *The Pope and the Witch*, *Antigone*, and *The Learned Ladies*. Smith is also Program Director for the Beckett Prison Project, producing the works of Samuel Beckett in maximum security prisons.

STEVEN LUKENS (*Assistant Stage Manager*) most recently finished his third season as Production Stage Manager for Encore Theater Company, where he worked on such shows as *Down the Road*, *Uncle Vanya*, and *Road to Nirvana*. He was also on the stage management staff for *Assassins* at the San Jose Civic Light Opera, and for *The Visit* and *Book of the Night* at the Goodman Theater in Chicago. He is a graduate of the theater department of Northwestern University.

WILFRED MARK (*Dance Consultant*) was educated at St. John's College in San Fernando, Trinidad and at the University of the West Indies in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad. He has taught dance and choreography at numerous schools and universities in Trinidad, England, and the United States. His credits include performances and choreographic work at the World Expo '88 in Australia, Lorraine Hansberry Theater, Wajumbe Cultural Ensemble, Trinidad Tesoro Dance Company, Derek Walcott Theater Company, and Trinidad and Tobago Southern Dance Company.

LUISAH TEISH (*Ritual Consultant, Spiritual Advisor*), author of *Jambalaya: The Natural Woman's Book of Personal Charms and Practical Rituals*, is a writer, performer, and ritualist. Born and raised in New Orleans, she is a priestess of Oshun, the Yoruba (West Africa) goddess of love, art, and sensuality. She is internationally known for her performances of African, Afro-Caribbean, and Afro-American folktales and won acclaim as Zora Neale Hurston in the multi-media production of *The Sanctified Church* by Ellen Sebastian. She has lectured on culture, spirituality, and women's myth and ritual, and has taught ritual dance, dance as meditation, and Katherine Dunham's technique. She has contributed poems, essays, interviews, and critiques to the *Yoga Journal*, *Shaman's Drum*, and *San Francisco Chronicle*, as well as to *This Bridge Called My Back*, *Homegirls*, *Take Back the Night*, *Cultures, Curers, and Contagion*, and *Shape-Shifters*. She has lived as a community activist in the San Francisco Bay Area for eighteen years.

MEG PATTERSON (*Assistant Director*) has been the casting director at San Jose Repertory Theater for the past four seasons, where she has cast more than twenty productions, assistant directed *The Innocents* and *The Master Builder*, and taught acting classes. Her directing credits include the Hillbarn Theater's current production of *Steel Magnolias* in Foster City, *The Guiltarón* at City Lights Theater in San Jose (chosen as one

of the ten best Bay Area plays of 1992 by the *San Jose Mercury News*), *Say Goodnight*, *Gracie* at Princeton Summer Theater (where she was Artistic Director in 1984), and U.C. Berkeley's *Tienanmen*. She was assistant director at the PepsiCo Summerfare International Festival, Seattle Repertory Theater, and Long Wharf Theater. Patterson is on the board of Theater Bay Area and is a member of the Task Force for Multicultural Theater. She has a B.A. in sociology and theater from Princeton University.

ABRAHAM CELAYA (*Directing Associate*) received an M.A. in philosophy from Oviedo University in his native Spain. He has studied *comedia dell'arte* with Fabio Mangolini, Topeng mask with I Made Djimat, and theater with Adela Escartin from Havana, Cuba, and Lucia Bensason and Erhard Stiefel from *Le Théâtre du Soleil* in Paris. An accomplished actor and singer, Celaya is now pursuing directing full time. He would like to thank Benny Ambush, A.C.T., and the cast of *Pecong* for this opportunity, and especially Mr. Slotemaker for making everything easy.

ELLEN NOVACK (*Casting Consultant*) affiliates with A.C.T. for a second season. She was the managing and/or casting director for CSC Repertory, Ltd. for six years and received Artios Award nominations for three plays she cast there: *Elektra*, *The Birthday Party*, and *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*. She has also cast more than twenty productions for the New York Shakespeare Festival and has worked at eighteen regional theaters. She cast the motion picture *Underheat*, starring Lee Grant, to be released in 1994. Her television credits include serving as casting director for NBC's "Another World" and co-casting the pilot "NYP Mounted" for CBS. She is currently the casting director for ABC's "One Life to Live," for which she won the 1992 Artios Award for best soap casting.

MERYL LIND SHAW (*Casting Director/Artistic Staff Associate*) joins the A.C.T. artistic staff after sixteen years as a regular in the Bay Area theater community, where she has stage-managed over sixty productions. Most recently, she stage-managed last season's *Bon Appetit!* and *Creditors* at A.C.T. She was Resident Stage Manager at Berkeley Repertory Theater for twelve years, Production Stage Manager at the Berkeley Shakespeare Festival for three seasons, and has stage-managed at the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, Eureka Theater, Alcazar Theater, and Center Stage in Baltimore. She directed *Willie and Marie* at the Julia Morgan Theater, and Joy Carlin in *The Belle of Amherst* for the U.C. Berkeley library, and has served as assistant or co-director for *The Sea* at Berkeley Repertory Theater, *The Cherry Orchard* at the Eureka Theater, *Bonjour, La! Bonjour* at the Berkeley Stage Company, and Bill Talen's *Rock Fables* at Intersection Theater. She has been active with Actors' Equity Association for many years and served on the A.E.A. negotiating committee for the recently adopted L.O.R.T. contract.

A.C.T. DIRECTORS, DESIGNERS, AND STAFF

CAREY PERLOFF (*Artistic Director*) assumed artistic leadership of A.C.T. in June 1992. Known for directing innovative productions of classics and new works adapted from or inspired by classical works and themes, Perloff opened her first season at A.C.T. with August Strindberg's *Creditors*, followed by Timberlake Wertenbaker's new translation of *Antigone*, and this season she directs a new translation of Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* by Paul Schmidt. Last May she staged the world premiere of Steve Reich and Beryl Korot's new music-theater-video opera *The Cave* at the Vienna Festival, Hebbel Theater in Berlin, and Royal Festival Hall in London; *The Cave* opens the Next Wave festival at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in October. Perloff served as Artistic Director of New York's CSC Repertory Ltd.-The Classic Stage Company from 1986 to 1992, where she directed the acclaimed world premiere of Ezra Pound's version of Sophocles' *Elektra* (with Pamela Reed and Nancy Marchand), the American premiere of Harold Pinter's *Mountain Language* (with Jean Stapleton and Peter Riegert) on a double bill with his *The Birthday Party*, Tony Harrison's *Phaedra Britannica*, Thornton Wilder's *The Skin of Our Teeth*, Lynne Alvarez's translation of Tirso de Molina's *Don Juan of Seville*, Michael Feingold's version of Alexandre Dumas' *The Tower of Evil*, Beckett's *Happy Days* (with Charlotte Rae), Brecht's *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* (with John Turturro), and Len Jenkins' *Candide*. Under her direction, CSC won the 1988 Obie Award for artistic excellence, as well as numerous Obies for acting, design, and production. Other New York credits include Kilburg Reedy's *Second Lady*; Terri Wagener's *The Man Who Could See Through Time*; *Leverage*, a musical theater/dance work created in collaboration with Max Rapkin and Ara Fitzgerald; Paula Cizmar's *Candy and Shelley Go to the Desert*; Sean O'Casey's *The Silver Tassie*; Brecht's *St. Joan of the Stockyards*; and the New York premiere of David Allen's Australian play *Cheapside*. In Los Angeles, she staged Pinter's *The Collection* at the Mark Taper Forum, winning a Drama-Logue Award for outstanding direction, and was Associate Director of Steven Berkoff's *Greek*, which won the Los Angeles Drama Critics' Circle Award for the best production of 1983. Her production of Ingebor Bachman's *The Good God of Manhattan* for Voices International (featuring Elizabeth McGovern) was broadcast on National Public Radio. Perloff received her B.A. (Phi Beta Kappa) in classics and comparative literature from Stanford University and was a Fulbright Fellow at Oxford University. She served on the faculty of the dramatic writing program at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts for years and taught acting and directing at NYU and at the Conservatory at CSC. She is the proud mother of Alexandra Perloff-Giles.

