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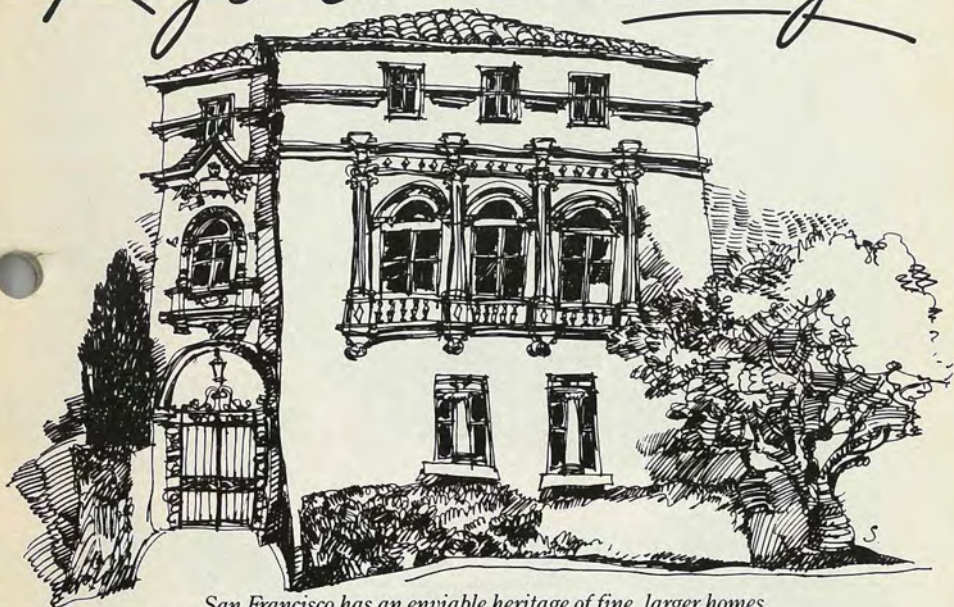
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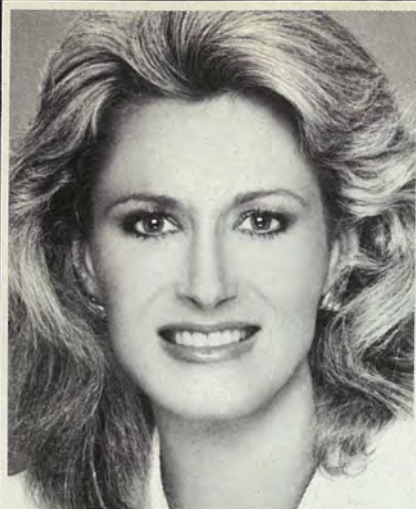
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PERFORMING ARTS

The Theatre & Music Magazine
for California & Texas

NOVEMBER 1987



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London Report

by Michael Ratcliffe



ALEX TUG WILSON

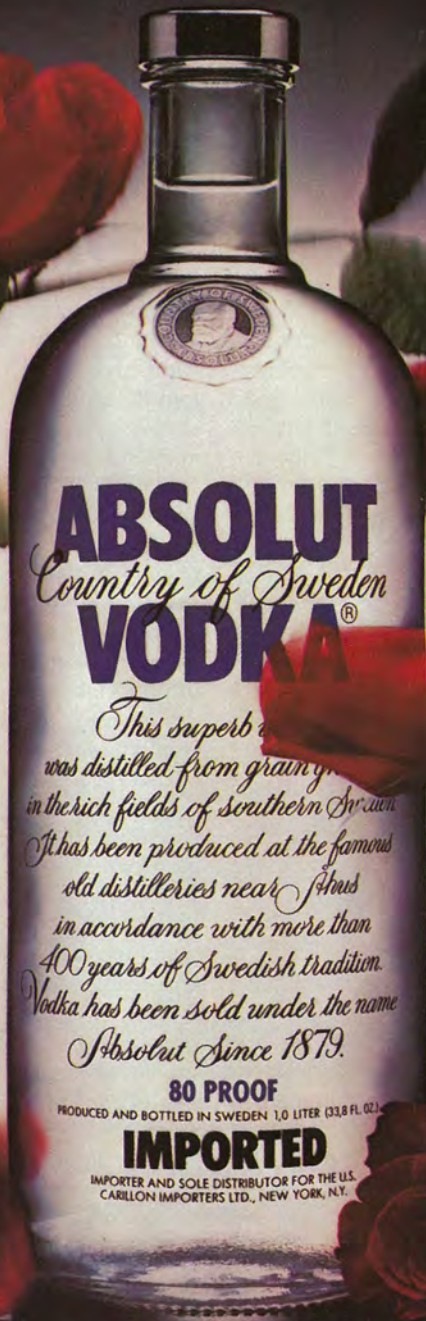
Joseph Carmon in the title role of Kleist's Michael Kohlhaas in the "stark and elegant" production by the Cameri Theatre of Tel Aviv at this year's Edinburgh Festival.

SOMETHING is always happening to *Hamlet*. That's what *Hamlet* is for: we turn it, tirelessly, to the light of the age, and country, in which we live. At this year's Edinburgh Festival, graced with more Soviet musicians, actors and cultural politicians than any occasion here since the October Revolution, the Moscow Studio Theatre of the South West presented a loud, lively and fluent version of the play on the Fringe. It featured a hippie Hamlet at least as old as his mother and the usurping King. Elsinore was indeed dominated, whenever he was on stage, by Valery Belyakovich's brilliant, witty and disarming

Claudius. Mr. Belyakovich also directed, so there may be a moral there.

