



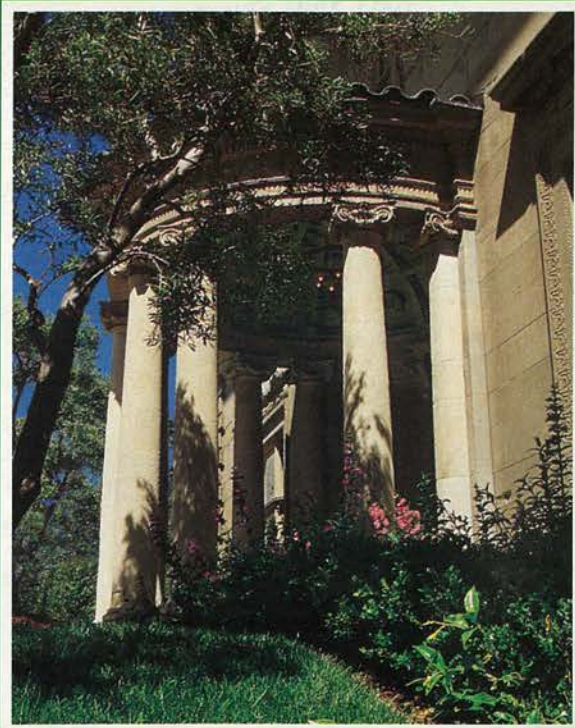
# AMERICAN CONSERVATORY THEATER

1994-1995 SEASON

## THE PLAY'S THE THING

*Stagebill*

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## ABOUT A.C.T.

The **AMERICAN CONSERVATORY THEATER** is a Tony Award-winning nonprofit theater in which professional training and production are inextricably linked to create work that aspires to the highest standards of American performance. Under the recent leadership of Artistic Director Carey Perloff, A.C.T. is committed to nurturing its rich legacy while expanding its reach into new communities and new areas of dramatic literature. Central to A.C.T.'s mission is the interaction of original and classical work on our stages and at the heart of our Conservatory.

Founded in 1965 by William Ball, A.C.T. opened its first San Francisco season at the historic Geary Theater in 1967. During the company's twenty-nine year history, more than two hundred productions have been performed to a combined audience of six million people in Japan, the U.S.S.R., and throughout the United States. In the 1970s, A.C.T. solidified its international reputation as a leading theater and training company, winning a Tony Award for outstanding theater performance and training in 1979. From 1986 to 1992, A.C.T. experienced a period of rejuvenation and growth under the leadership of

Artistic Director Edward Hastings.

Today, A.C.T. continues to fulfill the expectations of Bay Area audiences as a company of international recognition with performance, education, and outreach programs that annually reach more than two hundred thousand people in the San Francisco Bay Area.

From the beginning, A.C.T.'s philosophy has called for the union of superior repertory performance and intensive actor training. Its Conservatory, now serving fifteen hundred students every year, was the first training program not affiliated with a college or university accredited to award a Master of Fine Arts degree and is a model for the continued vitality of the art form. Danny Glover, Annette Bening, Denzel Washington, and Winona Ryder are among its distinguished former students.

The eighty-four-year-old Geary Theater, which was damaged in the San Francisco earthquake of 1989, is undergoing major renovation that will result in updated stagecraft, improved patron amenities, and a total seismic restructuring. A.C.T. anticipates opening a refurbished, state-of-the-art performance space during the 1995-96 season. To date, A.C.T.'s capital campaign has raised \$22.7 million of the funds necessary to complete the reconstruction.



*The interior of the Geary Theater immediately after the Loma Prieta earthquake, October 17, 1989*



*John Sutton*



# AMERICAN CONSERVATORY THEATER

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## 1994-95 REPERTORY SEASON

### ANGELS IN AMERICA A Gay Fantasia on National Themes PART ONE: MILLENNIUM APPROACHES PART TWO: PERESTROIKA

by Tony Kushner  
September 27, 1994 through April 2, 1995  
*Marines Memorial Theatre*

### HOME by David Storey October 20, 1994 through December 4, 1994 *Stage Door Theatre*

### ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD by Tom Stoppard December 14, 1994 through February 5, 1995 *Stage Door Theatre*

### THE PLAY'S THE THING by Ferenc Molnar, adapted by P.G. Wodehouse February 15, 1995 through April 2, 1995 *Stage Door Theatre*

### OTHELLO by William Shakespeare April 13, 1995 through June 4, 1995 *Stage Door Theatre*

### HECUBA by Euripides, translated and adapted by Timberlake Wertenbaker April 27, 1995 through June 4, 1995 *Center for the Arts Theater at Yerba Buena Gardens*

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## Stagebill

Vol. 1, No. 5 February 1995

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## C O N T E N T S



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Above: Stage Right Scrim Flats & Doors, original rendering of the set design of *The Play's the Thing* by scenic designer John Wilson.

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Come to A.C.T. for the most entertaining education in town. A.C.T. offers several ways for you to learn more about the season's productions and to express your views on the issues they raise:

### A.C.T. PROLOGUES

Sponsored by the Junior League of San Francisco, these lively one-hour presentations are conducted by noted actors, directors, and designers who introduce each new A.C.T. play. Prologues are held before the Tuesday preview of every production at 5:30 p.m. in the same theater as the evening's performance.

### AUDIENCE EXCHANGES

This post-show discussion forum began last season with A.C.T.'s acclaimed production of *Oleanna*, David Mamet's explosive examination of sexual harassment. These informal, anything-goes sessions are a great way to share your feelings with fellow theatergoers. Audience Exchanges take place for thirty minutes immediately after selected performances and are moderated by A.C.T. staff members.

### A.C.T. PERSPECTIVES

This popular series of free public symposia, offered for the first time last season, is back in 1994-95 from 7 to 9 p.m. on selected Monday evenings throughout the season. Each symposium features a panel of scholars, theater artists, and professionals exploring topics ranging from aspects of the season's productions to the intersection of theater and the arts with American culture. Everyone is welcome—you need not have seen a play to attend. Funded by a grant from the California Council for the Humanities, a state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

### "WORDS ON PLAYS"

In response to our many patrons who have asked to receive program notes in advance, this season for the first time A.C.T. offers you the chance to study up on coming plays. Each audience handbook contains a synopsis of the play and background information about the playwright and the social and historical context of the work. A subscription for six handbooks is available by mail to full-season subscribers for \$24; a limited number of copies of handbooks for individual plays are also available for purchase by single-ticket holders at the A.C.T. Central Box Office, located at 405 Geary Street at Mason, for \$5 each.

For more information, call (415) 749-2ACT.

### On *The Play's the Thing*

Stage Door Theatre

### A.C.T. PROLOGUE

February 21, 1995  
5:30 p.m.

Featuring  
Director Benny Sato Ambush

### A.C.T. AUDIENCE EXCHANGE

March 12, 1995 (matinee)

Immediately following  
the performance

### A.C.T. PERSPECTIVES

#### On *Othello*

Is Shakespeare  
Still Our Contemporary?  
May 8, 1995

#### On *Hecuba*

*Hecuba and the  
Culture of Revenge*  
May 22, 1995

7-9 p.m.  
Stage Door Theatre

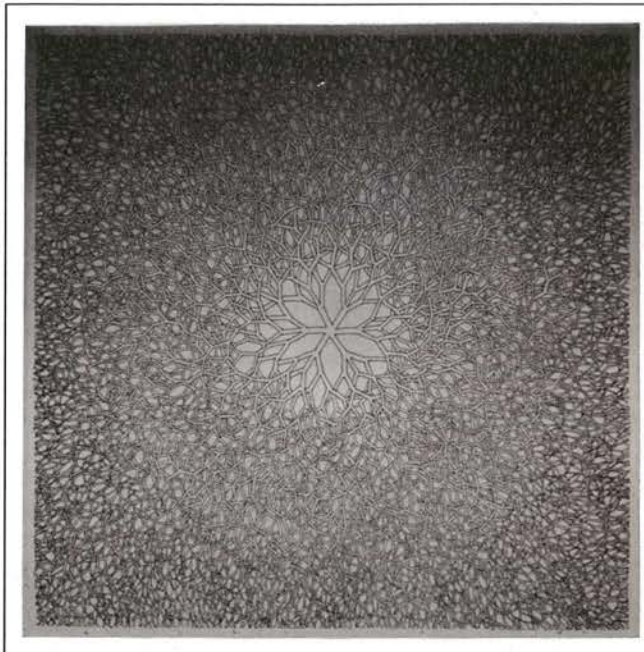
Speakers to be announced

## RUTH ASAWA: A GIFT FOR THE ARTS

Prominent Bay Area artist Ruth Asawa has graciously donated to A.C.T. one hundred limited-edition, signed etchings based on a drawing of one of her stunning wire sculptures. A.C.T. is now offering its preferred patrons the unique opportunity to purchase these prints at \$250 each (unframed), to support the company's annual fund. The image is 17" x 17" on a French rag paper, with a finished size of 22" x 26". The prints were hand pulled by Magnolia Editions, a fine paper- and print-making studio in Oakland which has been creating custom papers

and fine art prints in the European and Japanese traditions since 1981.

Asawa's graceful sculptures and unswerving commitment to arts education have enriched Bay Area life since she moved to San Francisco in 1949. Her major works include the Grand Hyatt's cast bronze fountain at the corner of Stockton and Post Streets on Union Square, the playful mermaid fountain in Ghirardelli Square, a 14' x 60' bas-relief depicting the seven hills of San Francisco in the motor court of the Parc Fifty Five Hotel, a large



David Belda

bronze wire sculpture on the facade of the Oakland Art Museum, a welded stainless steel fountain in Bayside Plaza at the corner of the Embarcadero and Howard Street, and, her most recent achievement, a commission by the city of San Jose for the Federal Building, a memorial honoring Japanese-American families interned during World War II. She has exhibited throughout the country, from the Whitney Museum in New York to San Francisco's De Young Museum and Museum of Modern Art, while her pieces can be found in the permanent collec-

A limited number of etchings by Bay Area artist Ruth Asawa are now available for purchase from A.C.T.



ASAWA'S  
GRACEFUL  
SCULPTURES  
AND  
UNSWERVING  
COMMITMENT  
TO ARTS  
EDUCATION  
HAVE  
ENRICHED  
BAY AREA  
LIFE SINCE  
1949.

tions of the Guggenheim, Whitney, and Oakland Art Museums, as well as those of private collectors.

The daughter of Japanese immigrant farmers, Asawa was sixteen in 1942 when her family was interned, first at the Santa Anita racetrack, and later in Rohwer, Arkansas. Also interned at Santa Anita were three Walt Disney artists—landscape artist Tom Okamoto taught her the fundamentals of drawing, her first lesson from a professional artist. After graduating from high school in the camp, she spent three years at Milwaukee State Teachers' College.

In 1946, Asawa received a scholarship to Black Mountain College, the renowned experimental arts school in North Carolina, where she encountered such groundbreaking artists as Josef Albers, Buckminster Fuller, Willem

develop their innate creativity and community responsibility at the same time as their intellects—principles that have profoundly influenced Asawa's artistic and educational philosophy ever since. She credits Albers with showing her the importance of the economy of means and effort, while Fuller taught her to experiment with materials, beginning with the least possible strength—to begin with "the straw rather than the stone."

Although she studied drawing and painting, Asawa taught herself sculpture, learning the technique of "crocheting" wire in Mexico in 1947. When she first started showing her wire pieces at the San Francisco Museum of Art in 1950, she was told they were not sculpture, because they were suspended from the ceiling, not standing on a pedestal. *San Francisco Chronicle* art critic Alfred

Frankenstein rallied to her cause, however, and Asawa's unique forms were ultimately celebrated across the country. *Artforum* wrote about her wire forms in 1962: "These (brilliantly) unified and economically stated works are surely among the most original and satisfying new sculpture to have arisen in the western United States since the

second war."

"In 1962, Paul and Ginny Hassel brought me a desert plant and said, 'Here, we have something for you to draw,'" remembers

de Kooning, John Cage, Charles Olson, and Merce Cunningham. Black Mountain's revolutionary experimental approach to education encouraged students to de-



Ruth Asawa

Terry Schuda

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ASAWA HAS  
DEDICATED  
HER CAREER  
TO THE  
BELIEF THAT  
ART MUST  
PLAY AN  
INTEGRAL  
ROLE IN  
FAMILY AND  
COMMUNITY  
LIFE.

Asawa. "But the plant was so tangled, I had to figure out how it grew before I could recreate it on paper." Using bundles of wire, she traced the structure of the plant and its complex branchings. The result was a new art form, tied wire sculpture.

"I'm concerned with the airy spaces surrounding the sculpture," says Asawa about her work. "If I can see twenty shapes, perhaps the viewer will see four or five at first, and eventually will discover others as they live with and continue to study the piece. As Albers used to tell his students, 'I like to sell more than the buyer knows he's buying.'" After she had constructed the plant in wire, Asawa found that she could sketch it, producing intricate linear drawings like the etchings she has donated to A.C.T.

Asawa has dedicated her long and distinguished career to the belief that art, in all its forms, must play an integral role in family and community life. With her husband of more than forty-five years, architect Albert Lanier, she has raised six children and is the proud grandparent of nine. Among her many public service credits are tours with the San Francisco Arts Commission, California Arts Council, and the National Endowment for the Arts' Education Panel.