JOHN SULLIVAN (*Managing Director*) joined A.C.T. as its chief administrative and financial officer in 1986. A native San Franciscan, Sullivan has been active in the theater since the mid-1970s, when he directed Harvey Perr's *Afternoon Tea* for the Circle Repertory Company in New York. In 1977 he joined the staff of the Mark Taper Forum as a resident director and producer. As head of the Taper's Forum Laboratory he produced numerous new plays by such writers as David Mamet, Susan Yankowitz, and A.R. Gurney. More recently he produced *The Detective*, a collaboration between

Joseph Chaikin and Vaudeville Nouveau at San Francisco's Magic Theater. A former deputy director of the California Arts Council, Sullivan has served on the boards of Theater Bay Area and the San Francisco New Vaudeville Festival. He currently serves on the National Executive Committee of The League of Resident Theaters. After completing his graduate work at the University of Southern California's School of Cinema, Sullivan wrote and directed numerous short films for the educational and entertainment markets, including three that were featured on national Emmy Award broadcasts. For five years he was a consultant to the Rand Corporation, focusing his work on the process and societal impact of popular culture. As a communications consultant Sullivan has advised such diverse clients as the California Roundtable, Kansas City Power and Light, and Major League Rodeo. Among his writings is *The National Outdoor Leadership School's Wilderness Guide*, a manual for camping and mountaineering published by Simon and Schuster, and numerous articles for magazines and newspapers.

BENNY SATO AMBUSH (*Associate Artistic Director*) directed last season's *Miss Evers' Boys* at A.C.T., earning three Bay Area Theater Critics' Circle Awards, and this season directs *Pecong* and *Full Moon*. Before joining A.C.T. in 1990, he was the Artistic/Producing Director of the Oakland Ensemble Theater for eight years, where his directing credits included *Division Street*, *A Night at the Apollo*, *O. Henry's Christmas*, *Tamer of Horses*, and *Alterations*, which won a Drama-Logue Award for best direction. In 1991 he directed *Pigeon Egghead* in A.C.T.'s Plays in Progress Series, which inspired the creation of a Bay Area Native American theater company — Turtle Island Ensemble, now an A.C.T. project. He directed *Letters from a New England Negro* for the 1991 National Black Theater Festival in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and the 1992 International Theater Festival of Chicago, the only American entry. Recent credits include *Fences* for the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Portland, *Miss Evers' Boys* for the Alabama Shakespeare Festival, and *Out of Purgatory* for The Old Globe Theater in San Diego. He is a board member of Theater Communications Group (TCG) and has served as a National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Management Fellow; an Assistant Director-in-Residence at Washington, D.C.'s Arena Stage; an NEA Directing Fellow at the Pittsburgh Public Theater; a U.S. Information Agency (USIA)-sponsored lecturer to Kenyatta University in Nairobi, Kenya in 1987; and a USIA theater delegate to the U.S.S.R. in 1990. He has also served on the board of Theater Bay Area. An alumnus of Brown University, he received his M.F.A. in stage directing from the University of California, San Diego.

RICHARD SEYD (*Associate Artistic Director*) was appointed Associate Artistic Director of A.C.T. in 1992. He is a native of England, where he co-founded the Red Ladder Theater, England's first professional political theater collective, for which he acted, directed, and produced for seven years. In San Francisco, Seyd worked first with the Asian American Theater Workshop and the Moving Men Theater Company. He has received Drama-Logue and Bay Area Theater Critics' Circle Awards for his productions of *Cloud 9*, *About Face*, and *Noises Off*. As Associate Producing Director of the Eureka The-

ater Company, he directed *The Threepenny Opera*, *The Island*, and *The Wash*. He has directed the Pickle Family Circus in London; *Three High* with Geoff Hoyle, Bill Irwin, and Larry Pisoni at the Marins Memorial Theater; *A View from the Bridge* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* for Berkeley Repertory Theater; *As You Like It* for the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival; and *Unfinished Stories* for the Mark Taper Forum's New Play Series. He directed *The Learned Ladies* (with Jean Stapleton) for CSC Repertory, Ltd. in New York during the 1991-92 season, and directed *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as the opening production for the California Shakespeare Festival's new outdoor amphitheater in 1991. That year he also directed *Sarah's Story* at the Los Angeles Theater Center; *Born Yesterday* at Marin Theater Company; and *King Lear* at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Portland. Last season at A.C.T. he directed *The Learned Ladies* and the American premiere of Dario Fo's *The Pope and the Witch*, and concludes this season with the Bay Area premiere of David Mamet's *Oleanna*.

DENNIS POWERS (*Senior Editor & Professional Advisor*) joined A.C.T. in 1967, during the company's first San Francisco season, after six years as an arts writer at the *Oakland Tribune*. Before being named to his present position by Carey Perloff, he worked with William Ball and Edward Hastings as a writer, editor, and casting associate. The A.C.T. productions on which he has collaborated as dramaturg or adaptor include *Oedipus Rex*, *Cyranus de Bergerac*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *The Bourgeois Gentleman*, *King Richard III*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Saint Joan*, and *Diamond Lil*. The most popular of his adaptations, the eighteen-year-old *A Christmas Carol*, was written with Laird Williamson, who was also his collaborator on *Christmas Miracles*, which premiered at the Denver Center Theater Company in 1985 and was later published. Among the other theaters with which he has been associated are the Long Wharf Theater in New Haven, Stanford Repertory Theater, Pacific Conservatory of the Performing Arts, and San Francisco's Valencia Rose Cabaret Theater. Powers' reviews and articles have appeared in the *New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Saturday Review*, *Los Angeles Times*, *American Arts*, and *San Francisco Chronicle*.

JAMES HAIRE (*Production Director*) began his career on Broadway with Eva Le Gallienne's National Repertory Theater. Among the productions he stage-managed were *The Madwoman of Chailloit* (with Le Gallienne, Sylvia Sydney, and Leora Dana), *The Rivals*, *John Brown's Body*, *She Stoops to Conquer*, and *The Comedy of Errors*. Haire also stage-managed the Broadway productions of *Georgy* (a musical by Carole Bayer Sager), *And Miss Reardon Drinks a Little*, and the national tour of Woody Allen's *Don't Drink the Water*. Haire joined A.C.T. in 1971 as Production Stage Manager. In that capacity, he managed more than one hundred productions and took the company on numerous regional, national, and international tours. He assumed the position of Production Director in 1985.

STEPHEN LeGRAND (*Music and Sound*) is now in his eighth season as sound designer and composer for A.C.T. His work with the company has included musical compositions and/or sound design for

Continued on page P-23



PECONG'S MUSIC

continued from page P-3

to *Pecong*, by nature a mystical and enchanting play. Work on Steve Carter's retelling of the Medea myth (what Ambush calls "fusion" theater) began with a prodigious amount of research and input by a small army of local consultants, designers, and experts in various aspects of Caribbean life, from dance to African religious rituals. The initial challenge was to present a Caribbean setting that was not specific to any particular island, but nonetheless retained the area's wealth of spirituality, history, and folklore. Ambush cautions, "Our work with *Pecong* was not improvisation. We really had to go in search of a culture. With the magic of Carter's words already in place and a staggering volume of knowledge behind us, we could then start to shape the world of the play. It's kind of like a band jamming once they know how to play their instruments."