In Ingmar Bergman's Stockholm production, which visited the National Theatre in London this summer, Claudius was again to the fore, grossly debauching the unresisting Queen to the applause of the whole court. Much of the action was witnessed as though in some psychic corner of her own mind, by a sexually disturbed Ophelia, who emerged as the prime victim and most tragic figure in the play.

The danger of all this, particularly if the play is in a language other than your own, is that it detracts attention from the Prince.



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When Claudius is so disarming, clearly the right man is on the throne of Denmark, no matter how he got there; if Ophelia haunts the play, it is harder to care about Hamlet. And where are the great Hamlets of today? It is a fact, in Britain and elsewhere, that leading actors of the late 1980s fail to strike fire from the greatest of all roles, as though puzzled by its indecisiveness, and scared of its heroic isolation.

I have not seen a tragic Hamlet, with whom audiences could identify, since five years ago when Jonathan Pryce called forth the speeches of his dead father, *Exorcist*-fashion, from his own belly, as though possessed by some involuntary spirit of revenge. I have not seen a *kingly*



Edinburgh Castle and Princes Street.

Hamlet anywhere for years, except at the Public Theatre in New York last year: the marvelously well-spoken and intelligent Kevin Kline. We could do with Shakespearean acting of that command and quality over here.

The Russians in Edinburgh, like Bergman's Swedes, took the play at a heck of a lick, depicting Elsinore as a place where courtiers crossed the stage like restless automata to the heavy beat of a musical score ranging from hard rock to Henry Purcell. The energy was perhaps fortunate, since for most of us it was the first engagement of the day, starting at 11:45 a.m., obliterating lunch, and ending in the middle of the afternoon. A

more introspective, slower production and heads would have been thudding on chests in one of the most endemic manifestations of Festival Fatigue.

Visitors to Edinburgh — particularly critics from London and abroad — get used to skipping lunch and dinner, eating at quite unsuitable times, in the street and on the run between a French play set in a disused wash-house at one end of the city and the sweaty, colorful birth of Papua New Guinea in a church community centre at the other — with what seems like an infinite number of insistently radical (i.e., cheap) versions of *Twelfth Night*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Macbeth* in between. It is surprising how many hours you can survive on dry-roast peanuts, chocolate and nectarines. The Edinburgh Diet.

The great joy of the Festival, where I spend most of August every year, is its unpredictability and the extra energies it draws from you when back home you would be shutting the door and thinking of bed.

The city itself is glorious and sustains you by its exhilarating diversity and compactness. Most shows are no more than a mile apart. A lesser joy is the predictability of the tiny scandals which splutter and pop around Festival and Fringe alike every year. The subjects are always the same: money, language, sex. One woman wrote to the paper about the female nakedness in the marvelous Mexican *Donna Giovanni* I wrote about in an earlier article; needless to say, she had not seen the show. An Edinburgh councillor complained that Ian Heggie's play *A Wholly Healthy Glasgow* was an insult to Edinburgh's great historic rival, a remark which drew roars of laughter all over Scotland, since the occasion of an Edinburgher rushing to the defense of Glasgow had not been recorded before.

In *A Wholly Healthy Glasgow* Heggie matches the speech techniques of David Mamet to the generous, dirty, blunt and

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brutally funny dialect of Scotland's largest city to create an original dramatic language. The play is an inverted moral comedy of pure corruption destroyed by devious innocence: Ben Johnson would have acknowledged it as a distant heir, and nodded benignly. Behind the black comedy lies the bleak fact that Glasgow has one of the poorest public health records in Europe.

Less amusing in the councillor's complaint was the implied threat that the Council would have to consider withdrawing funds from the Festival if it put on plays of "that kind." The Scots lead the world in sustaining their own myths and concealing the truth about themselves, especially from the English. The truth is that the ladies of Edinburgh, much-mocked since Muriel Spark made them immortal in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, are not only curious but extremely tough. They like to find out for themselves. People crash noisily and ostentatiously out of every show at the Festival, less from moral disapproval than because there is

always another show to take in if you are a bit fed up with the one you've got. When I attended a midweek matinee of *A Wholly Healthy Glasgow* they all laughed like anything, listened hard and came back after the break. So did their young grandchildren.

My optimum number of shows on one day in Edinburgh is five — veteran punters boast double that — and I am careful to cover five on only one day in each of the three weeks. This year, in the middle week, it was Tuesday, August 18. It began with the actors of the Shaliko Company from La Mama in New York slicing their way through a front curtain of newspapers with naked razor blades and ended, at two thirty in the morning, with *The Purple Rabbit Play*. The razor blades were not at all pleasant, but the purple rabbit — of whom more in a moment — was irresistible.

Shaliko's *Punch!*, exceptionally well-designed and directed by Leonard Shapiro in high Expressionist style, was a ferocious and horribly funny London



A scene from one of the hits of Edinburgh '87: the "ferocious and horribly funny" *Punch!*, presented by the Shaliko Company of New York.

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Punch and Judy script, virtually unchanged from 1827. It made a gritty, timeless statement about human violence and metropolitan desolation and was the kind of show where even the kids on the door warn you not to sit in the front two rows. I took the hint and avoided the center gangway, too, but I still ended up participating, with a tiny toy pistol in my hand, firing away. *Punch!* certainly made up for a serious shortfall of black coffee that morning.