Since 1962, Asawa has moved heaven and earth to bring arts education into San Francisco schools, cofounding the Alvarado Arts Workshop and implementing the National Endowment for the Arts' Artists in the Schools program (which was inspired by her

efforts with the Workshop). With the help of parents in the community, a four-hundred student School of the Arts was opened in 1992 on a shoestring in the former Frederick Burke Elementary School adjacent to San Francisco State. Working with former A.C.T. Conservatory Director Susan Stauter, who now serves as artistic director for the San Francisco Unified School District's high schools, Asawa has been a driving force behind the establishment of a new, centrally located, state-of-the-art public high school for the arts, located at 135 Van Ness Avenue (formerly Commerce High), scheduled to open in 1996. The new school will have direct access to its neighbors: San Francisco's Planning Commission, Main Library, Ballet, Opera, Symphony, Museum of Modern Art, Yerba Buena Gardens, Fine Arts Museums, Exploratorium, and, of course, A.C.T. Asawa is also currently active on the A.C.T. board of trustees' Conservatory committee, helping to identify and recruit a successor to Stauter.

After more than three decades of artistic accomplishment and community activism, Asawa has said that she is concerned with completing the circle. "Having learned something, then applied it," she says, "it is important to pass it on in some form so that it is not lost." A.C.T. is grateful for her philosophy, and invites all those interested in acquiring an exquisite manifestation of this artist's generous spirit to call the development department at (415) 834-3253. ■

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### MURDER STORIES

February 27, 1995

Randall Lyman  
"This Won't Hurt a Bit"

Hart Schulz  
"Trout Fishing in L.A."

Leo Litwak ♦  
"Lenny Loves Jane"

Mark Smallwood ♦  
"The Moon and Venus"

Mary Michael Wagner ♦  
"Acts of Kindness"

### HEARING-IMPAIRED STORIES

March 27, 1995

Molly Giles ♦  
"The Poet's Husband"

Don Asher ♦  
"Dirge Mute: The 69th Silent-Heavy Artillery  
Brigade Ball"

Rocky Gómez ♦  
"At the Borderline"

Bill Bradd  
"The Whistle Stop"

Lucia Berlin  
"The Adobe House with a Tin Roof"

♦ Denotes Local Writers

### FAMILY STORIES

April 24, 1995

Dona Budd ♦  
"Eating Crayons"

Alison Baker  
"Ooh, Baby, Baby"

Robert Glück ♦  
"Hidden in the Open"

Kate Braverman  
"Pagan Night"

### LAST CHANCE STORIES

May 15, 1995

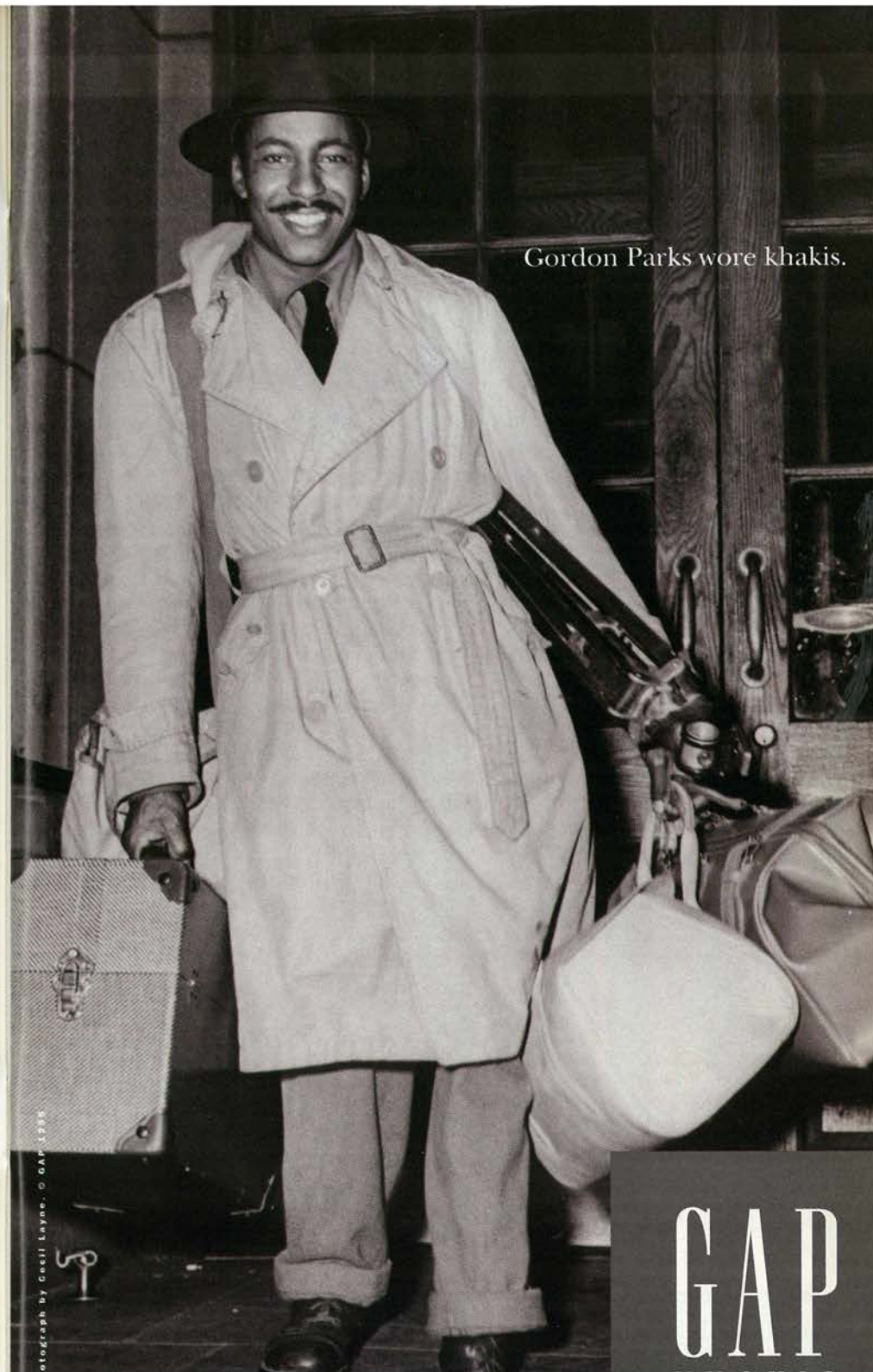
Abram George  
"A Second Chance"

Avner Mandelman ♦  
"Pity"

Russ Riviere  
"The 20-Breath Snake"

Po Bronson ♦  
"Tracking the Family Beast"

Gordon Parks wore khakis.



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American Conservatory Theater

Carey Perloff, *Artistic Director*

Thomas W. Flynn, *Administrative Director*

James Hairc, *Producing Director*

*presents*

# THE PLAY'S THE THING

(1926)

by Ferenc Molnár

Adapted by P.G. Wodehouse

Directed by Benny Sato Ambush

*Scenery by* John B. Wilson

*Costumes by* Christine Dougherty

*Lighting by* Peter Maradudin

*Sound by* David Torgersen

*Casting by* Meryl Lind Shaw

*Stage Management Staff*

Alice Elliott Smith

Juliet N. Pokorny, Steven Lukens

Michele Trimble—Intern

*Associate Directors*

Nicole Galland, Caroline Girgis

*Vocal Coach*

Nancy Houfek



This production is made possible in part by the generosity of  
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*San Francisco Chronicle*

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PART I: MILLENNIUM APPROACHES

PART II: PERESTROIKA

A GAY FANTASIA ON NATIONAL THEMES

By Tony Kushner

Directed by Mark Wing-Davey *Marines*  
*Memorial Theatre*, under the general  
direction of Charles H. Duggan,  
609 Sutter Street

Sponsored by James C. Hormel,  
The L.J. Skaggs and Mary C. Skaggs  
Foundation and San Francisco Focus

Lise Bruneau photo by Thomas Heinser



American  
Conservatory  
Theater



A.C.T.

## THE PLAY'S THE THING

### The Cast

(in order of speaking appearance)

<i>Mansky</i>	Ken Grantham
<i>Sandor Turai</i>	Ken Ruta
<i>Albert Adam</i>	Don Burroughs
<i>Dwornitschek</i>	Joe Bellan
<i>Almady</i>	Stephen Markle
<i>Ilona Szabo</i>	Kimberly King
<i>Mell</i>	Dan Hiatt
<i>Lackeys</i>	Michael Fitzpatrick, Gabriel Sebastian

### Understudies

*Sandor Turai, Dwornitschek*—Michael Fitzpatrick;  
*Ilona Szabo*—Bren McElroy; *Mansky, Mell, Lackey*—Tom Lenoci;  
*Albert Adam*—Darren Bridgett

The action takes place in a suite  
in a palazzo on the Italian Riviera,  
one Saturday in summer.

### Act One

3 a.m.

### Act Two

6 a.m.

### Act Three

7:30 p.m.

There will be two intermissions.



# FERENC MOLNÁR: LIFE AS THEATER

by Elizabeth Brodersen

1845

In *The Play's the Thing*, librettist Mansky admonishes his collaborator, Sandor Turai, to remember that "Life isn't all theater." But Turai, speaking for his real-life alter ego, playwright Ferenc Molnár, ripostes: "Yes, it is—if you write plays."

Molnár, who began his professional life as a law student and journalist, wrote forty-two plays (of which eighteen were produced on Broadway and twenty-six made into movies) during his prolific career, using his own experiences as his primary source material. Known variously as the "Hungarian Molière," "sparkling Aristophanes of the cafes," "monocled Swift of Budapest," and "Voltaire of the boulevards," Molnár crossed the boundaries between illusion and reality, theater and life, with urbane aplomb, and became one of the most popular dramatists of the first half of this century.

## THE KING OF CAFE SOCIETY

For a playwright whose theater emerged directly from some of the most intimate events of his own life, Molnár was singularly reticent when asked to provide personal details. When finally pressed to write an autobiography, he responded with this thumbnail sketch:

*1878, I was born in Budapest; 1896, I became a law student at Geneva; 1896, I became a journalist in Budapest; 1897, I wrote a short story; 1900, I wrote a*

*novel; 1902, I became a playwright at home; 1908, I became a playwright abroad; 1914, I became a war correspondent; 1916, I became a playwright once more; 1918, my hair turned snow white; 1925, I should like to be a law student at Geneva once more.*

About his earliest theatrical attempts, Molnár later elaborated:

*My first major dramatic effort was a weird, spectacular play called A kék barlang (The Blue Cave), which was successfully produced, in the early nineties, on a flimsy stage built (at a cost of eight whole guildens) within the basement home of a friend. I did the settings, too, while my chum contributed paper puppets of his own making. The premiere of this play, staged with the aid of all sorts of blue bottles filched from the surgery of my father, a physician, ended in a riot. In consequence of which, my next play had to languish for a decade thereafter, until the Comedy Theatre of Budapest saw fit to present it. This protracted pause may have left its baneful impress upon all my later dramatic efforts.*

*In conclusion, I may add that, far from harboring ambitions of jurisprudence, I am now trying to achieve a literary career.*

Molnár honed his theatrical craft in the cafes of Budapest, where as a young law student he had once repaired to do his homework and to write articles for the Hungarian newspapers. After earning popu-

larity as an essayist, journalist, and novelist, Molnár returned to playwriting, producing two hilarious farces in the French style: *The Lawyer* (1902) and *Józsi* (1904). His first international success, *The Devil* (1907), catapulted Molnár into the limelight with wildly successful runs in New York, London, and other cultural capitals of Europe.

In *fin de siècle* Budapest, French, German, and Austrian authors were well known, and the coffeehouses of the city that had celebrated its one thousandth anniversary in 1896 were overflowing with the creative energy of writers, painters, sculptors, and composers. Yet Hungarian drama was virtually unknown outside the country's boundaries—until *The Devil* made Hungarian drama a hot property and Molnár the king of Budapest cafe society.

A handsome, witty conversationalist, accomplished musician, and notorious ladies' man, Molnár presided over a host of Hungary's most talented artists, who met nightly at the New York Cafe, located in the basement of the New York Life Insurance Company building in Budapest. Like their American counterparts at New York's Algonquin Hotel, "Molnár's Gang" (also known as the "New York Crowd") were the self-appointed arbiters of Hungarian artistic excellence; an invitation to Molnár's table was considered the highest acknowledgment of talent. They travelled everywhere together, including dress rehearsals and opening nights, gossiping and drinking the



Ferenc Molnár

Interfoto MTL, Budapest

night away. It was considered bad form to go home before the tiny bronze letters on the statue of Hungarian patriot Lajos Kossuth, which stood on the banks of the Danube, were legible in the dim morning light.

Molnár himself, who—like most Budapestians—was constantly embroiled in romantic dramas (he was married three times, twice to actresses, and had many affairs), rarely went home. He would not emerge from his rooms until the early evening, when he would make his way to the New York Cafe to dine and sit until dawn. He would frequently wander from cafe to a friend's home to Turkish bath and back again, sometimes not returning to his apartment for two weeks at a stretch. His favored method of writing a play or a novel was to think it out in detail in advance (sometimes plotting for years) before sitting down at a cafe table to transcribe the entire work in a few days. Surrounded by chattering patrons, clattering dishes, and oompahing military bands, he

MOLNÁR  
SHOWS US  
TRUTH AS  
MIRAGE,  
AND  
PRETENSE  
AS REALITY.