Jamming is more the department of *Pecong's* musical director and composer, Wayne Wallace. A Bay Area trombonist and keyboardist whose long list of musical credits includes work with Sheena Easton, Aretha Franklin, Whitney Houston, Chris Isaak, Tito Puente, and The Temptations, Wallace was enlisted by Ambush to investigate the world of calypso and pan-Caribbean rhythms and to compose *Pecong's* musical elements — what could be termed the play's twin language.

Using the early music of Trinidad as a point of departure (since calypso originated there), Wallace developed a cache of different rhythms to expand and experiment with once in rehearsal with the



*Bay Area musician Wayne Wallace adds calypso rhythms to the artistic mix as musical director of A.C.T.'s *Pecong*.*

musicians, dancers, and dance coordinator/cultural consultant Halifu Osumare. "I also took music from Martinique, Guyana, and other places in the Caribbean," says Wallace, "and listened for similarities to Cuban, Puerto Rican, and Venezuelan music, which I'm more familiar with. For example we used some music from Grenada that is very calypso-like, while for the Miedo Wood Island section of the play I found an African sound to fit its dark, more primitive atmosphere. We aimed for a hybrid of calypso and other borrowed styles."

"Getting familiar with the early Trinidadian styles took a little time," Wallace continues, "mostly because there aren't many recordings. You see, calypso began with untrained musicians — people who just played the music they felt. It wasn't until the early twentieth century that there were scholars who wrote down the

music and gave us a scientific definition of calypso."

Wallace describes calypso "as a relatively straightforward kind of folk music with usually three or four chords played either in four-four or six-eight time. It's a great mish-mash of many different Caribbean sounds that hasn't changed much since its beginning. And, like all slave music, it was defined, to a certain extent, by the repression of colonialism, because the slaves were forbidden to use drums and had to create instruments to get around that. Its emphasis has always been on the words, on rhythmic sensibilities. That's the beauty of the music's style: it mixes English, patois, French, and other languages all together. The early calypsonians wanted to master language and harness it — particularly as a weapon."

Wallace is quick to add that *Pecong* is — to borrow Ambush's term — a fusion of music, speech, and dance. "This is not like American musical theater's heavy reliance on songs as specific building blocks. Benny has got some truly fantastic, versatile, and accomplished artists working together to give this production its full punch."

Ambush concludes, "The telling brilliance of Steve's play is its willingness to extend a greeting toward the imagination, which is fertile and unfixed. At the same time, it's firmly rooted in the history and traditions of two different hemispheres and time periods." These qualities demand a combined approach of substantial left-brain research effort and right-brain creative free-fall. Which is just how Ambush likes to work anyway.

— Tim Fisher

MOTHER/WORD

continued from page P-13

ence, required a reexamination of black folk life for the sound and rhythms of the oral tradition...and a studied reacquaintance with the improvisational system of contemporary black classical music (so-called jazz). The poets, seminally influenced by Baraka, turned their ears toward the spontaneity of Charlie "Yardbird" Parker, the lyricism of Smokey Robinson, the tonal shifts and modulations of a Betty "Bebop" Carter scat song, the driving force of utterance and rhyth-

mic repetition produced by James Brown, and the sustained, relentless, incantatory power generated by John Coltrane. Secular evocation of spirit was clearly apparent in black music, paving the way for the poets of the sixties — such as Baraka, Larry Neal, Ted Joans, Henry Dumas, Sonia Sanchez, and the original Last Poets — to explore the use of musical techniques in language. These same techniques would later appear in the new dramaturgy of black playwrights, finally rescuing black theater from the predictable, facile presentation of the black experience held hostage by realism.

Paul Carter Harrison is a playwright-in-residence and professor in the Theater/Music department of Columbia College, Chicago. He has written The Drama of Nommo (a collection of essays examining the retention of Africanisms in the American experience) and edited Kuntu Drama (an anthology of African diaspora plays). The above article is excerpted from Professor Harrison's introductory essay in Totem Voices: Plays from the Black World Repertory. A.C.T. is proud to host Professor Harrison as a participant in Oral Traditions Old and New: Pecong and The Cultural Roots of New World Literary Forms, the second program of A.C.T. Perspectives, a series of public symposia funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities Division of Public Programs.



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DIRECTORS, DESIGNERS, AND STAFF

continued from page P-19

Creditors, The Pope and the Witch, Miss Evers' Boys, Antigone, Dinner at Eight, Good, Charley's Aunt, Taking Steps, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, The Marriage of Figaro, The Seagull, and Faustus in Hell. He wrote the music for *A Lie of the Mind, Saint Joan*, and *Hapgood* with his collaborator, Eric Drew Feldman, with whom he has received awards for their scores for *The Lady's Not for Burning* at A.C.T., *The Tooth of Crime* and *The Rivals* at Berkeley Repertory Theater, and *Fen* for the Eureka Theater Company. LeGrand's work has included scores for *Yankee Dawg You Die* at Berkeley Repertory Theater and the Los Angeles Theater Center, *Lulu* and *Fuente Ovejuna* for Berkeley Repertory Theater, and music for *The Wash* at the Mark Taper Forum.

KATE EDMUNDS (*Set Design*) has designed *Antigone* and *Hamlet* for A.C.T., and her design for Holly Near's *Fire in the Rain...Singer in the Storm* was recently seen at the Stage Door Theater. For Berkeley Repertory Theater, she has designed *Private Lives, The Lady from the Sea, Dream of a Common Language, Major Barbara, The Winter's Tale, Fuente Ovejuna*, and *Twelfth Night*. For the past fifteen years she has designed throughout the United States at a wide range of major regional theaters. In New York, she has worked both on and off Broadway, designing the American premieres of Brian Friel's *Translations* and Christopher Hampton's *The Philanthropist*, as well as productions at the Manhattan Theater Club, Second Stage, Village Gate, and Roundabout. For three seasons she served as designer-in-residence at the O'Neill Playwriting Conference. Edmunds studied at Wayne State University and the Yale School of Drama and is a lecturer in scene design at U.C. Berkeley.

PETER MARADUDIN (*Lighting Designer*) returns to A.C.T. after designing the lighting for last season's *Antigone* and *The Learned Ladies*. He designed the lighting for the Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Kentucky Cycle* and *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* on Broadway, and lit the off-Broadway production of *Bouncers*. For regional theater he has designed over 130 productions in the last nine years for such companies as The Guthrie Theater, Kennedy Center, Mark Taper Forum, La Jolla Playhouse, Seattle Repertory Theater, San Diego's Old Globe Theater, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, South Coast Repertory, Repertory Theater of St. Louis, Indiana Repertory Theater, and Denver Center Theater Company. Maradudin has designed frequently in the Bay Area, lighting *The Lady from the Sea, Mad Forest, Fuente Ovejuna, Serious Money, A View from the Bridge*, and *Long Day's Journey into Night* for Berkeley Repertory Theater, as well as *The Master Builder* and *Oedipus* for San Jose Repertory Theater. He has received three Los Angeles Drama Critics' Circle Awards, a San Diego Theater Critics' Circle Award, nineteen Drama-Logue Awards, and an Angstrom Award for lifetime achievement in lighting design.

JENNY-KING TURKO (*Wigmaster*) is proud to be part of a long tradition of wigmakers and makeup artists in the Bay Area, having apprenticed under the auspices of the San Francisco Opera. After receiving her training she went on to work for Theatrical Hairgoods Company, several regional theater and opera companies, the New York City Opera national company, and the international tour of *Einstein on the Beach*.