Next, a complete *Othello* by one of the best Scottish touring companies, which last year reduced *As You Like It* to 90 minutes non-stop by removing, among many other things the character of Jaques completely. Not such a bad idea for audiences all over the Highlands and Islands who may never have seen Shakespeare before. I was hoping for similar revitalizing surgery on *Othello*, one of my least favorite plays in the canon; in vain, and I was flagging more than a little when we emerged around five. Late Afternoon Droop: Tea cures it. (Malt whisky only *seems* to . . .)

Back to the hotel for office calls and a brief, always disconcerting, connection with the world somewhere outside (to cover the Edinburgh Festival is briefly to experience the isolation of the foreign correspondent or the political commentator at party conferences always in the right place at the wrong time); then out again to the stark and elegant production of *Michael Kohlhaas* by the Cameri Theatre of Tel Aviv — a production almost ruined by a hideous Anglo-American headphone commentary which turned Kleist's moral drama of vigilante revenge into a movie for John Wayne. I find visual surtitles far less distracting than aural headphones and hope that festivals of foreign theatre follow the opera houses into setting them up.

One soggy egg sandwich and one wet and windy walk round the Castle Rock later, I was sitting in near-total darkness

with the voice of a single actor performing a piece called *Company*. This had nothing to do with Sondheim, but was a recent, rather funny autobiographical Beckett monologue about old age and the selective mischief of memory, directed by Tim Pigott Smith, Octavius in the Hopkins/Dench *Antony and Cleopatra* at the National Theatre and the beastly Ronald Merrick in *The Jewel in the Crown*. Julian Curry, an actor with a long, mournful head and voice to match, cast, and held, the spell.

Edinburgh being historically obsessed with both education and God, a large number of Fringe performances take place in churches and schools — most of them loaned for the Festival, a few permanently converted to performance use. *Company* was in a rough but lively new arts centre, run by one of Edinburgh's most inspired mavericks, Richard Demarco, now well-established in a former Gothick primary school off the Royal Mile. After *Company* was over, around eleven, we all lingered in the cafe next door for an hour while the stage was set up for what had already become known on the grapevine as "The Purple Rabbit Play." The purple rabbit became the dark horse of this year's Fringe and once the word was out there wasn't a seat to be had for the rest of the run. *The Tattoo Theatre*, to give the show its proper title, later transferred to the Almeida in London.

The subject of Mladen Materic's play without dialogue (I avoid the word "mime" for its misleading connotations of clowning in white faces) is family life. A young Yugoslav couple — the play comes from the Obala Open Stage Company in Sarajevo — sets up and lovingly furnishes an apartment and produces a child, a son. They quarrel, part, and, after endless adventures in which the boy invokes a large rabbit in purple silk coat to act as guardian angel and household god, come together again at the end. It is



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ALEX TUG WILSON

Eugene Lebedev (left) and Oleg Basilashvili in *History of a Horse*, presented by the Gorky Theatre of Leningrad in Edinburgh.

tender and moving without being sentimental, naive without being twee, simple and sophisticated in a manner that kept us wide awake until near two in the morning and certainly feeling better than when Mr. Shapiro's razors slowly cut through the newspaper 14 hours before.

The purple rabbit was not without its erotic side (turning out to be a young dancer-actress at the end) and in this reminded me of the white garden rabbit in Maurice Sendak's illustrations to *Charlotte and the Lovely Present*. At other times *The Tattoo Theatre* recalled the sophisticated innocence of French film directors like François Truffaut. Its particular kind of freshness would be virtually unattainable by English writers, actors or directors, which is why those of us who saw it fell for it.

Basic human preoccupations made a heartening return at Edinburgh this year. *The Tattoo Theatre* was about love; *Le Vavoir* (The Wash-house) about work. Thirteen

women in the public wash-house of Amiens in Northern France gather round the tub on an ordinary Tuesday in August 1914 which turns out to be the day of general mobilization in France, and, effectively, the last day of peace. They wash, scrub, gossip, dream, sing. The less French you know the more you could enjoy the informal, naturalistic choreography of Dominique Durvin and Hélène Prévost's production. Those with a certain amount of French were frustrated by the resonant acoustic of the wash-house, which alternately swallowed and released every other word, but the ensemble was superb. True Festival stuff.

Everything I have mentioned so far — save the Papuans, *A Wholly Healthy Glasgow* and *Michael Kohlhaas* — was on the Festival Fringe, which operates quite separately from, and this year far outshone, the theatre in the main Festival itself. (The Fringe is 90 percent theatre; the Festival, of course, embraces music,



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theatre, dance, fireworks, the Edinburgh Military Tattoo, opera, and visual art.) It was always going to be difficult, given the Festival director's limited budget and his own idiosyncratic tastes, to match the magnificent World Theatre Season he gave us last year, when no fewer than seven outstanding productions from Sweden, Germany, Poland, Spain, the U.S.A. and Japan dazzled British audiences starved of such things ever since the World Theatre Seasons at the Aldwych Theatre in London came to an end more than ten years ago.