“WHAT’S  
WRONG  
WITH BEING  
POOR IF YOU  
LOVE ONE  
ANOTHER?  
... HOW  
HAPPY YOU  
CAN BE IN  
AN ATTIC.  
WITH A  
CANDLE BY  
THE BED.  
WHEN YOU  
BLOW THE  
CANDLE,  
YOU MAKE  
BELIEVE  
YOU’RE IN A  
ROOM IN A  
CASTLE  
WITH SILK  
HANGINGS  
AND CUPIDS  
DANCING  
ON THE  
CEILING.”

—P.G. Wodehouse

would write in clear, precise long-hand uninterruptedly all night, almost never correcting a manuscript once the words were on paper.

In a city in which gossip was the most widely traded commodity and marital fidelity a rare phenomenon (“among Budapestians,” wrote playwright S.N. Behrman, “entering your wife’s room without knocking was the highest possible tribute”), Molnár’s plays were avidly consumed. His autobiographical works frequently disclosed the latest news of his complicated love life: *Liliom* (1909, made by Rodgers and Hammerstein into the musical *Carousel* in 1945) exorcised the demons of his failed first marriage, to writer and artist Margit Vészi; *The Guardsman* (1913, immortalized by the Lunts in a 1924 Broadway production and a favorite of Bernard Shaw) and *The Wolf* (1913) explained his affair with Hungarian stage star Irén Varsányi (for whom he had written *The Devil*, and who cost him two weeks in jail after a duel with her jealous husband). Molnár was also skilled at caricaturing his many intellectual enemies on stage—greedily curious audiences flocked to his opening nights to stare at Molnár’s latest real-life victims, much as Bostonians ogled Alexander Woollcott during *The Man Who Came to Dinner*.

After spending the First World War as a newspaper correspondent, Molnár returned to Budapest and—with *The Swan* (1919)—to playwriting once again with a wicked vengeance. An aficionado of the French comedies of Scribe, Sardou, Caillavet, de Flers, and Marivaux (Molnár translated and adapted more than thirty

of their plays), he became a master of the drawing-room comedy. During the mid 1920s, as his popularity abroad and income soared and his café entourage at home began to dwindle, Molnár left Budapest more and more frequently, eventually establishing what he called his “five-room apartment”: accommodations with

staff in the finest hotels of Budapest, Vienna, Karlsbad, Venice, and Nice. Living a life of itinerant luxury, he stayed one step ahead of the scandals and legal problems wrought by his continuing romantic entanglements with actresses: in 1924, he divorced second wife Sári Fedák and the following year married Lili Darvas

man. All day long she had to recite classical German plays. One afternoon an intimate friend called on me, and as we were chatting amiably, he suddenly jumped up. He had heard Lili’s voice in her room saying in fluent German, “I love you, I love you! I shall die of love for you!” No wonder he jumped. And I jumped. Both of us went to the door and, upon opening it, found Lili reciting declarations of love to her tutor, Dr. Hock, the German director. Utterly harmless, yet how disturbing it sounded! That’s how I got the idea, but you can just as well say that I got it from Hamlet.

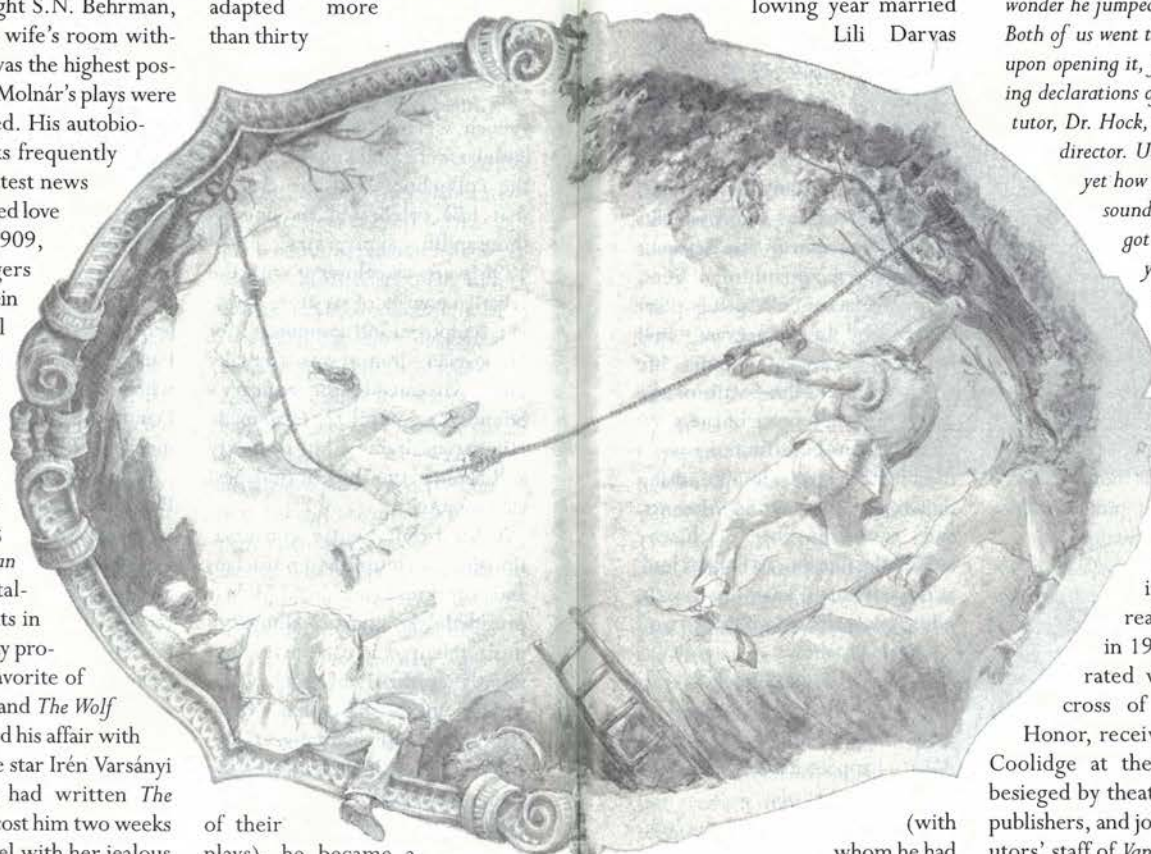
Considered the crown jewel of his career, *The Play’s the Thing* (with *The Swan*) pitched Molnár into even headier realms of success: in 1927 he was decorated with the French cross of the Legion of Honor, received by President Coolidge at the White House, besieged by theater directors and publishers, and joined the contributors’ staff of *Vanity Fair*. Between 1929 and 1932, he criss-crossed Europe, winned and dined by royalty and stage dignitaries and gambling in Riviera casinos, while managing to write a play a year.

During the 1930s, however, Molnár sensed impending disaster, as his mood and international tensions worsened. He left Budapest

(with whom he had already been involved when he married Fedák).

It was Darvas who inspired Molnár to write *The Play’s the Thing* (originally entitled *Játék a kastélyban*, or *The Play in the Castle*):

*My wife and I were stopping at the Hotel Imperial in Vienna. She was then learning to speak Ger-*



Original rendering of the ceiling for the set of *The Play's the Thing* by scenic designer John B. Wilson.



for the last time in 1937 and moved to Geneva, where he became something of a recluse. In 1940, Molnár took up permanent residence in Room 835 of the Plaza Hotel in New York, reclaiming his role as patriarch of literate Hungarian society (albeit in exile), this time reigning from a table at the 58th Street Delicatessen, where he continued to hold court until his death in 1952.

#### ALL OF US ARE ACTORS

In a 1946 *New Yorker* article about Molnár, S.N. Behrman wrote:

*Molnár's theater is unique in our time, because it is an endless self-exploration. . . . His theme is himself and he has taken his society right along with him over the footlights and confided to it expansively in stage whispers. . . . His own life became so inextricably involved in the theater that it was probably in-*

*evitable that he should develop, singlehanded, a theater about the theater itself. . . . Living in a zone in which reality and illusion overlap, he finally developed a category of plays in which he gave up all attempt to divide the two worlds and used as his theme their very indivisibility.*

Molnár's theater about theater culminated in some of his best work: *The Play's the Thing*, *The Guardsman*, and a trio of one-act plays which included *The Prologue to "King Lear," Marshal*, and *The Violet* (collectively entitled *Theater*, 1920). These plays showcased his favorite characters—the innocent young lover, unfaithful actress, pompous actor, all-seeing playwright, and shrewd servant—and explored his favorite themes: life versus theater, the battle of the sexes, and the power of the playwright's pen. Like Turai, he was a master of stage technique, using the world of fantasy and dreams, and revealing the machinery behind the illusion, to help us look at ourselves and laugh, or cry (in his own words) “a tear or two.”

Molnár shows us truth as mirage, and pretense as reality—that what happens on stage is life, and that what happens in life is really just another play.

Biographer Clara György captured the essence of Molnár's appeal: “While involving the audience in the mystery of creating a play, he reveals that the spurious action on the stage is at least as ‘real’ as life. . . . Therefore, all of us are actors and our lives are mere role-playing; after all, ‘the play’s the thing.’” ■

## THE HUNGARIAN INVASION

by Tim Fisher

Despite the wonders of today's “global economy,” the sight of a foreign play on an American stage is rare indeed, but seventy years ago this was not the case.

Between 1908 and 1940, a total of fifty-three Hungarian plays, by twenty-one different authors, were adapted and professionally produced on stages throughout New York City. At the peak of this “Hungarian invasion,” from 1921–33, twenty-nine new Hungarian works opened on Broadway

—seventeen between 1923 and 1925 alone, twelve between 1930 and 1933. Not a single season passed without a new Hungarian play in production somewhere in the city. Ferenc Molnár, who launched the phenomenon and was the last Hungarian to have a play in production at the onset of the Second World War, was by far the greatest contributor; his sixteen original plays accounted for more than one quarter of the total number of Hungarian imports.

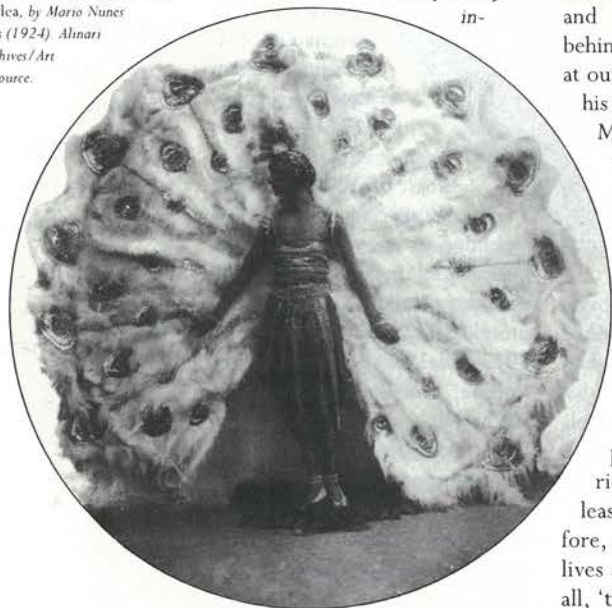
It began with *The Devil*. In 1908, after Molnár's play became a smash hit in Budapest, it was brought to New York, where four different adaptations were soon running simultaneously—two in English, one in German, and one in Yiddish—and at the height of the sea-



Lynn Fontanne and Alfred Lunt first appeared together in the 1924 Theatre Guild production of Ferenc Molnár's *The Guardsman*.

The Billy Rose Theater Collection of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Portrait of Countess Rosa Spalletti né Princess Lanza di Scalea, by Mario Nunes Vais (1924). Alinari Archives/Art Resource.



son, according to a reviewer, “no less than thirty companies” were staging it. Producers, playwrights, and translators moved to capitalize on the appeal of the exotic, perfectly crafted works by Molnár and his colleagues of the booming Budapest theater scene.

All of the Hungarian playwrights whose works were adapted in America during this period were established authors at home. The plays they exported were a diverse mixture of spectacles, melodramas, farces, plays of the imagination, period pieces, comedies, and satires. They covered the staple theatrical themes of love, marital relations, divorce, economic conditions, class distinctions, and the contrast between rural and urban life.



LINES LIKE  
 "SHE HAS  
 HAD NO  
 MAN FOR  
 TEN DAYS"  
 BECAME  
 "IT'S  
 SPRINGTIME."

Making sure the plays stayed within the bounds of American moral and social codes, the American adapters did some cutting and revising in the name of propriety ("washing the diapers" became "rocking the baby") but never drastically altered their structure, content, or characterizations. A third of the American adapters worked from original Hungarian, the rest from either French or German translations. They included many authors—among them Edna St. Vincent Millay, David Belasco, Ben Hecht, Charles MacArthur, and P.G. Wodehouse—already famous in their own right.