FOR YOUR INFORMATION

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES

A.C.T.'s administrative and Conservatory offices are located at 30 Grant Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94108. (415) 834-3200.

BOX OFFICE INFORMATION

A.C.T.'s Central Box Office

Location: 405 Geary Street at Mason, next to the Geary Theater, one block west of Union Square.

Box Office Hours: 12 p.m. - 8 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday; 12 p.m. - 6 p.m. Sunday and Monday.

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Box Offices at the Stage Door Theater, Marines Memorial Theater, and Orpheum Theater: Full-service box offices will be open 90 minutes before each performance in these venues.

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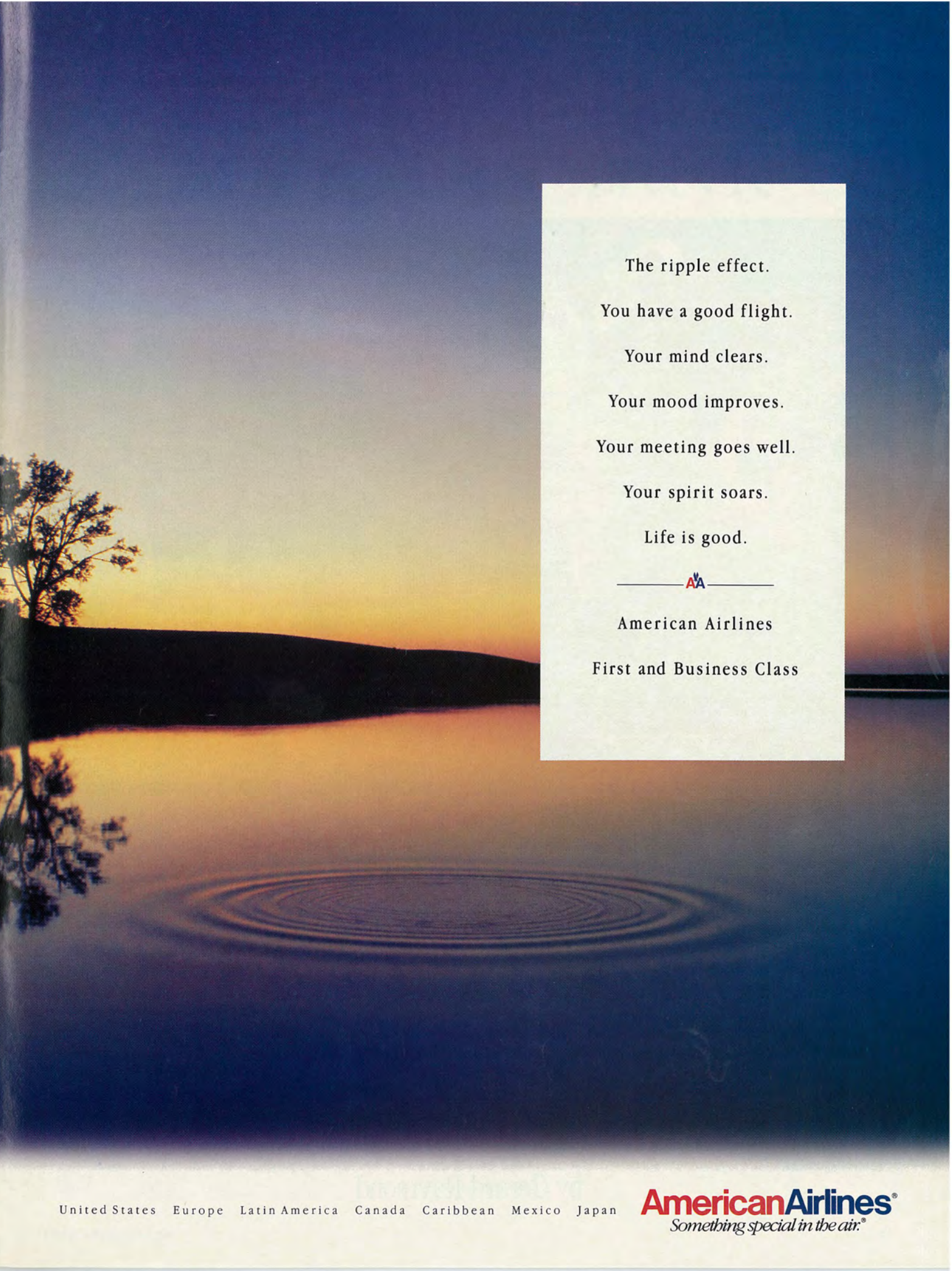
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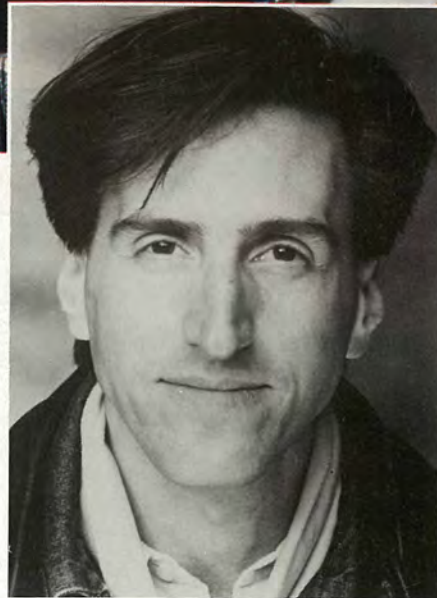
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All About Paul

Rudnick's hit play Jeffrey wows audiences out West



WILLIAM GIBSON/MARTHA SNOPE ASSOC.



Playwright Paul Rudnick lives in a small Greenwich Village brownstone, in an apartment that once belonged to the actor John Barrymore. We could talk about Barrymore if there is a lull in the conversation, I think to myself as I climb to the top floor to interview Rudnick. But conversation with Paul Rudnick doesn't flag. He is never at a loss for a pithy one-liner or a clever *bon mot*. Imagine a Woody Allen with a gym body, a Woody Allen who is gay. Check out Rudnick's new play, *Jeffrey* at the Westwood Playhouse in Los Angeles

Gerard Raymond is a veteran theater writer based in New York.

and Theatre on the Square in San Francisco, and the you'll see what I mean.

A runaway hit since it opened in New York at the beginning of this year, *Jeffrey* is a comedy about a young, gay man who

vows to give up sex because of AIDS. In a series of sketches, the celibate hero scurries nervously through contemporary gay Manhattan trying to run away from sex, love and commitment until he falls in love with an HIV-positive man. Part screwball comedy, part romance, part wicked satire, *Jeffrey* is an attempt to come to terms with the plague through laughter.

Who is this man who challenges us to laugh in the face of AIDS? The apartment I have just walked into reflects a decidedly eccentric taste. I figure it's a good place to start. "I saw this ad in *The New York Times* which said 'medieval duplex,' and the real estate agent said Barrymore lived there in 1917," Rudnick

Above: Members of the original New York cast of *Jeffrey*. Inset: The playwright, Paul Rudnick.

by Gerard Raymond

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Left to right: Patrick Kerr, Edward Hibbert, and John Michael Higgins at L.A.'s Westwood Playhouse in the roles they created in the New York production of Jeffrey.

tells me as I take in his living room, a snug garret crammed with antiques and Victoriana. "Because I am a student of the theater and a real estate romantic, I fell in love with the place immediately. It was my childhood fantasy of Greenwich Village life."