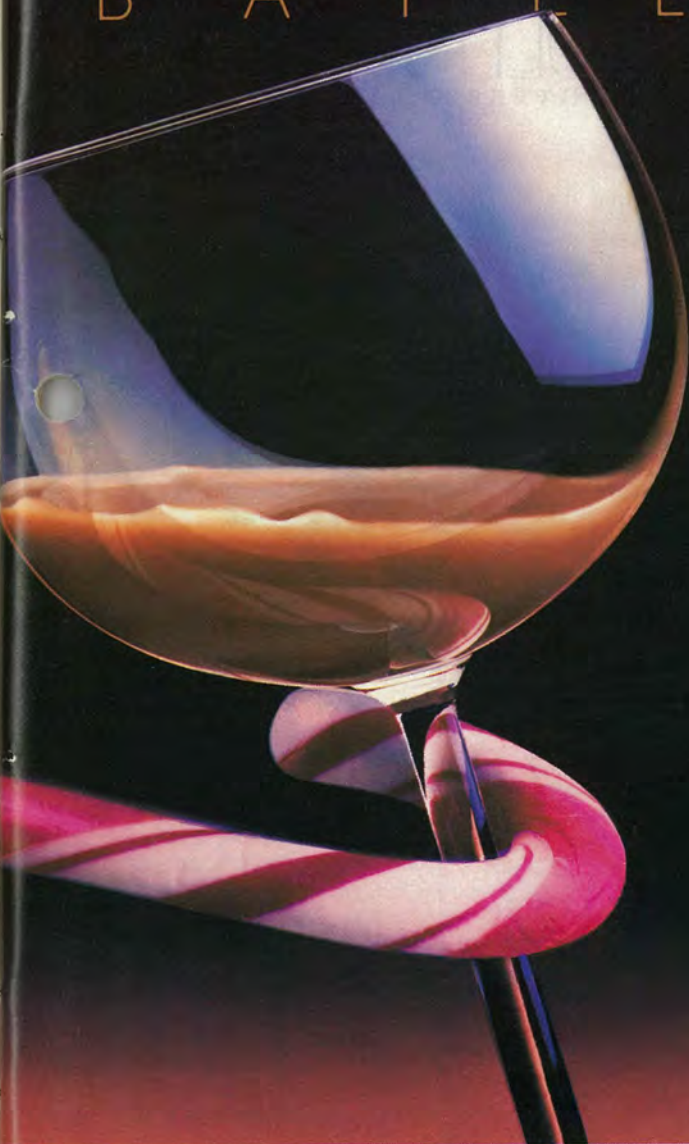
One side effect of Edinburgh's 1986 triumphs has been the visits of shows directed by Bergman, Peter Stein and Yukio Ninagawa to the National Theatre this year, but (although I did not see it all) there was a slightly tired look to Edinburgh's own international theatre program this August, with too many shows that have been around before and too

many hybrid shows moving into an uneasy middle ground between the disciplines of theatre, tourism, athletics and dance. The financial compulsion to present instantly *popular* foreign shows — there is no time for a success to build in a festival schedule — to the dubious spectacle of a French provincial ballet company packing three-and-a-half thousand people into the largest theatre in Britain, — the Edinburgh Playhouse, for a sight of the great Nureyev in roles which he can no longer dance.

This is Edinburgh at its meanest and worst: opportunist, patronizing, short-sighted. Few London dance critics bothered to attend the Festival at all this year, and the rather peculiar opera program contained only one event of a festival nature: the British premiere of Edward Bond and Hans Werner Henze's *Singspiel* after Balzac, *The English Cat*. Ian Strasfogel's tremendously chic produc-

(Continued on page 74)

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Welcome to our twenty-second season in San Francisco. This year, for the first time since 1983, we are presenting the first two productions in rotating repertory and continuing a repertory policy throughout most of the season, so that two, or even three, different productions are available in any given week.

The concept of repertory is an important component of our work for several reasons. For one thing it offers creative challenges to our actors, designers and backstage personnel. Instead of playing a single role eight times a week, A.C.T. actors play or rehearse two or three, and the contrast tends to sharpen, refine and intensify the actor's work in each part.

Our scenic designers have a different kind of challenge: to create full-scale settings for classic and contemporary plays constructed so that one can be dismantled and another assembled—both in the space of an hour or an hour and a half, sometimes between a matinee and an evening performance.

There are other benefits to repertory, too. Because productions are presented only three or four times a week, the run of each play is extended, giving it more time to find its audience as word of mouth builds in the community. A blockbuster comedy playing several performances a week can help support a less immediately popular but worthy drama that may be scheduled only once or twice in the same week.

In a less tangible sense, a repertory format adds a special kind of vitality, variety and energy to a theatre company. The constant change and renewal is invigorating to the artists and offers a vivid indication of a company's scope and depth as it alternates between, say, *The Seagull*, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* and *The Real Thing* within a few days, as we did last year.

We are proud to present William Shakespeare's *King Lear* and Sam Shepard's *A Lie of the Mind* as our opening productions. We hope they signal the beginning of a season rich in entertainment and illumination. Thank you for being with us.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Edward Hastings". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping "E" and "H".

Edward Hastings
Artistic Director



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A.C.T.'s newest neighbor in the Theatre District is right at home in its artistic surroundings. The new Portman Hotel at the corner of Mason and Post Streets appears to be a 330-room gallery of art — from the 10' by 10' bronze sculpture at the motor entrance to the antique Japanese screen in the rooftop club. In fact, Managing Director Patrick Mene estimates that \$675,000 of the hotel's opening budget went toward artwork, primarily the work of Bay Area artists.

And in an unprecedented good neighbor gesture for the San Francisco Arts Commission, John Portman, architect and developer of the hotel that bears his name, donated \$10,000 to a 96-page catalog of the city's publicly-owned art.