To American audiences who had seen translations and adaptations of French and German dramas as early as the eighteenth century, these Hungarian plays brought the exotic wrapped in the accessible and familiar—Eastern Europe was more mysterious than Britain or France, but it was still Europe. Love and physical attraction were the predominant subjects, forming the core of a majority of the plots or providing at least a slight motivating factor for the actions of the characters. A guide through life's difficulties and trials, love (and conventional marriage) always triumphed, although this victory often came at a price: the end of youth, a benign deception, or compromise. At the same time, the plays were rich with physical passion, which was presented as a positive and powerful force, never hidden or suppressed. Innuendo and a fair quantity of lust were ever present, but as long as virtue prevailed—along with some toning down by the American adapters (lines like "she has had no man for

ten days" became "it's springtime")—the sexual was permissible as part of the exotic package.

The plays were strongly spiritual but not religious or preachy, and rarely displayed any disrespect to clergy or the symbols of established religion. The more European, class-conscious aspects of the original versions, with minimal adjustments by the adapters, did not offend the American sense of democracy and individualism. Magyar peasant life was glorified as a reservoir of spirituality, honest and hard labor, and healthy living. Nowhere in any play was an appealing case made for city life—an attractive quality to American audiences who indulged in similar idealizations of the rural, working life.

By 1940, Molnár in particular had built up an impressive record: his plays had run for a total of thirteen seasons, and there were five seasons in which two or more of his plays were in production either simultaneously or consecutively. His first-run performances totalled 2,148; one play's run exceeded 300, four exceeded 200, and five exceeded 100 nights. *The Play's the Thing* was his most popular success, though *A Tailor-Made Man*, by Gábor Drégely, ran for the greatest number of nights at 398. With Nazi Germany threatening, Molnár and many of his colleagues fled Europe for the United States as the world readied for war. Molnár turned to novels and memoirs, his compatriots ceased to write for the theater (many were absorbed into Hollywood), and the thirty-two-year theatrical relationship between America and Hungary drew to a close. ■

## YES, THE BUTLER DID IT

by Jeff Adams

If you were surprised to discover that British-born writer P.G. Wodehouse had adapted a Hungarian light comedy for the American stage, you are probably not alone. Pelham Grenville Wodehouse ("Plum" to his friends) is best known for his stories about Bertie Wooster's butler, the amazing Jeeves, whose chief role was to get his scheming employer out of frequently-life-threatening predicaments. Jeeves, an endearing character, has rightly taken his place as an enduring literary persona. Yet he is merely one famous component of an enormous Wodehouse canon which, by the time he died in 1975 at the age of 94, included sixteen plays and eighteen musicals (twenty-eight if you include shows to which he contributed lyrics), ninety-six books, more than three hundred short stories, much humorous verse, and even a half dozen Hollywood film scenarios.

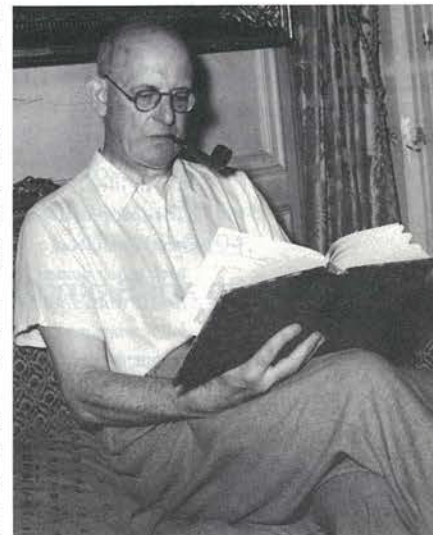
Wodehouse's closest theatrical collaborator was Guy Bolton, with whom he worked on twelve shows, including *Oh, Kay!* and *Anything Goes*. Wodehouse met Bolton in 1915 when Wodehouse reviewed the Jerome Kern-Bolton musical *Very Good Eddie* as drama critic for *Vanity Fair*. Two years later, the Wodehouse-Kern-Bolton triumvirate collaborated on four wildly successful shows—*Miss Springtime*, *Oh Boy!*, *Leave It to Jane*, and *Miss 1917*—earning a place in theater history as the inventors of modern musical comedy.

Recognized as a master lyricist

by such theatrical legends as George and Ira Gershwin, Oscar Hammerstein, and Lorenz Hart, Wodehouse wrote the lyrics for *Miss Springtime*, *Rosalie*, and *The Three Musketeers*, as well as the words to the song "Bill" for *Show Boat*. Wodehouse's other stage works include *Nuts and Wine* (written with C.H. Bovill), *The Cabaret Girl* (with George Grossmith), *The Beauty Prize* (also with Grossmith), *Her Cardboard Lover* (with Valerie Wyngate), *Hearts and Diamonds* (with Laurie Wylie), *A Damsel in Distress* (with Ian Hay), *Baa Baa Black Sheep* (also with Hay), and *Candlelight*.

Wodehouse's dramatic output, while large enough to comprise in itself the career of a lesser mortal, seems—on the surface—a curiosity for this prolific writer. He hated going to the theater and once confessed in a letter to writer Denis Mackail, "I don't know why it is, but I can't write plays." In fact, playwriting was for Wodehouse "the most ghastly sweat." Why, then, did he do it at all?

The answer perhaps lies in his own creative method. "In writing



P.G. Wodehouse

UPI/Bettmann



a novel," wrote Wodehouse, "I always imagine I am writing for a cast of actors. Some actors are natural minor actors and some are natural major actors. It is a matter of personality." It became natural, to borrow his word, for Wodehouse to construct a strong sense of plot that would drive his stories and make them interesting for his readers. It was a quality he came to admire in playwrights but found lacking in himself, oddly enough, early in life:

*The first play I was ever connected with was a collaboration with a boy named Henry Cullimore when I was seven. I don't know what made us decide to do it, but we did, and Henry said we*

*would have to have a plot. "What's a plot," I asked. He didn't know. He had heard or read somewhere that a plot was of the essence, but as to what it was he confessed himself fogged. This naturally made us feel a little dubious as to the outcome of our enterprise, but we agreed that there was nothing to do but carry on and hope that everything would pan out all right. (Chekhov used to do this.) He—Henry Cullimore, not Chekhov—was the senior partner in the project. He was three years older than I was, which gave him an edge, and he had a fountain pen. I mostly contributed moral support. . . . Henry let me down.*

*He got as far as*

*ACT ONE*

*(Enter Henry)*

*Henry: What's for breakfast? Ham and oatmeal? Very nice.*

*But there he stopped. He had shot his bolt, and, as I had nothing to suggest, we called the thing off.*

No doubt this experience was instructive, making an impression on young Wodehouse, and perhaps serving as continuing motivation throughout his career never to let himself—or his readers—down. In fact, concern with plot dogged him for years, as this comment (written when he was thirty-nine) to another friend reveals: "There really ought to be some sort of central bureau, an Ideas Exchange, where authors could send plots they couldn't use themselves and other authors

*continued on page 49*

Villa in Amelia,  
by George Tutge  
(1982)



Alinari Archives/Art Resource



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## Performance Highlights

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On February 20, three of San Francisco's most prestigious arts organizations take part in what's being termed a "Concert-ed Effort Against AIDS." Classical Action, the national organization that raises money for AIDS by enlisting the talent of the classical music community, has joined up with the San Francisco Symphony, Ballet, and Opera for the largest-ever classical event dedicated to this critical battle. Carol Burnett plays mistress of ceremonies to a performance that takes place at both **Davies Symphony Hall** and the **War Memorial Opera House**. Performers include soprano Carol Vaness, baritone Thomas Hampson, pianist Evgeny Kissin, dancer/choreographer Bill T. Jones, and fiddler Mark O'Connor. Additionally, the Ballet performs a world premiere by Helgi Tomasson. Michael Tilson Thomas and Denis de Coteau conduct. For ticket information, contact the SFS Box Office at (415) 864-6000.

\*\*\*\*\*

The American Conservatory Theater follows up Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* with another classic reality vs. illusion play, Ferenc Molnar's *The Play's the Thing*. In the most famous of the Hungarian master's drawing-room comedies, a theatrical venture is almost scuttled when its young composer overhears his fiancée, who happens to be the play's leading lady, receiving amorous advances from her leading man, who happens to be her ex-lover. To save the production from disaster, the two librettists concoct a play to match the lovers' scenario and diffuse the composer's suspicions. Performed in the original English adaptation

by P.G. Wodehouse, *The Play's the Thing* stars Ken Ruta, Ken Grantham, Don Burroughs, and Stephen Markle, and is directed by Benny Sato Ambush. Previews begin at the Stage Door Theatre on February 15, with opening night on February 22.

\*\*\*\*\*

The **San Francisco Symphony's** music director designate, **Michael Tilson Thomas**, visits his new home turf February 8 through 18. During this engagement he conducts Debussy's *La Mer*, *Danse sacrée et Danse profane*, and a pair of works featuring the SFS Chorus. He also leads music by Mahler, Leonard Bernstein, J.C. Bach, Steve Reich, and—with soloist Gil Shaham—Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No. 1. On February 3 and 4, **Sir Georg Solti** conducts Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and Stravinsky in his first SFS appearances since 1960.

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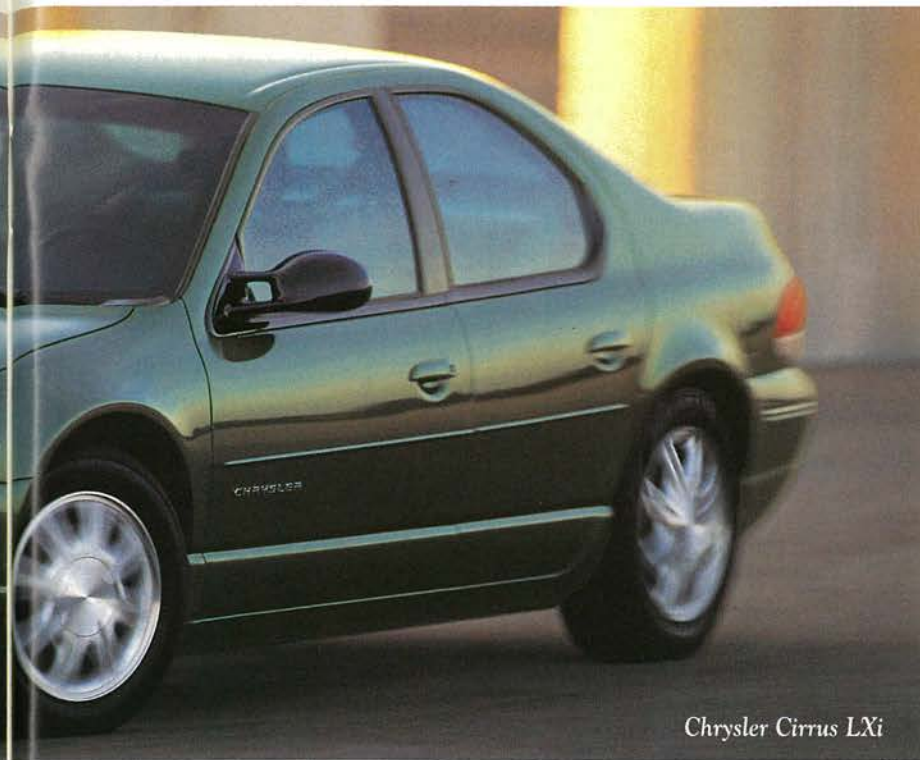
Over at the **War Memorial Opera House**, the **San Francisco Ballet** gets its 1995 repertory season underway, beginning with an **Opening Night Gala** on February 1. Among this month's offerings:

an encore production of Tomasson's *Romeo and Juliet*, a world premiere by choreographer David Bintley entitled *The Dance Horse*, coupled with revivals of Mark Morris' *Maelstorm* and Val Caniparoli's *Pulcinella*; and a world premiere by Canadian choreographer James Kudelka, performed with revivals of Jerome Robbins' *In G Major* and Paul Taylor's *Company B*. For schedule and ticket information, call (415) 861-1177.

—Robert Simonson







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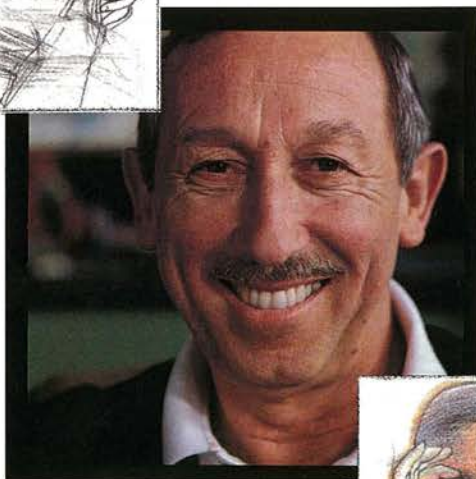


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 Performance Workshop  
 Christopher Herold, *Text, Project Director*  
 Kevin Jackson, *Project Director*  
 Dan Johnson, *Intermediate Acting, Musical Theater*  
 Rose Adams Kelly, *Alexander Technique*  
 Kay Kostopoulos, *Acting, Project Director*  
 Margery Kreitman, *Junior Performance Workshop, Young Playwrights Lab*  
 Stephanie Asher Lindus, *Acting Technique, Voice & Speech, Master Acting*  
 Brian Lohmann, *Improvisation*  
 John Loschmann, *Ballet, Project Director*  
 Nick Mangano, *Humanities*  
 Van Mitchell, *Voice & Speech*  
 Amy Mueller, *Acting*  
 Technique/Scene Study,  
 Performance Workshop  
 Frank Ottiwell, *Alexander Technique*  
 Elizabeth Payne, *Acting, Speech*  
 Lisa Peers, *Musical Theater*  
 Carey Perloff, *Humanities, Project Director*  
 Priscilla Regalado, *Jazz, Movement*

Victoria Rue, *Acting*  
 Ken Ruta, *Project Director, Audition*  
 Edward Sayegh, *Singing*  
 Chantelle Schaffer, *Singing*  
 Barbara Scott, *Improvisation*  
 Richard Seyd, *Acting*  
 Jack F. Sharrar, *Advanced Acting, Directing, Performance Workshop*  
 Mark Silence, *Combat*  
 Craig Slaughter, *Advanced Acting, Directing, Performance Workshop*  
 Lynne Soffer, *Acting, Audition, Text*  
 Natalie Stewart, *Voice*  
 Rebecca Stockley, *Improvisation*  
 Deborah Sussel, *Verbal Action*  
 Bruce Williams, *Audition, Acting, Project Director*  
 Judy Wilson, *Young Playwrights Lab*  
 Jenny Ziclon, *Makeup*

A.C.T. operates under an agreement between the League of Resident Theaters and Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States.