Barrymore had named the apartment "Alchemist's Corner." Now, as Rudnick himself says smiling, it looks like a stage set for a murder mystery in summer stock. There are old portraits on the walls and every available table top is cluttered with candlesticks and lamps. Heavy ungainly objects, like the wooden mantelpiece, predominate. If you said junk, I suspect he'll cheerfully agree with you. Some of the pieces, Rudnick says, are genuine antiques, but he goes for mood rather than for authenticity. "When I lie on the couch with a legal pad, desperate to avoid writing, I can look up and see a kind of furniture parade." I had to ask about the centerpiece of his living room, an ornately carved throne. "It's a real test actually," he replies laughing. "When people come in they either shy away from it or they head right for it. My mother immediately sat on it."

* * *

You won't find clues to Rudnick's wildly theatrical personality in his child-

hood. He was born thirty-six years ago in the suburbs — Piscataway, New Jersey, to be specific. According to him, New Jersey is like a "mass day-care center", a "holding pad" with malls and lakes, designed to coddle children. He had a happy and untroubled childhood in Piscataway. "The people were very kind, but I knew they were only feeding and clothing me until the people in New York came to get me."

When it was time to go to college Rudnick chose Yale over Harvard, because Cole Porter went to Yale. Harvard, according to Rudnick, prepares people to become President of the United States, whereas at Yale one learns to play the piano and mix a martini. Never mind that Yale produced George Bush, that, Rudnick says, was an aberration. "Going to Yale was like being in a Broadway show out of town. Eventually you would be moved to New York where you would be a hit!"

Rudnick moved to his dream city in 1979, and although his Broadway debut was still over a decade away, he was finally in his element. He says he met many people with no money and no access, all trying for the same life that he wanted. "There was a wonderful sense of community — the gay community and the arts community." At Yale he

had met two kindred spirits, playwright Wendy Wasserstein and costume designer William Ivey Long, who in time, were also going to make it big on Broadway. They remain his close friends today.

When he was growing up, Rudnick's parents had tried to impress on him the value of the dollar and the importance of hard work. Their efforts backfired. The young Rudnick had become convinced that he would "rather die" than have a job. Of course, this severely limited his options in the real world. "I couldn't be an heir to a great fortune because of my parent's selfishness — their refusal to be Rockefellers," he quips. Supporting himself with various odd jobs, Rudnick decided that the only profession left open to him was writing.

He tried his hand at journalism, but his wild imagination almost got him into trouble. "I would do interviews and if the person wasn't saying anything that was interesting or pithy — no fabulous quote or great sentence — I would think one up!" Realizing that this was a bad habit for a reporter, he turned to fiction and the theater. Now he could invent as he pleased, borrowing from real life whenever necessary.

His first play, *Poor Little Lambs*, a quirky comedy about a woman who tries to break into the Whiffenpoofs, Yale's all-male singing group, was produced off-Broadway in 1982. Starring the then-unknown Kevin Bacon and Bronson Pinchot, it generated enough interest to bring it to the attention of Hollywood, although a movie never materialized. Two very funny novels followed: *Social Disease*, which was published in 1986, is a satirical take on the New York club scene featuring a young man who has never done a day's work in his life (sounds familiar?); *I'll Take It* (1989), is about a group of compulsive shoppers, inspired by Rudnick's mother and two aunts.

In due course, Rudnick's historic apartment became grist to his creative mill. In his 1991 play, *I Hate Hamlet*, a young soap star who is playing Hamlet in Central Park, moves into, where else? Barrymore's apartment in the Village. No wonder that throne looks familiar, I realize, as we sit talking. I had seen it on stage in *I Hate Hamlet*. Needless to say,

Rudnick had to improve on real life. In his play, the ghost of the celebrated thespian suddenly materializes in his former apartment to give the soap star some pointers in the classical acting tradition.

With *I Hate Hamlet*, Rudnick finally got his name up in lights on a Broadway marquee, but it turned out to be a very bizarre experience. Talking about it now, Rudnick sees the humor of the whole episode, and I'll bet it will show up someday in one of his literary confessions. What happened was that Nicol Williamson, the British actor playing Barrymore in *I Hate Hamlet*, apparently didn't like the play. He made up his own



John Michael Higgins created the role of Jeffrey in the New York production.

lines and made unscheduled exits during his scenes. When, on one occasion, he attacked another actor with a sword, it made headlines in the local tabloids. Rudnick's Broadway debut was effectively upstaged, and the show closed abruptly.

"People told me, 'Oh Paul, this will be a wonderful chapter for your memoirs,' and I wondered if they said that to the people getting out of the lifeboats from the Titanic," says Rudnick with a laugh. In fact the debacle actually helped his career as a writer. He found himself with work offers for both stage and screen,

and the play has since been produced all over the world. Two years later the playwright was back with his most successful work to date.

So we get to *Jeffrey*. I ask Rudnick, who has been openly gay from the beginning of his career, about the significance of him writing on a gay theme. "I always had gay characters, but this is the first time that I took the community as a whole subject," he replies. He says he also wanted to celebrate the "theatrically rich group" afforded by the gay community. "It's an extra plus when you are speaking to people about their immediate concerns." But, I point out, no one had quite presented the health crisis in these terms before. In the play's most quoted lines, a character says "think of AIDS as the guest who won't leave, the one we all hate. It's still our party." Rudnick agrees that his approach was unusual, and speculates that *Jeffrey* could not have been written in the first decade of the AIDS crisis. "Now there are all these questions, aside from the medical ones, about how we live with this particular nightmare, and especially how we achieve any kind of romance or hope for good simple cheer with this stuff going on."

In an article he wrote for *The New York Times* shortly after *Jeffrey* opened, Rudnick acknowledged that making wisecracks about AIDS could be viewed as being in the worst, possible taste. But, he wrote, AIDS is not the end of gay life or gay laughter. "If people can't giggle in hospitals or at memorials, all they can do is weep." There are no sacred cows in *Jeffrey*. Rudnick pokes fun at AIDS fundraisers, self-help gurus and memorial services at which guys cruise each other.

Rudnick tells me that he was very gratified when friends who were sick responded positively to his play. "Most of the people with AIDS refuse to see themselves as victims. Sometimes other people, even with the best of intentions, tend to pigeonhole those with AIDS, [reducing them to] just a red ribbon. They certainly deny PWAs a romantic life, treating them as if their lives were limited, as if they were already dead." Rudnick confesses that he enjoyed standing at the back of the theater to

gauge how the play was doing. Audiences in New York, both gay and straight, respond to the play with whoops of laughter, and most of the city's critics concur that *Jeffrey* is the funniest play in town.

Rudnick believes that the "essential romantic comedy dilemma" of our time is one of love and sex in the age of AIDS; *Jeffrey* is probably the first old-fashioned romantic comedy in which an HIV positive person falls in love. True to its romantic inclinations, the play begins with slides of Manhattan accompanied by Gershwin music and ends with a couple on the top of the Empire State building, kissing against a cardboard skyline and a big cartoon moon. It's your standard boy meets boy, boy loses boy, boy gets boy back story. And it takes place in the Manhattan the young Rudnick dreamt about growing up in New Jersey. "I wanted the play to have this fairy tale romance in the center of it and I wanted to use Manhattan for its enchantment in the way Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers and Woody Allen have used it."

But there are detractors. I remind Rudnick that even while finding the play funny, some people have questioned his use of age-old gay stereotypes: an interior decorator and his simple-minded chorus-boy lover; a randy, gay, Catholic priest; a caterer and a bartender. For the first time in our conversation he doesn't come up with a wisecrack, this is obviously a criticism that galls him. He defends himself arguing that it is "exhilarating" to write from a gay perspective those same characters that might have been token figures twenty years ago. "If you are writing from the inside, you find that they are very full human beings and have genuine strength," he says, warming to the subject.