For A.C.T., The Portman generously agreed to host the Season Gala on October 17, 1987, featuring a lavish dinner and

cast party. The hotel has also provided luxury accommodations for a host of illustrious A.C.T. alumni attending the Gala, including Marsha Mason, Harry Hamlin, Richard Dysart and Laurence Luckinbill. Season Gala Chairman Erika Hills has deemed the hotel "the best thing to happen to San Francisco since the arrival of A.C.T.!"

A.C.T. donors of the Williams, Shakespeare and Sophocles Circles will be receiving a special benefit this season — complimentary parking at The Portman for each of their subscription performances — in recognition of their support to A.C.T.

The entire A.C.T. company wishes to salute the generosity and good will of The Portman. The hotel's loyalty to the arts community is most welcome.

SIMPSON PAPER SPONSORS "LEAR"

Simpson Paper Company has helped A.C.T. get our season and our 1987-88 fund raising campaign off to a great start by making a generous grant to underwrite *King Lear* through the Simpson Fund, a corporate foundation. A longtime supporter of the theatre, the corporation also distinguished itself last season by co-sponsoring A.C.T.'s acclaimed production of *The Doctor's Dilemma*.

Headed by President John Fannon, Simpson Paper Company is a major producer of high quality coated, printing, writing and technical papers. Taking an active approach to corporate philanthropy, Simpson Paper Company has a strong interest in promoting the quality of life in all its community. The policy has led the company to play a leadership role in supporting the arts in San Francisco, their

corporate headquarters.

"We're well aware of the role that a company such as ours should play in the life of a city," commented Fannon. "We're proud to maintain a strong commitment to the arts in San Francisco — and our support of A.C.T. throughout the past decade is a result of that ongoing effort."

"We view A.C.T. as a unique organization making a valuable contribution to the community," noted Fannon, "and, in that sense, the theatre shares common goals with Simpson Paper. We're very pleased to support A.C.T.'s artistic goals and ambitions by underwriting this production."

A.C.T. is proud to include Simpson Paper Company among our growing list of corporate donors, and to offer our sincere thanks for its outstanding support of *King Lear*.

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WHO'S WHO AT A.C.T.



JOSEPH BIRD is now in his 18th season with A.C.T. Educated at Penn State College and having studied with Lee Strasberg, he became a featured actor in Ellis Rabb's APA-Phoenix Repertory Company in New York. Mr. Bird spent much of his career performing on Broadway, at the San Diego Shakespeare Festival's Old Globe and in numerous East Coast summer stock productions. His A.C.T. credits include *Paradise Lost*, *Peer Gynt*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Travesties*, *Ah, Wilderness!*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Richard II*, *The Three Sisters*, *A Christmas Carol*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Lady's Not for Burning*. Mr. Bird has also appeared on Broadway in *The Show-Off* with Helen Hayes and in *Hamlet* with Ellis Rabb.



Shakespeare Festival, Berkeley Jewish Theatre and Theatreworks of Palo Alto, where he portrayed Franklin Sheppard in Sondheim's *Merrily We Roll Along*. Among his other credits are Freddie in *Good*, directed by Julian Lopez-Morillas, Navarre in *Love's Labour's Lost*, Francis Flute in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Catesby in *Richard III* with Dakin Matthews. Mr. Butterfield also teaches in the Conservatory and Young Conservatory Programs and will be seen later this season in *Diamond Lil* and *The Birds*.



RICHARD BUTTERFIELD begins his second season at A.C.T. with the role of Edgar in *King Lear*. Last year he appeared as the Solider in *Sunday in the Park with George*, Billy in *The Real Thing*, Young Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol* and, among other roles, a drag queen in *Faustus in Hell*, for which his much lovelier wife, Glynn, and four sisters chided him considerably. Mr. Butterfield has worked in the Bay Area with the San Jose Repertory Company, Berkeley

NANCY CARLIN, a graduate of the Advanced Training Program, returns to A.C.T. for her third season following appearances last year as Jennifer Dubedat in *The Doctor's Dilemma*,

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Betty in *The Floating Light Bulb* and Masha in *The Seagull*. She performed most recently with Shakespeare Santa Cruz as Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing* and April in *Company*. She has worked at numerous theatres in the Bay Area and beyond, including the Oregon Shakespearean Festival, the Eureka Theatre, the Berkeley Repertory Theatre, the Summer Repertory Theatre of Santa Rosa and the Pacific Conservatory of the Performing Arts in Santa Maria. Miss Carlin received her B.A. in Comparative Literature from Brown University.



JOY CARLIN has been with the A.C.T. company for many years. She has appeared in numerous productions, including the roles of Miss Prism in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Kitty Duval in *The Time of Your Life*, Bananas in *The House of Blue Leaves*, Asa in *Peer Gynt*, Aunt Sally in *All the Way Home*, Birdie in *The Little Foxes* and Odile in *Opera Comique*. She has been Resident Director and the Acting Artistic Director of the Berkeley Repertory Theatre. Her directing credits include *The House of Bernarda Alba*, *The Lady's Not For Burning* and *The Doctor's Dilemma* at A.C.T. in addition to productions at the Berkeley Stage Company, Seattle's A Contemporary Theatre, the Oregon Shakespearean Festival and the San Jose Repertory Company. She is a member of the board of trustees of the Berkeley Jewish Theatre.