A.C.T. is a constituent of Theatre Communications Group, the national organization for the non-profit professional theater. A.C.T. is a member of the League of Resident Theaters, American Arts Alliance, California Theater Council, Theatre Bay Area, Performing Arts Services, San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, and San Francisco Convention & Visitors Bureau.

A.C.T. is a participant in the National Theatre Artist Residency Program, administered by Theatre Communications Group, the national organization for the American theater, and funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts.

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

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

# SPONSOR PROFILES

## SAN FRANCISCO HILTON & TOWERS

A.C.T. is delighted to announce the sponsorship debut of the illustrious San Francisco Hilton & Towers with Ferenc Molnar's classic comedy, *The Play's the Thing*. Located just steps from the city's famous cable cars and world-class shopping in Union Square, the San Francisco Hilton ranks as the largest hotel on the West Coast, with close to two thousand rooms. The Towers, a "hotel within a hotel," provides exclusive services for those who wish the utmost in personalized amenities. Its Cityscape restaurant, located on the forty-sixth floor at the very top of the landmark Hilton tower, offers seasonal California cuisine and a three-hundred-sixty-degree view of the Bay Area. This season, the Hilton has made generous parking and accommodation discounts available to A.C.T. patrons. "The large and small downtown businesses, hotels, and theaters make up a fam-



The San Francisco Hilton and Towers is located at 333 O'Farrell Street.

ily of our own," says Deborah Larkin, the Hilton's director of public relations. "We are very happy to support A.C.T. as one of the institutions that give this area its distinctive personality and culture—our partnership with A.C.T. is a good match."

## WAYS OF GIVING

Gifts to the American Conservatory Theater may be made in a variety of ways: cash, appreciated securities, bequests, and other planned gifts. A "planned gift" is a broad term that includes pooled income funds, gift annuities, charitable trusts, life insurance, and property. Planned gifts often provide considerable tax savings. Many people who could not otherwise give to A.C.T. as generously as they would like find they are able to do so with a carefully planned gift. If you would like more information, please contact the Development Department, A.C.T., 30 Grant Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94108, (415) 834-3253.

## GOT A GROUP?

Groups of fifteen or more can save up to thirty percent on A.C.T. ticket prices.

And group leaders see the show for free!

For information, call Linda Graham at (415) 346-7805.



## FIREMAN'S FUND FOUNDATION



Fireman's  
Fund  
Foundation

The Fireman's Fund Foundation, which celebrated its fifth consecutive year of A.C.T. sponsorship with last season's production of *Light up the Sky*, continues its more than twenty years of commitment to A.C.T. by cosponsoring this season's *The Play's the Thing*. "It's a delightful comedy with a title that fits both the subject and the central reason why we underwrite A.C.T.," says Barbara Friede, the Foundation's director. Marin-based Fireman's Fund Insurance Company ranks among the top twenty property casualty insurers in America. The

spirit of giving has been the Foundation's central focus since its inception in 1953. It has donated more than \$27 million to non-profit organizations nationwide—making it a priority to address needs within Marin County and to assist Bay Area cultural and artistic groups.

"One of our goals is to provide a financial foundation for the performing arts," says Friede. "That way the organizations we support can truly focus on their performances. It's a simple act of giving, really, that rewards the human spirit in all of us."

## HONORING A.C.T.'S FRIENDS

Enjoy working with diverse people and learning more about the theater? The Friends of A.C.T., the company's volunteer auxiliary, offers many opportunities for people interested in contributing their time and talent to A.C.T. Volunteers assist with mailings, usher at student matinee performances, work in the library, help with auditions, and more.

Friends do so much for A.C.T. throughout the year that we can never thank our volunteers enough for the critical support they provide. We would like to recognize the Friends listed below, who have volunteered during recent months:

Edwarda Adams	Celia Gersco	Roy Ortopan	Philip Shulman
Alison Augustin	Barbara Gerber	Miriam Perusse	Ellen Spinrod
Margo Babyak	Patrick Glennon	Terry Pickett	Sol Stecklow
Kate Bailey	Phyllis Honodel	Joe Ravicini	Sam Thai
Arnold Burton	Esther Jennings	Walter and Elaine	Ruth Tisdale
Maureen Dan	Bettye Krider	Riney	Betty Tsunada
Milton Epstein	Ines Lewandowitz	Joe Rosenthal	Isabel Wiel
Elaine Foreman	Gibson Mann	Beverly Saba	Don Williams
Phil Gerrard	Riva Mintz	Willis Scott	

For information about the Friends of A.C.T., please call (415) 834-3301.

## A.C.T. PRESENTS THE 1995 EUROPEAN THEATER TOUR!

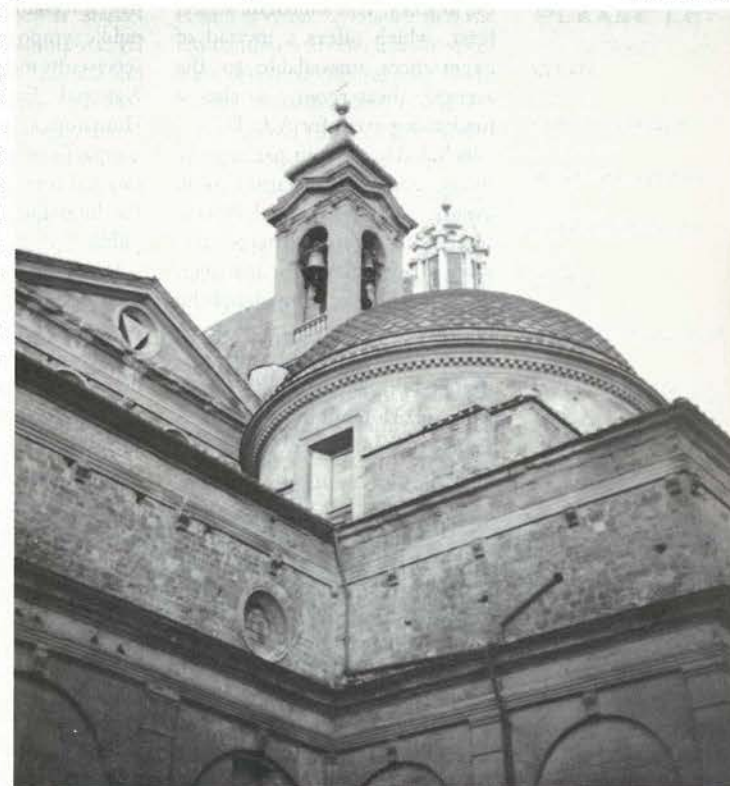
Indulge in a truly European theatrical adventure as A.C.T. and Tour Arts of San Francisco travel abroad for the sixteenth annual London theater tour—which this year for the first time ventures across the continent into sunny Italy. Departing San Francisco on May 31 and returning June 12, the tour will spend six days and five nights in London catching up on current shows and theater happenings before moving south to explore Pisa and beautiful Florence for an additional five days and four nights.

Most of the time in Britain will be packed with performances at London's major venues, including the Royal Court, the Barbican (home of the Royal Shakespeare Company), the National Theatre, and theaters in the West End. Tour members will have the rare opportunity to meet the artistic director of one of the lead-

the greatest cities in the world.

Then it's on to Italy: after stopping briefly to take in the leaning tower of Pisa, the tour reaches Florence on June 7. Highlights of this part of the trip include visits to such Florentine treasures as the Uffizi Galleries, the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Flowers, and the

*The cupola of the cathedral of San Lorenzo in Florence, at 6 a.m. (1978)*



Carey Perloff

ing companies, enjoy afternoon tea with a special celebrity guest, and debate the current state of British drama with one of London's prominent critics, with plenty of time off in between to explore one of

Bargello museum; a drive through the Tuscan landscape of the Val d'Arno to the Borro, a medieval hamlet far off the beaten track; a morning excursion to the majestic city of Siena; and performances of



the ballet at the Teatro della Pergola and opera at the Teatro Comunale. The tour will also be treated to a gourmet dinner *a piacere* at La Paterna, a family-run farm known only to local residents, which offers the very finest Tuscan cuisine and wine.

Hosting the London portion of the tour for the first time this year is A.C.T. Artistic Director Carey Perloff, whose unique insight into modern and classical drama will bring an invaluable perspective to the journey. This annual theatrical feast, which offers a myriad of experiences unavailable to the average theatergoer, is also a fundraising event for A.C.T.

Included in the tour package are tickets and transportation to all events, sightseeing, and discussions with theater experts, services of a resident tour manager, first-class hotels, many delightful meals, and a tax-deductible donation to A.C.T. For more information and brochures, contact Tour Arts at 231 Franklin Street, San Francisco, CA 94102, (415) 864-8565.

## A FRESH PERSPECTIVE FROM THE CALIFORNIA COUNCIL FOR THE HUMANITIES

The California Council for the Humanities has honored A.C.T. with a \$12,000 grant to fund "A.C.T. Perspectives," the company's second annual series of free public symposia. The CCH, which receives its major funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities, is an independent, nonpartisan organization whose mission is to bring the insights of the humanities to the California public.

Thanks to the generosity of the CCH, A.C.T. has again this season invited distinguished scholars and artists to discuss issues related to mainstage productions and to highlight the dramatic fusion of theater and contemporary life. In early January, the Marines Memorial Theatre audience explored millennial issues of faith and mortality raised by A.C.T.'s epic production of *Angels in America* with Reverend Alan Jones, Dean of San Francisco's Grace Cathedral; Yoruba priestess Louisah Teish; and authors Gerald Jampolsky, M.D. (founder of the Center for Attitudinal Healing in Tiburon) and Diane Victoria Cirincione (coauthor, with Jampol-

sky, of *Change Your Mind, Change Your Life*). Also on the dais in January were A.C.T. Artistic Director Carey Perloff and Professors Alice Rayner and Ruby Cohn, who engaged a full house at the Stage Door Theatre in a lively and provocative two-hour examination of the work of Britain's brightest twentieth-century playwrights, including David Storey (*Home*) and Tom Stoppard (*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*).

Still to come in the A.C.T. Perspectives season are: "Is Shakespeare Still Our Contemporary?" on May 8, 1995, and "*Hecuba* and the Culture of Revenge" on May 22, 1995, both at the Stage Door Theatre. The latter programs will focus on A.C.T.'s productions of *Othello* and *Hecuba*, respectively.

All symposia are held on selected Monday nights from 7 to 9 p.m. and are free of charge. For more information, call the A.C.T. box office at (415) 749-2ACT.

## A TIME FOR RENEWAL

Plans for the 1995-96 season—including A.C.T.'s historic return to the Geary Theater stage—are now in the works. Current subscribers will be the first to receive information about the new season's seven outstanding plays, as well as the chance to reserve seats in the renovated Geary, in late March, as A.C.T.'s subscription renewal campaign gets underway. Anyone else interested in subscribing to A.C.T. should call the subscription office at (415) 749-2250.

## AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE ABOUT GRANTS FOR THE ARTS

More than 170 San Francisco institutions currently receive funding from Grants for the Arts of the San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund (GFTA). These grants, which constitute A.C.T.'s single largest source of contributed income, use tourism-generated revenue to ensure that the city continues to offer a broad spectrum of diverse cultural activities to the Bay Area's thousands of visitors.

In 1993 and 1994, GFTA-funded budgets were frozen at their 1992 level, presenting serious implications for A.C.T. and other GFTA recipients, who each year struggle to present artistic programming at the highest level of excellence while constrained by steadily decreasing contributed revenues. As the city's budget process for the 1995 fiscal year commences, all San Francisco arts organizations and their audiences are uniting to ask Mayor Jordan and the board of supervisors to lift the GFTA freeze: hotel occupancy rates have been high during the past year, and revenues to the Hotel Tax Fund are up. By passing this prosperity on to the city's cultural institutions, we can enhance San Francisco's artistic reputation, attracting even more visitors—and tourist dollars—to the local economy.

Please let our officials know how important city funding for the arts is to you by filling out a postcard available from the house manager. We'll do the mailing. Thank you for your support.