"I think those people — the interior designers, florists, costume designers, pet groomers, and others who every one thinks of as the silliest of sissies — they are the ones who have done most of the marching, most of the protesting and they define the gay world," Rudnick continues. "To suddenly ignore them or act as if they were the Uncle Toms or Aunt Jemimas of our world is shocking to me. I wonder at those critics who seem to

prefer gay characters who are as straight as possible. That's a far more vicious stereotype — a kind of bland, middle-of-the-road, all-American decency. If I was a straight person I would be offended to be portrayed as that dull! So I think asking to have gays shown as such straight arrows is just a big mistake. And it sure isn't funny."

I decide to go a step further and ask Rudnick whether *Jeffrey* might be so popular because it is safe. Is a hit because a general audience only sees gay people as jesters? "In most gay projects there tends to be that moment where there is a soap opera chord or a drum roll and you see two men kissing



Harriet Harris plays *Woman in Bed*, *Showgirl*, *Ann Marwood Bartle*, *Debra Moorhouse*, *Sharon Mom*, and *Mrs. Marcangelo* in *Jeffrey*.

or having sex. One of the things I wanted with *Jeffrey* was to have the guys kissing within the first five seconds. There is so much open sexuality and gay romance in the play, so that far from saying we are harmless jesters, it says we are completely sexual, powerful, and very funny people. I don't think that's safe. I think it's more subversive. Because it is funny, people are disarmed and almost accept it without knowing. I haven't been to many plays about wild optimistic gay romances, and I am very pleased to have written one."

However you read *Jeffrey*, the bottom

line is that it *is* funny. Like the playwright himself. I have only to ask my next question and Rudnick is bubbling again. I mention the recent revelations that Libby Waxman-Gelmer, film critic-at-large for *Premiere* magazine is none other than our playwright. Mrs. Waxman-Gelmer's regular columns, with her idiosyncratic film reviews peppered with caustic comments about movie stars and anecdotes about her family and gay friends, are the comic highlight of the magazine. "She is a goddess, a wonderful and distinct creature and I am but a humble manservant," Rudnick exclaims. "I don't see why she should be tagged with the burden of being identified with this hack gay writer, when she is clearly a prose stylist far beyond my gifts," he carries on.

Even if he claims he's not in Goddess Libby's league, Rudnick's fame has spread to Hollywood. His first effort there however, was not a success. He wrote the original script for *Sister Act*, but it was junked when Whoopi Goldberg came on board replacing Bette Midler. He also did some uncredited revisions on *The Addams Family*. But with the sequel, *Addams Family Values* opening this Thanksgiving, Rudnick will come into his own as a screenwriter. It's easy to see how Rudnick the ex-suburbanite must have enjoyed chronicling this most unwholesome of American families. "The parents are permissive, the children are outrageous, the house is a deliriously happy wreck, and no one is ever punished," he says gleefully.

We are running out of time now, so I ask Rudnick about his next project. It's a new play due summer 1994, but he tells me he won't talk about it this early for fear of jinxing it. I subsequently learn that it's titled *The Naked Truth* and focuses on a New York socialite who wants to shut down a gallery because it is exhibiting allegedly obscene photographs. As I leave Rudnick's apartment, I realize that journalists who interview this playwright won't need to make up things about their subject. For the past one and a half hours he has given me the Paul Rudnick Show, and there were just about as many laughs here as there are in *Jeffrey*. □

WILLIAM GIBSON/MARTHA SNOPE ASSOC.

Touting Toronto

Arts Abound to the North

The 200th anniversary in July of Toronto's founding as a city on the north shore of Lake Ontario whizzed by with little local exuberance. But then Torontonians tend to be almost blasé, even jaded, about most things — except when the Blue Jays win the World Series.

They appear to take the city's infinite variety of pleasures for granted, because taken together, such delights would ordinarily inspire the most irksome kind of boasting, at home or abroad. They don't usually boast about the city.

The Greater Toronto Area is Canada's

Albert Warson is a Canada-based writer.



MICHAEL LE POER TRENCH

largest — population 3.5 million — and most cosmopolitan city (the United Nations designated Toronto as the world's most ethnically-diverse city in 1989). Sheer size and ethnicity make for the human dynamics; progressive municipal governments and resigned taxpayers (no proposition 13s here) have done the rest.

Toronto is traversed by an efficient and safe transit system, is kept squeakily clean and relatively safe, parks everywhere, with a wonderful waterfront and is endlessly fascinating because of cultural/culinary crosscurrents.

It also offers one of the richest cultural/entertainment mixtures in North Amer-



METROPOLITAN TORONTO CONVENTION & VISITORS ASSOCIATION

The Toronto skyline is dominated by the CN Tower, tallest freestanding structure on earth. Inset: The spectacular hit Miss Saigon at the magnificent new Princess of Wales Theatre which has one of the largest stages in North America.

by Albert Warson



3 million visitors from outside the Greater Toronto Area fill many of those seats every year, perhaps a third of them from the United States.

While Americans tend to gravitate to hit productions from Broadway or London's West End, they should also notice that Canadian playwrights are busy at their craft. More than two-thirds of Toronto's productions in the 1991-1992 season were in fact premieres of original Canadian plays. American visitors have the choice of familiar productions. Or they can be somewhat more adventurous and see Canadian drama, comedy and musicals that illuminate the national psyche, even if some of the humor and dialogue can turn mystifyingly parochial at times.

Two new theaters opening in Toronto within five months of one another are something to celebrate. One of them is the 2,000-seat Princess of Wales Theatre, built specifically to mount a \$12 million flashily spectacular *Miss Saigon* — outside of New York and Chicago the only other place to see it in North America.

It is set to run for at least two years from its opening last May. Whether it is *Madame Butterfly* revisited or the real Puccini opera, the stage is one of the largest on this continent (60 feet deep and 85 feet wide), cavernous enough for grand opera and the pit deep enough for a 75-piece orchestra. Even with those expanses, no seat is further than 85 feet from the stage. Co-producer Cameron Mackintosh describes the theater as "something more than a pastiche of old Victorian buildings". They are, he added, "the modern equivalent of great old-fashioned theaters".

Having bought, restored, renovated and operated the 1,500-seat Edwardian gem of a Royal Alexandra Theatre a few doors away for the past 30 years and the 1,000-seat Old Vic Theatre in London for the past 10 (after outbidding Andrew Lloyd Webber), proprietor/impresarios Ed Mirvish and his son David are too performance-wise for the stage to be dark very long. There is after all, a \$22 million investment in the theater to recoup and their reputation as wildly successful entrepreneurs to preserve.

David Mirvish's previous incarnation



Clockwise from upper left: Toronto's 55,000-seat fully retractable-roofed SkyDome, home of the Blue Jays; Eaton Centre; The Art Gallery of Ontario with a collection of 15,000 paintings and the world's largest collection of Henry Moore sculptures; Futuristic Toronto City Hall.

ica. If dining is entertainment, the city's 5,000 restaurants alone entertain diners whose tastes run to everything from "American" to West Indian.

In a more traditional cultural sense, there is The Royal Ontario Museum, one of the continent's five most popular museums, and other museums, 100 music venues and a like number of art galleries and exhibition spaces, including the recently expanded Art Gallery of Ontario, with a collection of 15,000 paintings and the world's largest collection of Henry Moore sculpture, along with an Ontario Science Centre, a genuine British-style castle — the list is long and varied.