MEGAN COLE returns to A.C.T. after an eleven year hiatus, having been with the company for the 1973-1976 seasons, when she appeared in such roles as Varya in *The Cherry Orchard*, Queen Elizabeth in *Richard III*, Mistress Page in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and Abbie in *Desire Under the Elms*. Since that time, she has performed in theatres from coast to coast, including the Hudson Guild in New York City, McCarter Theatre in Princeton, Center Stage in Baltimore, Intiman Theatre in Seattle, Alaska Rep, Oregon Shakespearean Festival, Seattle Rep and South Coast Rep. In



1984, she won the Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Award for her portrayal of the Widow Quinn in *Playboy of the Western World*, and in 1981 was the only American to ever join the Royal Shakespeare Company's tour of American universities. She has twice appeared as the Narrator in Bernstein's *Kaddish Symphony*. Miss Cole tours with her one-woman show and teaches acting and period dance at both Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle and the University of Washington.



PAUL COOLBRITH makes his professional debut at A.C.T. in *King Lear*. A graduate of A.C.T.'s Advanced Training Program and former member of Santa Maria's P.C.P.A., Mr. Coolbrith appeared in, among other roles, the Allen Fletcher productions of *The Unsinkable Molly Brown* as Christmas Morgan, the acclaimed *Idiot's Delight* as Quillery and *Macbeth* as Ross, in addition to Donovan Marley's *Billy Budd* as the Dansker. In San Francisco, Mr. Coolbrith's most recent credits are Atticus in Edward Hastings' *To Kill A Mockingbird* and Davies in John Wilk's production of *The Caretaker*.

BRIAN CRAWLEY joins A.C.T. to complete his MFA in the Advanced Training Program's third-year class. He holds a BA in English and Theatre from Yale University, and before coming to A.C.T. performed in *Life Is A Dream* at the Ark Theatre, New York. He has appeared locally



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as Billy in *Casualties* and Don John in *Much Ado About Nothing* at Theatreworks, and danced as a witch in the San Francisco Opera's *Macbeth*. He was seen this past summer in P.C.P.A. Theatrefest productions of *Hans Christian Anderson* and *Kiss Me Kate*. As a student, Mr. Crawley played the title roles in *Richard III* and *Nicholas Nickleby*, Trofimov in *The Cherry Orchard* and one of the punk devils in last season's *Faustus in Hell*.



PETER DONAT joined A.C.T. in 1968. He was born in Nova Scotia, attended the Yale Drama School, toured extensively and performed for seven seasons with Canada's Stratford Shakespeare Festival. In New York, he has performed both off-and on Broadway, where he received the Theatre World Award for Best Featured Actor of 1957, and with Ellis Rabb's legendary APA Repertory Company. At A.C.T., he has appeared in many productions, including *The Merchant of Venice*, *Hadrian VII*, *A Doll's House*, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *Equus*, *Man and Superman*, *The Little Foxes*, *Uncle Vanya*, *The Sleeping Prince*, *The School for Wives*, *Macbeth*, *Our Town*, *Opera Comique* and *The Lady's Not for Burning*. Mr. Donat's television credits include a starring role in the NBC-TV series, *Flamingo Road*, and a Disney pilot titled *Earth-Star Voyager*. His film credits include *The Hindenburg*, *The China Syndrome*, *A Different Story*, *Godfather II*, *The Bay Boy* with Liv Ullmann and an upcoming release, *Tucker*, directed by Francis Ford Coppola.



DREW ESHELMAN attended A.C.T.'s Advanced Training Program in 1973-74 and made his debut with the company in *The Ruling Class* at the Geary, after numerous student productions. He was seen in the extended San Francisco engagement of *Cloud Nine* at the Eureka, Marines Memorial and Alcazar theatres, played featured roles in such films as *The Right Stuff* and *Magnum Force*, and made television appearances on *Partners in Crime* and *Shannon*. Among the other major stage productions in which he has appeared are *Hamlet* at the Berkeley Shakespeare Festival, *The Tempest* and *The Taming of the Shrew* at San Diego's Old Globe Theatre and *The Good Person of Szechwan* at the Berkeley Repertory Theatre. Mr. Eshelman was also a member of the original cast and the Los Angeles revival of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, and was featured in the San Francisco Repertory production of *Bent*. He appears in the yet-to-be-released film *Tucker* and *Earth-Star Voyager*, a Disney TV pilot. His previous A.C.T. credits include *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Macbeth*, *You Never Can Tell*, *The Lady's Not for Burning*, *Sunday in the Park with George*, *The Doctor's Dilemma* and *Faustus in Hell*.



RICK HAMILTON was seen last season as Max in *The Real Thing* and Trigorin in *The Seagull*. He was a member of the A.C.T. company from 1973-1976, during which time he appeared in *Desire Under the Elms* (which toured the Soviet Union), *General Gorgeous*, *The Threepenny Opera* and as Tranio in the widely acclaimed production of *The Taming of the Shrew*, which was televised for the PBS series



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Theatre In America. On Broadway, he was a member of the original cast of *Amadeus*. During his ten seasons with the Oregon Shakespearean Festival he played such roles as Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Tom in *The Glass Menagerie*, Hotspur in *Henry IV, Part I*, Marc Antony in *Julius Caesar* and Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew*. He has also spent seasons performing with Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, The Alley Theatre, the Dallas Shakespeare Festival and Los Angeles Theatre Center. He can be seen in the recently released film, *The Principal*.