PLEASE LET  
OUR  
OFFICIALS  
KNOW HOW  
IMPORTANT  
CITY  
FUNDING OF  
THE ARTS IS  
TO YOU.

Work proceeds on the reconstruction of A.C.T.'s historic Geary Theater, scheduled to reopen during the 1995-96 season.





## THE A.C.T. SUMMER TRAINING CONGRESS

Soon it will be time to enroll in the A.C.T. Conservatory's annual intensive acting program—the Summer Training Congress (STC). With an eight-week full-time schedule beginning in mid-

June, the STC is designed for anyone aged nineteen or above who wishes to study the craft of acting in a professional environment. From 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday, A.C.T. company members and faculty instruct students in a rigorous dramatic course including physical acting, vocal production, dance, stage combat, Alexander Technique, improvisation, theater games, audition technique, and seminars on playwriting and Shakespeare. The summer's work culminates in a week-long presentation of graduation scene work.

Every year the STC attracts hundreds of applicants from around the country, ranging from high school graduates and college students to teachers and professional actors. Students are organized into small groups to ensure maximum individual attention, facilitating exposure to the full range of the program. A certificate of completion is awarded upon graduation.

The STC provides the opportunity for every student to grow as an artist and as a person in a positive and supportive atmosphere. It is an intensive and exciting challenge—for many it is a summer never to be forgotten.

The application deadline for the 1995 Summer Training Congress is May 15. Please call (415) 834-

3350 for application materials and more information. ■



Students in the A.C.T. Conservatory's Advanced Training Program (left to right): Kimberly Mohne, Christopher Moseley, Leith Burke, and Debbie Carriger

*continued from page 28*

could buy anything that suited their style."

The chance to do the *adaptation* of a play, then—in effect to have the plot handed to him—must have been heartily welcomed by Wodehouse. ("Adaptations are pie," he would say.) Moreover, it took some of the perceived risk out of the hands of a writer both fascinated and vexed by the vagary of theatrical success. "I was the man," he wrote in 1956, "who said that *Show Boat* and *On the Spot* couldn't possibly succeed and that no one could ever make *Pygmalion* into a musical."

### "THREE DAYS ON A MAN'S YACHT"

"Everyone thinks I did such a marvelous job on *The Play's the Thing*," said Wodehouse, "whereas in fact it was ninety-nine percent Molnár and one percent P.G.W. I simply put Molnár's dialogue into idiomatic English. Took me three days in longhand on a man's yacht." The "yacht" was actually a small boat on the moat of Hunstanton Hall, a grand estate in Norfolk where Plum and his wife, Ethel, spent the summer of 1926:

*I spend most of my time on the moat. . . . I'm writing this in the punt with my typewriter on a bed-table wobbling on one of the seats. There is a duck close by which utters occasional quacks that sound like a man with an unpleasant voice saying nasty things in an undertone.*

While keeping Molnár's structure intact, Wodehouse rearranged a few speeches, toned down some of the dialogue to pacify prudish American sensibili-

ties (while retaining enough suggestiveness to establish Almaday's amorous intentions in Ilona's bedroom), added a couple of lackeys to the background, and—ever-alert to the dramatic utility of the serving class—expanded Mell and Dwornitschek's bantering dialogue at the beginning of Act III. "To the dramatist," wrote Wodehouse, "a butler is indispensable. Eliminate him, and who is to enter rooms at critical moments when, if another word were spoken, the play would end immediately? Who is to fill in gaps by coming in with the tea-things, telegrams, the evening paper, and cocktails?"

Wodehouse—who despaired of ever being able to write "serious stuff"—recognized in *The Play's the Thing* the opportunity to partner with a fellow humorist, a breed of writer he found somewhat maligned and misunderstood. Molnár's play also fit perfectly his notion of what would work on the American stage. "American audiences want plays about the relationship of men and women," he wrote to Bolton in 1951. "I doubt if you can get by with a story which doesn't deal primarily with sex relations." As history has proven, Wodehouse was correct about the appeal of *The Play's the Thing*, which ran for 326 performances in 1926, and another 240 nights in its 1948 Broadway revival.

Molnár apparently never forgot Wodehouse's skill. In 1947 Plum reported meeting the Hungarian at the casino in Cannes: "[Molnár] stopped the play at the table for about five minutes while he delivered a long speech in praise of me—in French, unfortunately, so I couldn't understand it, not being

“THE  
PLAY'S THE  
THING . . .  
WAS 99%  
MOLNÁR  
AND 1%  
P.G.W.”



the linguist then that I am today." Molnár later insisted that Wodehouse also adapt his *Arthur*, a drawing-room comedy first performed in the United States off Broadway in 1978, and the unproduced *Game of Hearts*, based on Molnár's comedy *Pit-a-Pat*.

#### "EXIT, PURSUED BY A BEAR"

After the Second World War, Wodehouse's theatrical efforts generally met with less success, but he seemed to come to terms with insecurity about his dramatic writing. True to his playful character, though, he continued to couch whatever self-confidence he felt in humorous, "Jeevesian" terms:

*I suppose the fundamental distinction between Shakespeare and myself is one of treatment. We get our effects differently. Take the familiar farce situation of the man who suddenly discovers that something unpleasant is standing behind him. In The Winter's Tale, Act Three, Scene Three, here is how Shakespeare handles it:*

*Farewell!*

*The day frowns more and more: I never saw  
The heavens so dim by day. A  
savage clamour!  
Well may I get aboard! This is  
the chase:  
I am gone forever.*

*(Exit, pursued by a bear.)*

*I should have adopted a somewhat different approach. Thus:*

*I gave the man one of my  
looks.*

*"Touch of indigestion,  
Jeeves?"*

*"No, sir."*

*"Then why is your tummy  
rumbling?"*

*"Pardon me, sir, the noise to which you allude does not emanate from my interior but from that of the animal that has just joined us."*

*"Animal? What animal?"*

*"A bear, sir. If you will turn your head, you will observe that a bear is standing in your immediate rear inspecting you in a somewhat menacing manner."*

*I pivoted the loaf. The honest fellow was perfectly correct. It was a bear. And not a small bear, either. One of the large economy size. Its eye was bleak, it gnashed a tooth or two, and I could see at a glance that it was going to be difficult to find a formula acceptable to all parties.*

*"Advise me, Jeeves," I yipped.  
"What do I do for the best?"*

*"I fancy it might be judicious for you to exit, sir."*

*No sooner said than done. I streaked for the horizon, closely followed by the dumb chum. And that, boys and girls, is how your grandfather clipped six seconds off the world's mile record.*

*Who can say which method is superior?*

The validation of Wodehouse's ability as a writer rests in the continuing popularity of his books, two decades after his passing. As for his work for the stage, particularly the continued revivals of *The Play's the Thing*, one can only say that the proof is in the pudding. Plum pudding. ■

Jeff Adams is a Bay Area writer of unpublished novels and short stories.

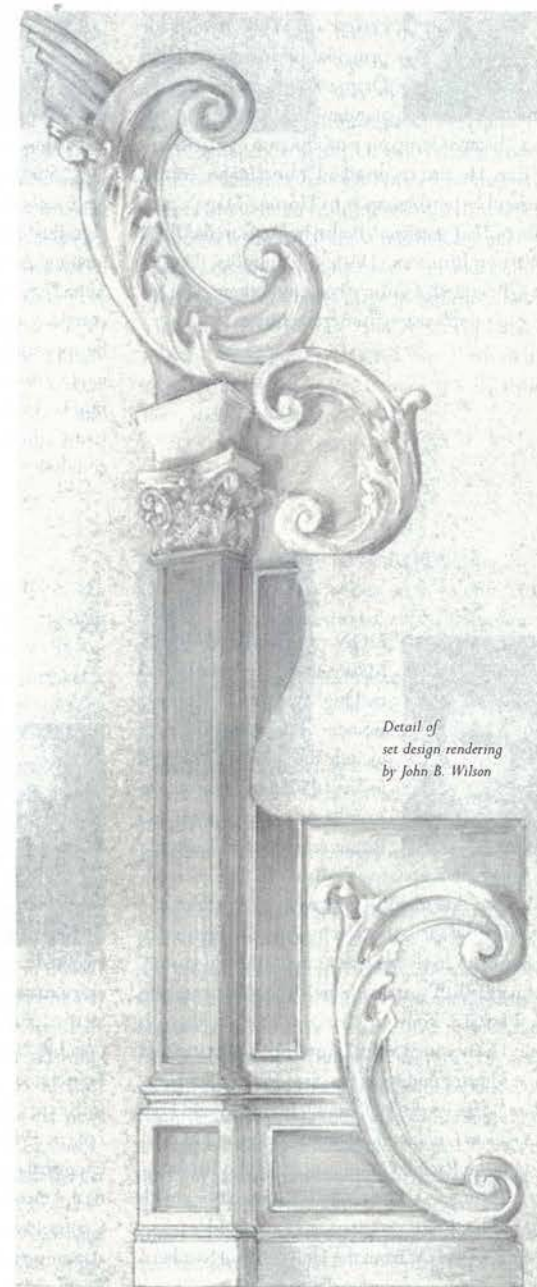
## SARDOODLEDOM

In the play within *The Play's the Thing*, Ferenc Molnár parodies the silly comedies of late-nineteenth-century French playwright Victorien Sardou (1831-1908).

Considered a master of the "well-made play," Sardou was (in)famous for the outspoken fondness of audiences, and the heartfelt contempt of critics, for his inane, unabashedly formulaic plays. Bernard Shaw, who hated everything Sardou stood for, coined the term "Sardoodledom" to describe his conveniently clever plots, simplistic characterizations, ridiculously extravagant staging, and willingness to pander to popular tastes.

Sardou wrote seventy-eight plays, including sweeping historical melodramas and farces that lampooned French society at the end of the Second Empire. He wrote many of his later works for Sarah Bernhardt, including such potboilers as *La Tosca* (1887) and *Fédora* (1882) (on which operas were based by Puccini and Giordano, respectively), *Théodora* (1884), and *Cléopâtre* (1890) (in which he had Bernhardt play the death scene with live garter snakes). Sardou's comedies were equally successful: his historical farce *Madame Sans-Gêne*—about Napoleon's washerwoman—also served as the basis for an opera by Giordano, and *La famille Benoiton* (1865), *Divorçons* (*Let's Get a Divorce*, 1880) and *Nos bons villageois* (*Our Good Yokels*, 1866) are considered among his "best" works.

—E.B.



Detail of  
set design rendering  
by John B. Wilson





**JOE BELLAN** (*Dwornitschek*) has been nominated for four Bay Area Theatre Critics' Circle (BATCC) Awards. He received a BATCC Award for principal performance and a Drama-Logue Award for outstanding achievement in the

Eureka Theatre Company's production of Dario Fo's *About Face*. He also received a Drama-Logue Award for ensemble performance in Upstart Stage's production of *The Professional*. Bellan has appeared in films for Warner Brothers, Disney, Columbia, United Artists, Twentieth Century Fox, and others, and has been seen on television numerous times.



**DON BURROUGHS** (*Albert Adam*) is pleased to be making his A.C.T. debut. Recent Bay Area credits include the role of B.J. Gibson in *The 1940s Radio Hour* at San Jose Repertory Theatre, and Romeo and other roles during

California Shakespeare Festival's 1994 season. Regional credits include portrayals of Posthumus/Cloten in *Cymbeline*, the Son in Tony Kushner's *The Illusion*, Silvius in *As You Like It*, and other roles during four and a half years with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF); Tony in *West Side Story* at the 5th Avenue Theater in Seattle; Lieutenant Cable in *South Pacific* at Theater under the Stars in Houston; and Perchick in *Fiddler on the Roof*, Young Ebenezer and Fred in *A Christmas Carol*, and other roles during four seasons with the Pacific Conservatory of the Performing Arts Theaterfest. Burroughs has toured twice with the OSF School Visit Program as an actor and teacher. He received a B.F.A. from the University of Southern California and has extensive dance training.



**MICHAEL FITZPATRICK** (*Lackey*), a graduate of the A.C.T. Advanced Training Program, is the recipient of the Burt and DeeDee McMurtrey Professional Theater Intern Fellowship. He has been seen on A.C.T.'s main-

stage this season in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. Studio productions at A.C.T. included *Awake and Sing*, *Light up the Sky*, and *The Lower Depths*. He is also a graduate of the Pacific Conservatory of the Performing Arts (P.C.P.A.) and attended the College of Santa Fe in New Mexico. As a member of the P.C.P.A. company and a teacher in their Young Conservatory, he appeared in *Big River*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, *The Normal Heart*, and *Baby*, among others. Fitzpatrick has also worked at many Sacramento theaters, winning six Elly Awards for acting and design.



**KEN GRANTHAM** (*Mansky*) appeared this season at A.C.T. in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, directed by Richard Seyd. He has acted with Houston's Alley Theatre, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, the Eureka Theatre Company

(where he served as associate artistic director and literary manager), the Magic Theatre, and the Z Collective, and in such long-running hits as *Dear Master*, *Cloud 9*, *Noises Off*, and *Dracula*. A cofounder of San Francisco's Magic Theatre, he directed John O'Keefe's *Chamber Piece* there in 1971 and *All Night Long* in 1980. He has also directed for the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, Berkeley Shakespeare Festival, Lincoln Center Performance Ensemble, Lincoln Center Institute for the Arts, and numerous colleges and universities. Recently he directed *Keely and Du* and *Death and the Maiden* for the Alley Theatre.