The city's cosmopolitan flavor has not escaped the notice of movie and television producers. Toronto is second only to Hollywood and New York for film location (also doubling for Boston, New York,

Tokyo, Washington, Chicago, Philadelphia, Vienna and Tehran) and commercial production in North America. The Festival of Festivals in September is the second largest film festival in the world, although the volume is no guarantee of unforgettable moments, even for the most enthusiastic cineastes.

After London and New York, Toronto has the world's largest theater industry in the English-speaking world. It numbers more than 120 companies and 22,000 theater seats in 44 venues (compared to two live theaters in 1962).

They range from sometimes uncomfortable but ingeniously converted fire-halls, factories and Victorian mansions, church spaces, faithfully restored vaudeville houses and Dorothy Chandler-like complexes. Often the theater is brilliant. Just as often it is tolerable. Too often it is execrable. A bit of research, not excluding picking up *The Globe* and *Mail* for the best theatrical criticism, doesn't hurt.

Whatever the theater venue, the market has to be bigger than the immediate area for them to survive. It is. More than



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as an art gallery owner is recalled dramatically in the more than 10,000 square feet of original mural painting by Frank Stella (whom he represented) lavished on the lobbies. His swirling, color-field abstract murals also illuminate the auditorium ceiling dome and enliven the exterior of the 120 foot high fly tower backing on to a drab streetscape. They reflect, says Stella "the way people mill around...bustling and active, like a crowd."

The least visible, most dynamic aspect of the theater is a room chock-full of computer-driven, high tech wizardry that, for this show, activates 70 special effects, 250 prop changes and 410 lighting instruments culminating in the iconographic helicopter landing and takeoff simulation. Visually and dynamically the production owes more to the

bells and whistles staging of the London original than the one on Broadway. Of the acoustics, the musical's composer Claude-Michel Schonberg enthused: "You never know why you have a sound like that. The Opera Bastille in Paris doesn't have it. It's a miracle."

No less miraculous is the Mirvish knack for bringing successful productions, often Broadway musicals, to their Royal Alexandra stage. *Five Guys Named Moe* (to November 6) and *Crazy For You* (December 3 to January 22, 1994), are no exception.

The two "royal" theaters are engulfed within those two blocks in restaurants seating thousands of diners in search of the most familiar and least exotic cuisines. The Mirvishes' neighborhood presence is fortified by their seating for 2,400 diners in 10 flamboyant dining rooms on five floors in two buildings. Some of Toronto's more gastronomically appealing restaurants are at hand, as are CN Tower, tallest freestanding structure on earth, and the 55,000-seat fully retractable-roofed SkyDome, both of which loom overpoweringly a few

blocks away. With landmarks like that, it is well nigh impossible to miss the theaters and restaurants.

As if Toronto didn't have enough to gloat over with the glitzy new Princess of Wales Theatre, the \$50 million North York Performing Arts Centre is opening this month, almost exactly due north and several miles away in the adjoining suburban city of that name. It's on Yonge Street, Toronto's main street (and the world's longest street, which ends, curiously enough, in North Dakota).

The 1,800-seat theater opens October 5 with Harold Prince's resurrection of *Showboat*, the interracial musical by Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II, that has occasioned some local controversy over the opening "niggers all work on the Mississippi" etc. lyrics. Needless to say, there have been changes, although Jerome and Oscar might have been puzzled about the uproar over racial intolerance they were trying to expose.

Not to be cast into any cultural shadows, the Centre's single-balcony, 1,000-seat recital hall will be inaugurated November 22, 1993 with a special gala performance by lyric soprano and opera Diva Dame Kiri Te Kanawa. The following evening, Itzhak Perlman and Pinchas Zukerman, in a rare duo performance, will launch an overlapping series of concerts to mid-June 1994.

They are of an international diversity and celebrity unprecedented in Toronto's history. Roy Thomson Hall, Toronto's premier, 2,800-seat concert hall established in 1981 and home to the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, looks to be seriously upstaged, but has a 1993/94 season of its own nonetheless. Toronto's classical music menu over the next several months is going to be exceptionally filling and exceedingly rich.

While the City of North York owns the Centre, it is operated by The Live Entertainment Corporation of Canada, headed by Garth Drabinsky, who previously ran Cineplex Odeon Corporation and built its 200-movie theaters across North America. His archrivalry of the Mirvishes peaked when they beat him to the rights for *Miss Saigon*.

Drabinsky's Livent, as it's known, spent \$20 million restoring the turn-of-

Clockwise from upper left: *Half of the world's only stacked theater*; the 1,000-seat Winter Garden sits atop the 1,500-seat Elgin; The new \$22 million Princess of Wales Theatre which opened with *Miss Saigon*; Ontario Place is home to the world's first IMAX theater; Roy Thompson Hall, home to the Toronto Symphony Orchestra.



COURTESY METROPOLITAN TORONTO CONVENTION & VISITORS ASSOCIATION

the-century 2,200-seat Pantages Theatre, also on Yonge Street but right downtown where Toronto originated, to its original luster. He has consoled himself with the spectacularly successful *Phantom of the Opera* that opened at the Pantages in September 1989 and closes at the end of this month, and *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, the Livent production that swept up theatrical awards in Canada and the United States.

About a block south on Yonge Street are the world's only stacked theaters. The 1,500-seat Elgin, all burgundy and gold leaf formality, is at ground level; the 1,000-seat Winter Garden, rustically done up with trees, trellises and real leaves — is on top. They were restored over two years at a cost of \$29 million and opened in 1989, with a Canadian version of *Cats*. The cultural fare is truly eclectic — from smaller scale Canadian Opera Company productions (operas sung in Italian, German, Czech, French, all with English surtitles, (from November 4 to February 12, 1994) to a new musical based on Napoleon's life in that venue, opening in March. Details however, are still sketchy.

The opera company's main courses can be sampled at the 3,200-seat O'Keefe Centre, more variety show/music hall than opera house, near historic Union Station and Royal York Hotel, both worth a quick look for magnificent restoration and synergistic function. *Carmen* (to October 9), *Madame Butterfly*, *La Traviata* (in April, 1994) interspersed with other standards from the operatic repertoire will be performed.

With vampiric themes enjoying such considerable vogue these days, the opera company is staging the world premiere of *Nosferatu*, a.k.a. *Dracula* (December 8 to 12, 1993) at another venue, and without Gary Oldman. Then there is the Opera in Concert production of *Der Vampyr* (February 5 and 6) at the St. Lawrence Theatre next door to the O'Keefe Centre, for those not yet sated with the perverse theme of the blood-sucking "undead".

Speaking of the undead, until the recessionary stake driven into the heart of the proposed new \$40 million ballet/opera house is removed, the National

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Ballet of Canada continues to share the O'Keefe Centre stage with the opera. A new production of *La Sylphide* and Balanchine's *Four Temperaments* (November 17 to 24, 1993) will be followed immediately by two performances from the Royal Winnipeg Ballet's repertoire, then back to the National Ballet's *Coppelia* (February 9 to 13), *Onegin* (February 23 to 27) and *Sleeping Beauty* (April 27 to May 15) before the company's world premiere of a ballet by



OTTLA VON TIEDEMAN



JANE EDMONDS

Top: Eric Donkin as Ko-Ko, Lord High Executioner, and Juan Chioran as Pooh-Bah in the Stratford Festival production of Gilbert & Sullivan's *The Mikado*. Above: Stratford's Festival Stage.

choreographer Glen Tetley and *Time Out With Lola* (May 4 to 8).