LAWRENCE HECHT continues this year as head of A.C.T.'s Advanced Training Program. In addition to staging such A.C.T. productions as *The Dolly*, *Translations* and *'night, Mother*, he has also served as actor, resident director and Director of Actor Training for the Pacific Conservatory of the Performing Arts in Santa Maria, California, where his directing credits include *Harvey*, *Major Barbara* and *Bus Stop*. This will be Mr. Hecht's 16th season with A.C.T. A graduate of the University of San Francisco and A.C.T.'s Advanced Training Program, Mr. Hecht has directed numerous productions for the Plays-in-Progress series and is an instructor in the Advanced Training Program. He is also a member of the acting company and has performed in more than 25 productions with A.C.T. including *The National Health*, *The Visit*, *Buried Child*, *Night and Day*, *The Three Sisters*, *Happy Landings*, *The Holdup* and *Sunday in the Park With George*.

ED HODSON performed most recently with the Vermont Ensemble Theatre Company, where he played Norbert in *Blue Window* under the direction of Sarah Ream. He studied in the Advanced Training Program at A.C.T., and was seen last season as Brodie in *The Real Thing*. He has worked at the Eureka Theatre Company, appearing in *Landscape of the Body*, *Fen* and *A Narrow Bed*, which was written by his wife, Ellen McLaughlin. Mr. Hodson has performed in New York for the 29th Street Project



in *Dakota's Belly Wyoming*, *Hostel Witness* and *Jamie's Gang*. He was also seen in New York productions of *Under Distant Skies*, *Boo*, *DEROS on the Funny Farm*, *The Blue Dahlia*, and toured nationally as Mozart in *Amadeus*.



STEVEN ANTHONY JONES has been performing for 25 years, five of those with the Negro Ensemble Company of New York, where he created the role of Pvt. James Wilke in the original production of *A Soliders' Play*. Mr. Jones also has worked in films, television and industrial films. He appeared locally in the Eureka Theatre productions *The Cherry Orchard*, *Every Moment* and *The Island*, the San Jose Repertory Theatre's *Master Harold . . . and the Boys* and in *Division Street* at Oakland Ensemble Theatre.



BARRY KRAFT, a charter member of the company, has recently returned from teaching

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Journey into Night. A graduate of Brown University, Mr. Paterson served in the army for four years before starting his professional acting career in a summer stock company. He appeared for at least part of every season for twenty years at the Cleveland Play House, taking time out for live television, films and four national tours with his own one-man shows, which he has performed in 32 states of the Union and at the U.S. Embassy in London. His major roles for A.C.T. include *You Can't Take It With You*, *Jumpers*, *The Matchmaker* (U.S.S.R. tour), *The Circle*, *All the Way Home* (Japan tour), *Buried Child*, *Happy Landings*, *The Gin Game*, *Dial "M" For Murder* and *Painting Churches*. Last season he appeared in *The Doctor's Dilemma*, the 11th anniversary of *A Christmas Carol*, as Scrooge, a role he originated, and *Faustus in Hell*. He presently serves as a member of the San Francisco Arts Commission and is a member of the Board of Trustees of A.C.T.



JEANNE PAULSEN makes her first appearance on the Geary stage as Goneril in *King Lear*. She has been seen by Bay Area audiences at the San Jose Repertory Company in *The Very Last Lover of the River Cane* and *How the Other Half Loves*, and at the Oregon Shakespearean Festival as Martha in *Strange Snow*, for which she won a Drama-Logue award. Other OSF productions in which she performed include *The Three Sisters*, *Broadway*, *Light Up the Sky*, *An Enemy of the People*, *Artichoke* and *The Matchmaker*, among others. In Seattle, her work has

been seen in the Empty Space production of *Fen* and A Contemporary Theatre's productions of *The Marriage of Bette and Boo*, *Diary of a Scoundrel*, *Cloud 9*, *Top Girls* and *A Christmas Carol*. Her other credits include roles at The Milwaukee Rep, Denver Center Theatre Company and the Pacific Conservatory for the Performing Arts. Miss Paulsen holds a BA from the University of Northern Iowa and an MFA from the University of California/San Diego.



DON PIPER is a third-year student in the Advanced Training Program and has appeared in studio productions of *The Cherry Orchard*, *Hamlet*, *Henry VI*, *The Way of the World* and *The Physicists*. He recently appeared in the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival's production of *Much Ado About Nothing* as Borachio and Encore Presentations' *Saved as Harry*. He has also toured nationally in *Annie Get Your Gun*, *The 1940's Radio Hour* and *The Student Prince*. Before relocating to the Bay Area, Mr. Piper was active in Dallas/Ft. Worth theatres, where his performances included *Cousins in Major Barbara*, *Clifford* in *Deathtrap* and *Ken Harrison* in *Whose Life Is It, Anyway?*.



DANIEL REICHERT joins the company this year as a third-year student in the Advanced Training Program. While a student at A.C.T., he performed the roles of Lopahin in *The Cherry Orchard*, York in *Henry VI, Part II*, Horner in *The Country Wife*, Sir Mulberry Hawk in *Nicholas Nickleby*, Laertes in *Hamlet* and Fran

in *Gemini*. This past summer he appeared as Jabe in *Orpheus Descending* with the New York Stage and Film Company and, most recently, as Benedick in the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival production of *Much Ado About Nothing*, directed by Albert Takazauckas. A relative newcomer to the West Coast, Mr. Reichert is a native of Massachusetts and holds an A.B. in English from Vassar College.