**DAN HIATT** (*Mell*) has performed in dozens of plays in the Bay Area over the past twenty years or so. Most recently, he appeared in *Laughing Wild* at the Mason Street Theatre, which followed an extended run in the role of

Lucky in *Waiting for Godot* at the Y Theatre in the Tenderloin. His most recent A.C.T. appearance was as Guildenstern in this season's production of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. Other favorites include *The Pope and the Witch* at A.C.T., *Lips Together Teeth Apart*, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, and *Born Yesterday* at Marin Theatre Company; *As You Like It*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *King Lear*, *The Winter's Tale*, and others at the California Shakespeare Festival; *Noises Off*, *Greater Tuna*, and *Curse of the Werewolf* at various theaters; and *Undiscovered Country* and *The Way of the World* at the Huntington Theatre in Boston.



**KIMBERLY KING** (*Ilona Szabo*) has appeared in theaters across the country, including the Alley Theatre, McCarter Theatre, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Circle Repertory Theatre and TheatreWorks/USA in New York, Hunting-

ton Theatre, Asolo Center for the Performing Arts, and Great Lakes Theatre Festival, among others. Her leading roles have included Keely in *Keely and Du* (directed by Ken Grantham); Aggie in *Dancing at Lughnasa*; Susan in *Woman in Mind*; Amanda, Elvira, and other Noel Coward women; Titania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; Dorine, Mariane, and Elmire in *Tartuffe*; and Isabella in *Measure for Measure*. A lyric coloratura soprano, King has sung many opera and musical theater roles. She had a leading role in the film *Promises* and won critics' circle awards for her portrayals of Keely in *Keely and Du*, Aggie in *Lughnasa*, Elvira in *Blithe Spirit*, and the psychotic Susan in *Woman in Mind*. She appeared as Candida in the Aurora Theatre's inaugural production, directed by Barbara Oliver. She is married to actor/director Ken Grantham.



**STEPHEN MARKLE** (*Almady*) appeared with Amy Tribbey in last season's A.C.T. production of *Oleanna*, directed by Richard Seyd. He has worked on and off Broadway and at regional theaters throughout the country since

1969. In June he will play Orson Welles in a one-man show on which he has collaborated with playwright Robert Montgomery (*Subject to Fits*) at the Public Theatre in New York. His most recent stage appearance was as Lopakhin in Irene Lewis's production of *The Cherry Orchard* at Center Stage in Baltimore. Markle's television credits include "Star Trek—The Next Generation," "Wiseguy," and "Civil Wars." His film work includes *Ticket to Heaven*, *Invasion U.S.A.*, *Without a Trace*, and *The Manhattan Project*.



**KEN RUITA** (*Sandor Turai*) appeared in *Tartuffe*, A.C.T.'s first Geary Theater production, in 1967 and remained as a leading actor with the company for six seasons, returning in 1982 to direct *Loot*. He has appeared most recently at

A.C.T. in *Light up the Sky*, *Uncle Vanya*, and *Antigone*. His performances in *The Floating Light Bulb*, *The Immigrant*, and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* were honored with Bay Area Theatre Critics' Circle and Drama-Logue Awards. Last year he was similarly honored for his performance in *Substance of Fire* at the Magic Theatre, and his performance in *Shadowlands* earned him the Helen Hayes Best Actor Award nomination for 1994. Last fall he directed *Love's Labor's Lost* and *Macbeth* for A.C.T.'s Advanced Training Program. He acted in more than thirty productions at Minneapolis's Tyrone Guthrie Theater, where he was a founding member and served as associate director from 1975 to 1978, directing *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Doctor Faustus*, and *La Ronde*. He is an Associate Artist of San Diego's Old Globe Theatre, where he has played roles from King Lear to Bottom and directed the plays of Shakespeare, Molière, and Stoppard. He has also acted and directed



for the Mark Taper Forum, Huntington Theatre Company, and Arizona Theatre Company (where he also served as associate artistic director from 1984 to 1986). Recent favorite roles include *King Lear* at Actors' Theatre of Louisville, *Titus Andronicus* at the Utah Shakespearean Festival, Prospero in Seattle Repertory Theatre's *The Tempest*, and Captain Hook in the Intiman Theatre Company's *Peter Pan*. He appeared in the Broadway productions of *Inherit the Wind*, *Separate Tables*, *Ross*, *The Three Sisters*, and *The Elephant Man* and has performed and directed with the opera companies of Dallas, Sacramento, and Minnesota, as well as Chicago's Lyric Opera and the Minnesota Orchestra.



**GABRIEL SEBASTIAN** (*Lackey*) is new to the Bay Area. He has spent the last five years in Chicago, where he attended the theater school at DePaul University and was seen as Vershinin in *The Three Sisters*, Prosper Block in *A Scrap of Paper*, and Harry Bagley in *Cloud Nine*.



**DARREN BRIDGETT** (*Understudy*) most recently appeared as Orlando in *As You Like It* at TheatreWorks in Palo Alto. Other TheatreWorks credits include Richard in *Ah Wilderness!*, for which he received a 1994 Drama-

Logue Award, and supporting roles in the West Coast premiere of *Nagasaki Dust*. He has been seen as Gunnar in *Vikings* with Center Repertory Company and Octavio Caesar in *Caesar*, directed by Charles Marowitz. He apprenticed with the California Shakespeare Festival during their first season in Orinda, appearing in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *King Lear*, and *All's Well That Ends Well*. He can be seen in the upcoming film *Sunflower Boy*.



**TOM LENOCI** (*Understudy*), recipient of the Shep Pollack and Paulette Long Professional Theater Intern Fellowship, is a 1993 graduate of A.C.T.'s Advanced Training Program. At A.C.T. he has appeared in mainstage productions of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, *Home*, and *The Duchess of Malfi*, as well as studio productions of *A Prayer for My Daughter*, *Cymbeline*, *Ivanov* (in the title role), and *The Lower Depths*. Bay Area credits also include *25 Fish in Dogpatch* for the Bay Area Playwrights' Festival, *Shadowlands* at Marin Theatre Company, David Barth's *A Dance along the Precipice* at Intersection for the Arts, and the role of Barry, the best man, in the San Francisco production of *Tony 'N' Tina's Wedding*.



**BREN MCELROY** (*Understudy*), recipient of the Jerry and Maria Markowitz Professional Theater Intern Fellowship, is a 1994 graduate and M.F.A. candidate of A.C.T.'s Advanced Training Program, where her studio credits include Yelena in *Uncle Vanya* and Irene in *Light up the Sky*. At the New Jersey Shakespeare Festival she appeared in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Diary of a Scoundrel*, among others. She earned her B.A. at Kenyon College, where she received the Joanne Woodward Acting Trophy, and has received awards from the National Forensic League and the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts.

**JOHN B. WILSON** (*Scenic Designer*) dedicates his work on this production to the memory of Jim Ponder. Wilson previously designed *Saturday*, *Sunday* and *Monday* at A.C.T. For the Magic Theatre, he designed *Playland* (also directed by Benvy Sato Ambush), *Break-*

*ing the Code*, *Suicide in B-Flat*, *All Night Long*, and fifteen other plays, including seven world premieres. Wilson has also designed in theaters across the country, including the Folger Shakespeare Theatre, J. Paul Getty Museum, Studio Arena Theatre, and the American Theatre Exchange in New York. Locally he has designed for Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Artists Confronting AIDS, California Shakespeare Festival, San Jose Repertory Theatre, TheatreWorks, Marin Theatre Company, San Francisco Opera Center, San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, Western Stage, California Theatre Center, Eureka Theatre Company, and many others. Wilson holds graduate degrees from Carnegie-Mellon University and San Francisco State University. He currently teaches at Stanford University and San Francisco State.

**CHRISTINE DOUGHERTY** (*Costume Designer*) has also designed costumes at A.C.T. for *The Pope and the Witch* and *Taking Steps*. For Berkeley Repertory Theatre she has designed *Geni(us)*, *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *Mother Jones*, *Speed the Plow*, and *Life during Wartime*. Other Bay Area credits include work for the California Shakespeare Festival and San Jose Repertory Theatre. Most recently she designed the world premiere of John Pielmeier's *Voices in the Dark* for A Contemporary Theater in Seattle. She has also designed for the John Houseman Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse, Old Globe Theatre, Studio Arena Theatre, San Diego Repertory Theatre, and Westwood Playhouse. Her opera work includes designs for the Long Beach Opera, Valparaiso Music Festival, and Opera San Jose. Dance credits include designs for choreographers Jose Limon, Amy Osgood, and John McFall. She has worked with her father, Ted Dougherty, on many of Bulgarian artist Christo Javacheff's projects since 1976. She received her M.F.A. from the University of California, San Diego.

**PETER MARADUDIN** (*Lighting Designer*), designer in residence at A.C.T., has designed *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, *Home*, *Oleanna*, *Full*

*Moon*, *Scapin*, *Uncle Vanya*, *Pecong*, *Pygmalion*, *The Learned Ladies*, and *Antigone*. On Broadway, he designed the lighting for *The Kentucky Cycle* and *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, and for regional theater he has designed more than one hundred and fifty productions for such companies as the Guthrie Theatre, Kennedy Center, Mark Taper Forum, La Jolla Playhouse, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Old Globe Theatre, Alliance Theatre Company, Pittsburgh Public Theatre, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and South Coast Repertory. Other recent Bay Area productions include *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and *The Woman Warrior* for Berkeley Repertory Theatre. Maradudin has received four Los Angeles Theatre Critics' Circle Awards, twenty Drama-Logue Awards, and an Angstrom Award for lifetime achievement in lighting design.

**DAVID TORGERSEN** (*Sound Designer*) is the resident sound designer for Antenna Theater, where he has worked on eight original plays and more than one hundred audio productions. Recent shows include *Enola Alone*, *The Appearance of Civilization*, and *On Sight in Sausalito*, for which he won the 1993 Bay Area Theatre Critics' Circle Award for best sound design. Other local shows include *Dream of a Common Language* and *A View from the Bridge* at Berkeley Repertory Theatre. This is his first production with A.C.T.

**ALICE ELLIOTT SMITH** (*Stage Manager*) is in her seventeenth season at A.C.T., where she has been the company's master scheduler, production coordinator of Plays in Progress, and director of staged readings and studio and Plays in Progress productions. A partial listing of her stage-managing credits includes *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*, *The Learned Ladies*, *Pecong*, *Uncle Vanya*, *Oleanna*, and *Home*.



Smith is also program director of the Beckett Prison Project, producing the works of Samuel Beckett in maximum security prisons.

**STEVEN LUKENS** (*Assistant Stage Manager*) most recently served as assistant stage manager for *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, *Full Moon*, *Uncle Vanya*, and *Pecong* at A.C.T. He was production stage manager for Encore Theatre Company for three seasons, where he worked on productions of *Down the Road*, *Uncle Vanya*, and *Road to Nirvana*. He was also on the stage management staff for *Assassins* at 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.

**JULIET N. POKORNY** (*Assistant Stage Manager*) has stage-managed in the Bay Area for eight years at venues including the Magic Theatre, Marin Theatre Company, California Shakespeare Festival, Marines Memorial Theatre, and Berkeley Repertory Theatre. She has also served as production stage manager for such commercial shows as *Tony 'N' Tina's Wedding* and *Pageant*.

**NANCY HOUEK** (*Vocal Coach*) returns to A.C.T. after a five-year hiatus. An actor and director as well as a coach, she has performed with A.C.T., the Denver Center Theatre Company, the California Shakespeare Festival, San Jose Repertory Theatre, and the Alaska Repertory Theatre Company, among others. She won a Los Angeles Drama-Logue Award for her performance as Josie Hogan in *Moon for the Misbegotten* at the Magic Theatre. Currently Houfek is on leave from the University of Minnesota, where she teaches voice, speech, dialects, and Shakespeare. She has coached for A.C.T., The Guthrie Theatre, the Cricket Theatre, the Great American History Theatre, and

KTCA's "Newton's Apple." A graduate of Stanford University, she received her M.F.A. from A.C.T.

**NICOLE GALLAND** (*Assistant Director*), an actor, writer, and director, recently directed *Loot* for J2M Productions and played Yelena in *Uncle Vanya* in Mendocino. From New York and Massachusetts, she received an honors degree from Harvard University. Her previous assistant directing work includes productions for Berkeley Repertory Theatre and the California Shakespeare Festival.

**CAROLINE GIRGIS** (*Assistant Director*) studied music and Italian literature at the University of Southern California and received her M.A. from the University of Chicago. She has been associated with the San Francisco Opera Center for three years and directed productions for the Center's Western Opera Theater Tour in 1993 and 1994. She has also worked with the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Opera Company of Philadelphia, and, locally, TheatreWorks in Palo Alto and Opera San Jose.