For sheer terpsichorean breadth, Toronto is the dance performance capital of Canada, with all due respect to Montreal, whether it's classical, modern, jazz, ethnic or experimental. And for all the different places to see it, there is probably nothing better for visitors than

to head for the Premiere Dance Theatre at Queen's Quay Terminal on the city's central waterfront.

The season started in October with the Toronto Dance Theatre, the country's most admired modern dance company. Peggy Baker, former lead dancer with Mikhail Baryshnikov's White Oak Dance Project performs in November, followed by dance events every month, including the Muntu Dance Theatre's African presentation in February, and concluding May 8 with Grupo Corpo's final performance of Mozart's *Orphanage Mass*.

There are other reasons to go to the Premiere Dance Theatre. It was designed specifically for dance performances, hence the name, for one thing. No improvised, rigid stage floor here. A 1950s-era rebuilt streetcar line stops practically at the front door, although there is abundant parking nearby.

More to the point, it's in a warehouse building magnificently restored by Toronto architect Eberhard Zeidler, whose firm designed Ontario Place, the nearby manmade, 56-acre lake front park/amusement center that houses the world's first IMAX theater. Queen's Quay Terminal restaurants are adequate to stave off hunger; consumerist thirsts can be slaked on two shopping levels catering to discerning shoppers. Views of the inner harbor, boat traffic, sea gulls and the chain of Toronto Islands are mesmerizing.

It's also a short walk along the idyllic waterfront to Harbourfront's international authors' readings in the fall. Canada's largest antique marketplace waits in ambush across the street. Open every day, it offers the pleasant diversion of browsing through a tantalizing selection of silver, jewelry, clothing, memorabilia, furniture, bric-a-brac and the usual flea market kind of stuff. Toronto in fact abounds with shops that cover virtually every period of antiquity (heavy on English and European) and most countries.

And if there is time, the Stratford Festival, where Shakespeare's plays and others, continue to enthrall, and the Shaw Festival, the world's only repertory company devoted to George Bernard Shaw's plays, among the work of other play-



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wrights, are each about a 90-minutes' drive from Toronto in superb theaters and bucolic settings.

Depending on the weather, there are few things more relaxing than to watch the swans gliding along the Avon River (naturally) in Stratford's lovely park before the curtain goes up. The Shaw Festival is at Niagara-on-the-Lake, a superbly restored and meticulously groomed 19th-century village. It's also near Ontario's vineyards that are beginning to capture international awards for their wines. The tours and tastings are not the Napa Valley, but then the Napa Valley doesn't offer Shavian wit and wisdom.

The season is in full swing at both theaters from May to late fall. At the Shaw Festival, *St. Joan*, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, *Blithe Spirit*, *And Then There Were None* are on this month. *Anthony and Cleopatra*, *The Mikado*, *The Imaginary Invalid* and *The Importance Of Being Earnest* play until the end of this month at Stratford, with *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Gypsy* on until Mid-November.

More contemporary, improvised and often in-your-face comedy is in full bloom in any one of a dozen Toronto clubs. Film comedians John Candy, Rick Moranis and Catherine O'Hara (the careless mom in *Home Alone*), Broadway star Andrea Martin and Lorne Michaels, who invented "Saturday Night Live," put the Toronto's Second City

revue on the laughter map. They're still going strong (the current revue is called *Inhale To The Chief*) in a converted fire-hall next to what used to be a morgue, but without Candy, et al.

There are dozens of dinner/supper theaters of generally passable but never brilliant quality, and true gastronomes would want to think twice about eating in them. Most of them have a summer stock feel, even in the dead of winter. But there is definitely variety — female impersonation, magic shows, medieval spoofery, interactive murder mystery, solo singers, and so on.

Manhattan, to which Toronto is often compared for cultural/entertainment enjoyment on a more modest scale, has its story about Dutch colonists buying the island for \$24 worth of trinkets. Toronto has such a story too. The English colonists that bought the land on which Toronto was built from Mississauga Indians in 1788 paid some 1,700 pounds.

At today's exchange rates, that works out to about \$3,400 Canadian, or almost exactly what a music lover would pay for the top seat at all the concerts in the inaugural series at the North York Performing Arts Centre. Both were bargains.

The most effective way to find out anything about Toronto is to call the Metropolitan Toronto Convention & Visitors Association, 8:30 to 5:00 EST weekdays and 9:30 to 5:30 weekends, at 1-800-367-1990, toll free anywhere in North America. □



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Fall Collections Ask us to Express How We Feel

I was having lunch the other day with New York designer Isaac Mizrahi (whose costumes recently appeared on Baryshnikov's White Oak dancers) and one of L.A.'s defining women of style, Lisa Eisner.

At the end of lunch Lisa pulled out a couple of recently found vintage bracelet treasures to share with Isaac, or "I" as she calls him.

"Look at the psychology of that one," remarked Mizrahi, "put it on, put it on."

Immediately Lisa's wrist was adorned with the "mad" cuff — a revelry of faux coral, turquoise, rhinestones and pearls in a Jules Verne "chinioserie under the sea theme." A carved coral medallion was surrounded by turquoise pebbles and rhinestones. Coming up the sides were two ominous glittering octopi with pearl heads.

"Can you imagine what the designer was going through when he designed that?" asked Lisa.

My mind raced to answer her question. I pictured a woman in her studio filled with bizarre and wonderful art, expressing her sense of freedom, beauty and humor through her jewelry. An expression of a kind of madness? Perhaps. But what divine madness.

All of this is another way of saying fashion is more than vapid folly or mere planned obsolescence. Each season designers' psychology, the psychology of the society and the times we live in are infused in the collections. Whether unconscious or conscious, the thoughts and feelings are there.

In each of the collections, the body is important. Seen softly moving under-



neath filmy layers of gossamer fabrics or floating jerseys, this is a marked change from aggressive shoulders, pulled in waists and pushed out breasts. The body is plenty, honored in its natural form. That's lovely. It does not need super-human proportions. The message is smooth, evenly paced, effortless yet powerful.

Because the fabrics are so sensual, they evoke feelings when we wear them. Of course, feelings are a particularly human and uniquely personal domain. Feelings are subjective and non-competitive. They require that we go in and consult ourselves, rather than wait for outside judgment to know what to think. And when the way we feel matches the way we look, there is a kind of mass communication that takes place beyond cellular and satellite capabilities.

Technology can never keep up with the of human intelligence and feelings. Innately our humanity brings us back into balance when our minds are tipping the scales in favor of too much thought and not enough feelings. That is the Gestalt behind Calvin's simplicity, Donna's sensuality, Isaac's elegance, Giorgio's ease, Chanel's sophisticated humor, Kamali's modern romanticism, Dolce y Gabbana's playful femininity, Todd Oldham's multiple personality expressionism ...

Color is another psychological podium with a message all its own. Many designers have adopted soothing neutrals, including black — Calvin Klein, Donna Karan, Norma Kamali, and Karl Lagerfeld to be sure. But one designer known for his neutrals, Giorgio Armani, has made his strongest color statement in years. He seems to be saying — "be free, wear color whenever and however you feel it, seasons aside."

Cosmetics are certainly following that philosophy with saturated but pale color on eyes and cheeks made, more innocent with delicate eyebrows and neutral lipsticks.

It's interesting to notice just what you do feel when you put on different designers' clothes, or clothes from your closet, or clothes from a neighborhood boutique, or a swap meet. Notice how what you choose has something to do with how you feel. Notice how what you wear can evoke specific feelings. Notice how your makeup changes with your feelings. This is no accident. Fashion is created by humans for humans with all the expression of emotions that creativity implies.

Above: Designer Todd Oldham's past-life romanticism.

by Barbara Foley

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