## ADDITIONAL CREDITS

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**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*, last season's acclaimed *Uncle Vanya*, and this season's *Home*, by David Storey. In 1993 she staged the world premiere of Steve Reich and Beryl Korot's new music-theater-video opera *The Cave* at the Vienna Festival, which was subsequently presented at the Hebbel Theater in Berlin, Royal Festival Hall in London, and Next Wave Festival at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. 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's *The Tower of Evil*, Beckett's *Happy Days* (with Charlotte Rae), Brecht's *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* (with John Turturro), and Len Jenkin's *Candide*. Under her direction, CSC won the 1988 Obie Award for artistic excellence, as well as numerous Obies for acting, design, and production.

Perloff has directed and developed numerous new plays and translations and is completing work with Timberlake Wertenbaker on a new version of Euripides' *Hecuba* for A.C.T. to be produced in the spring of 1995. 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 earned the Los Angeles Drama Critics' Circle Award for best production). 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 is the proud mother of Lexie and Nicholas.



**BENNY SATO AMBUSH** (*Associate Artistic Director*) has directed at A.C.T. *Miss Evers' Boys* and *Pecong* (each nominated for eight, and each winning three, Bay Area Theatre Critics' Circle Awards), and *Full Moon*. For A.C.T.'s

1990-91 Plays-in-Progress series, he directed *Pigeon Egghead*, a play about Native Americans which helped inspire the creation of a new Bay Area Native American theater company, Turtle Island Ensemble, currently operating under A.C.T.'s auspices. Other regional directing credits include *Playland* at the Magic Theatre; the world premiere of *Out of Purgatory* at the Old Globe Theatre (which won Ambush a nomination for the Los Angeles Robbie Award for best director of a drama); *Miss Evers' Boys* at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival (filmed excerpts from which appeared in *Deadly Deception* on the acclaimed PBS series "Nova" in 1993); *Fences* at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Portland; and Sherley Anne Williams's *Letters from a New England Negro* for the 1991 National Black Theater Festival and the 1992 International Theater Festival of Chicago (the only American entry). He has also directed the annual Bay Area McDonald's Gospel Fest since 1990.

Before joining A.C.T., Ambush was the Artistic/Producing Director of the Oakland Ensemble Theatre (1982-90), Oakland's first and only resident professional theater, where his directing credits included *Division Street*, *A Night at the Apollo*, *MLK: We Are the Dream*, *Tamer of Horses*, and *Alterations* (which won a Drama-Logue Award for outstanding direction in 1985). He is a board member of Theatre Communications Group and the Bay Area Playwrights' Foundation, producers of the annual Bay Area Playwrights' Festival. He has been active locally, regionally, and nationally in advocacy for cultural equity, non-traditional casting, and pluralism in American art. Ambush received his B.A. from Brown University and his M.F.A. from the University of California, San Diego.





**RICHARD SEYD** (*Associate Artistic Director*) was appointed Associate Artistic Director of A.C.T. in 1992. He has received Drama-Logue and Bay Area Theatre Critics' Circle Awards for his productions of *Cloud 9*, *About Face*, and *Noises*

*Off*. As Associate Producing Director of the Eureka Theatre 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 Marines Memorial Theatre; *A View from the Bridge* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* for Berkeley Repertory Theatre; *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 Theatre Center; *Born Yesterday* at Marin Theatre Company; and *King Lear* at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Portland. For A.C.T. he has directed *The Learned Ladies*, the American premiere of Dario Fo's *The Pope and the Witch*, Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*, and the Bay Area premiere of David Mamet's *Oleanna*. This season at A.C.T. he directs Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* and Shakespeare's *Othello*.

**THOMAS W. FLYNN** (*Administrative Director*) became A.C.T.'s Administrative Director in the fall of 1993. For the previous three years, he was A.C.T.'s Director of Development and Community Affairs. Flynn has also served as Campaign Director for the Geary Theater Campaign. Prior to joining A.C.T., he held development positions at the Boston Ballet, the Handel and Haydn Society, and Tufts University. Flynn studied East Asian History at Harvard College. He has been a recipient of the Henry Russell Shaw Traveling Fellowship, conducting research on European architecture, and a Management Fellowship from the American Symphony Orchestra League. Flynn is currently a member of the San Francisco Arts Commission.

**JAMES HAIRE** (*Producing Director*) began his career on Broadway with Eva Le Gallienne's National Repertory Theater. Among the productions he managed were *The Madwoman of Chaillot* (with Le Gallienne, Sylvia Sydney, and Leora Dana), *A Touch of the Poet* (with Denholm Elliott), *The Seagull* (with Farley Granger), *The Rivals*, *John Brown's Body*, *She Stoops to Conquer*, and *The Comedy of Errors*. He also stage-managed the Broadway productions of *Georgy* (a musical by Carole Bayer Sager), *And Miss Reardon Drinks a Little* (with Julie Harris and Estelle Parsons), as well as the national tour of Woody Allen's *Don't Drink the Water*. Off Broadway he produced Ibsen's *Little Eyolf* (directed by Marshall W. Mason) and Shaw's *Arms and the Man*. Haire joined A.C.T. in 1971 as Production Stage Manager. In 1985 he was appointed Production Director, and in 1993 he assumed his current position. He and his department were awarded Theater Crafts International's award for excellence in the theater in 1989, and in 1992 Haire was awarded a lifetime achievement award by the Bay Area Theatre Critics' Circle.

**JOHN LOSCHMANN** (*Conservatory Executive Director*) has been working at the American Conservatory Theater for fourteen years teaching ballet, musical theater, and acting and directing student projects. He has also taught at Northern Illinois University and San Jose State University, and for eight years he was a teacher and dancer with the Pacific Ballet. Loschmann won a Bay Area Theatre Critics' Circle Award for his portrayal of Gregor Samsa in the San Francisco Theatre Project's acclaimed production of Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, which went to the Edinburgh Theatre Festival in Scotland. He graduated from Antioch University with a degree in dance and has an M.F.A. in acting from A.C.T.

**CRAIG SLAIGHT** (*Young Conservatory Director*) spent ten years in Los Angeles directing theater and television before joining A.C.T. in 1988. An award-winning educator, Slaight is a consultant to the Educational Theater Association, a panel member for the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts, and a frequent guest speaker and adjudicator throughout the country. In 1989, he founded the Young Conservatory's New Plays Program; to date eight new works by professional playwrights have been de-

veloped, five of which have been published by Smith & Kraus in *New Plays from A.C.T.'s Young Conservatory*.

**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*, *Cyrano 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, *A Christmas Carol*, was written with Laird Williamson, who was also his collaborator on *Christmas Miracles*, which premiered at the Denver Center Theatre Company in 1985 and was later published. Among the other theaters with which he has been associated are the Long Wharf Theatre in New Haven, Stanford Repertory Theater, Pacific Conservatory of the Performing Arts, and San Francisco's Valencia Rose Cabaret Theater. Powers's reviews and articles have appeared in the *New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Saturday Review*, *Los Angeles Times*, *American Arts*, and *San Francisco Chronicle*.

**MERYL LIND SHAW** (*Casting Director*) joined the A.C.T. artistic staff in 1993 after sixteen years as a regular in the Bay Area theater community, where she has stage-managed more than sixty productions. At A.C.T., she stage-managed *Bon Appétit!* and *Creditors*. She was Resident Stage Manager at Berkeley Repertory Theatre 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 Theatre, Alcazar Theater, and Center Stage in Baltimore. She directed *Willa and Marie* at the Julia Morgan Theatre, 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 Theatre, *The Cherry Orchard* at the Eureka Theatre, *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 team for the current L.O.R.T. contract.

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*For more information about the Leadership Campaign for American Theatre, please contact the A.C.T. development department.*

## 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

The A.C.T. Central Box Office is located at 405 Geary Street at Mason, next to the Geary Theater, one block west of Union Square. Central Box Office hours are 12 to 7 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, and 12 to 6 p.m. Sunday and Monday.

### Box Offices at the Stage Door, Marines Memorial, and Center for the Arts Theaters:

Full-service box offices are open 90 minutes before each performance in these venues.

### Bass:

A.C.T. tickets are also available at all Bass centers, including The Warehouse and Tower Records/Video.

### Ticket Information / Charge by Phone / Charge by Fax:

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

### Ticket Policy:

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

### TICKET PRICES

*Stage Door /  
Marines Memorial /  
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#### Previews:

Orchestra/Loge	\$24	*\$25
Balcony	\$19	
Gallery	\$11	

#### Sunday / Tuesday / Wednesday / Thursday

Orchestra/Loge	\$32	*\$35
Balcony	\$25	
Gallery	\$13	

#### Friday / Saturday

Orchestra/Loge	\$39	*\$45
Balcony	\$30	
Gallery	\$15	

\*Indicates prices for *Angels in America*.

### Subscriptions:

Seven-play season subscribers save up to 31% and receive special benefits including parking, restaurant, and extra-ticket discounts, the ability to reschedule performance dates by phone, and more. Call the Subscription Hotline at (415) 749-2250.

### Discounts:

Half-price tickets are sometimes available on the day of performance at TIX on Union Square in San Francisco. Half-price student and senior rush tickets are available at the theater box office up to 90 minutes prior to curtain. Matinee senior rush price is \$6. All rush tickets are subject to availability, one ticket per valid I.D. Student subscriptions are also available at half off the box-office prices.

### Group Discounts:

For groups of 15 or more, call Linda Graham at (415) 346-7805 for special savings.

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### SPECIAL PROGRAMS

#### A.C.T. Prologues:

A series of one-hour discussions conducted by noted actors, directors, and designers who introduce each new A.C.T. production. Presented before the Tuesday evening preview of each production, in the same theater as the evening's performance, from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Doors open at 5 p.m. Sponsored by the Junior League of San Francisco.

#### A.C.T. Audience Exchanges:

Informal audience discussions moderated by members of the A.C.T. staff, held after selected performances. For information, call (415) 749-2ACT.

#### A.C.T. Perspectives:

A symposium series held from 7 to 9 p.m. on selected Monday evenings throughout the season, featuring in-depth panel discussions by noted scholars and professionals. Topics range from aspects of the season's productions to the general relation of theater and the arts to American culture. The symposia are free of charge and open to everyone. For information, call (415) 749-2ACT.

#### Student Matinees:

Matinees offered at 1 p.m. to elementary, secondary, and college groups for selected productions. Tickets are specially priced at \$8. For information, call Jane Tarver, Student Matinee Coordinator, at (415) 749-2230.



## FOR YOUR INFORMATION

### "Words on Plays":

Handbooks containing a synopsis and background information on each of the season's plays can be mailed in advance to Full Season subscribers for the special price of \$24 for the entire season. A limited number of copies of individual handbooks are also available for purchase by single-ticket holders at the A.C.T. Central Box Office for \$5 each (sorry, no phone or mail orders for individual handbooks). For information, call (415) 749-2ACT.

### Conservatory:

The A.C.T. Conservatory offers classes, training, and advanced theater study. The Young Conservatory offers training for students between the ages of 8 and 18. Call (415) 749-2350 for a free brochure.

### Costume Rental:

A large collection of costumes, ranging from hand-made period garments to modern sportswear, is available for rental by schools, theaters, production companies, and individuals. Call (415) 749-2296 for more information.

### Parking:

A.C.T. patrons can park for just \$6 at the San Francisco Hilton and Towers. Enter on Ellis Street between Mason and Taylor. Show your ticket stub for that day's performance upon exit to receive the special price for up to five hours of parking, subject to availability. Full Season subscribers enjoy an even greater discount. (Subscriber discount parking packages are already sold out.)

### AT THE THEATER

#### Beeper!

If you carry a pager, beeper, watch, or alarm, please make sure that it is set to the "off" position while you are in the theater to avoid disturbing the performance. Alternately, you may leave it with the House Manager, along with your seat number, so you can be notified if you are called.

#### Latecomers:

Latecomers will be seated before the first intermission only if there is an appropriate interval.

### Listening System:

Head sets designed to provide clear, amplified sound anywhere in the auditorium are available free of charge in the lobby before performance.

### Photographs and Recording

of A.C.T. performances are strictly forbidden.

**Smoking** is not permitted in the auditorium.

### Wheelchair Access:

The Stage Door, Marines Memorial, and Center for the Arts Theaters are accessible to persons in wheelchairs.

### VENUES

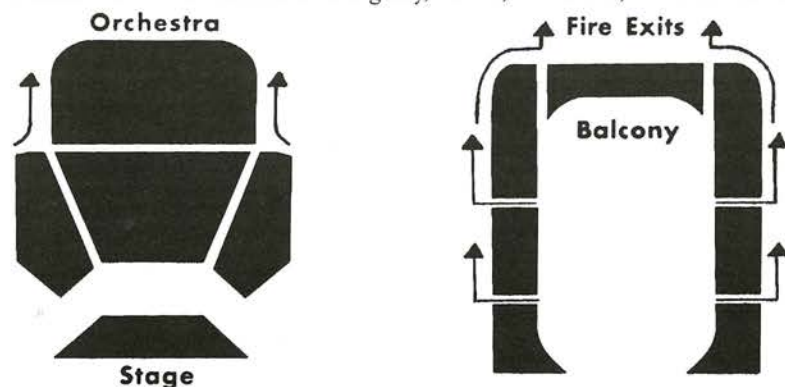
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The **Center for the Arts Theater** is the new state-of-the-art theater at **Yerba Buena Gardens**, located at 700 Howard Street at Third.

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