LANNYL STEPHENS is a second year company member. She appeared last season in *Sunday in the Park with George*, *A Christmas Carol*, *The Seagull* and as Betty Boop and Marilyn Monroe in *Faustus in Hell*. She appeared at the Bay Area Playwrights' Festival as Sister in *Looking in the Dark For . . .* and, most recently, in *Nunsense* at the Marines Memorial Theatre. Her studio performances at A.C.T. include Dorine in *Tartuffe*, Olga in *The Three Sisters*, Goneril in *King Lear* and Beaty in *Lydie Breeze*. Miss Stephens is a founding member of Encore Productions, for which she played the role of the Parlor Maid/Temp in last season's production of *La Ronde*. She holds a B.A. in Theatre Arts from the University of Texas.



HOWARD SWAIN was seen last year in A.C.T. productions of *The Doctor's Dilemma*, *A Christmas Carol* and *The Seagull*. He has worked with the Magic Theatre, Eureka Theatre, One

Act Theatre, San Francisco Repertory Company and Overtone Theatre. In 1982 he joined the Berkeley Shakespeare Festival and has also performed for the Berkeley Jewish Theatre, San Jose Repertory Company, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and the Berkeley Repertory Theatre where he appeared as Crow in *The Tooth of Crime*, receiving a Bay Area Critics' Circle Award. He returns to the company following a summer at Shakespeare Santa Cruz. Mr. Swain's other credits include roles in *Partners in Crime* and *Hill St. Blues* on network television, as well as the yet to be released films *Cherry 2000* and *Miracle Mile*.

DIRECTORS, DESIGNERS AND STAFF

EDWARD HASTINGS (Artistic Director), who assumed the leadership of A.C.T. early last year and guided the company through the most successful season in its history, is a graduate of Yale College and the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. A founding member of A.C.T., his productions of *Charley's Aunt* and *Our Town* were seen during the company's first two San Francisco seasons. Since then, he has staged many shows for A.C.T., including *The Time of Your Life*, *The House of Blue Leaves*, *Street Scene*, *All the Way Home*, *Fifth of July* and last season's *The Real Thing*. In 1972, he founded the A.C.T. Plays in Progress program devoted to the development and production of new writing. For three summer seasons, Mr. Hastings served as a resident director at the Eugene O'Neill Playwrights' Conference in Connecticut. He taught acting in 1984 at the Shanghai Drama Institute as part of the Theatre Bridge Program between A.C.T. and the Shanghai Theatre. Off-Broadway, he co-produced *The Saintliness of Margery Kempe* and *Epitaph for George Dillon* and directed the national company of the Broadway musical *Oliver!* He staged the American production of *Shakespeare's People* starring Michael Redgrave, directed the Australian premiere of *The Hot I Baltimore*, and restaged his A.C.T. production of Sam Shepard's *Buried Child* in Serbo-Croatian at the Yugoslav Dramatic Theatre in Belgrade. He has been a guest director at the Guthrie Theatre, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Denver Center Theatre Company, San Francisco Opera Center and Berkeley Repertory Theatre.

JOHN SULLIVAN (Managing Director) joined A.C.T. as its chief administrative and financial officer in 1986. A former deputy director of the California Arts Council, he is currently a director of Theatre Bay Area, and a member of the advisory board of the San Francisco New Vaudeville Festival. Mr. Sullivan has been active in the theatre since the mid 1970's when he directed Harvey Perr's *Afternoon Tea* at the Circle Repertory Company in New York. He later joined the staff of the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles, where as head of its Forum Laboratory, he produced over 20 new works by American playwrights. More recently, he produced *The Detective*, a collaboration between Joseph Chaikin and Vaudeville Nouveau at San Francisco's Magic Theatre. A graduate of the University of Southern California's film school, Mr. Sullivan has written and directed numerous short films including three which were featured on the national Emmy Awards. He is also the co-author of *The National Outdoor Leadership School's Wilderness Guide*, a manual for camping and mountaineering published by Simon and Schuster. Mr. Sullivan is a native San Franciscan.

DENNIS POWERS (Associate Artistic Director) joined A.C.T. in 1967, after six years at the *Oakland Tribune* as an arts writer and a season at Stanford Repertory Theatre as Associate Managing Director. After several years as A.C.T. Press Representative, he became General Director William Ball's executive assistant and, later, Dramaturg and Artists and Repertory Director, collaborating with Ball on new translations or adaptations of such classic works as *Oedipus Rex*, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *The Cherry Orchard* and *The Bourgeois Gentleman*. With Laird Williamson, he adapted *A Christmas Carol* for the stage, and the production has been presented annually by A.C.T. since 1976, as well as by other theatres and schools. His 1975 dramatization of *Dracula* was premiered at the Pacific Conservatory of the Performing Arts and has subsequently been produced by some thirty theatres and schools. In 1985, he and Williamson wrote *Christmas Miracles*, which had its world premiere at the Denver Center Theatre Company. Both *Cyrano* and *A Christmas Carol* have been presented on television. Mr. Powers is a member of the 1987 National Endowment for the Arts Theatre Panel and the Dramatists Guild.

ALBERT TAKAZAUCKAS (Director) made his A.C.T. debut, after a notable career in the Bay Area, with last year's successful production of *The Floating Light Bulb*. As an opera director, he has worked throughout the United States

including Seattle, where he opened last year's Seattle Opera season with *Tosca*. In theatre, he first drew critical attention in his native Manhattan with the only American production in a century of Victor Hugo's *Hernani*. Later, he directed David Mamet's Obie Award-winning *Sexual Perversity in Chicago*, which brought him to San Francisco's Magic Theatre ten years ago. His work at The Magic Theatre also includes *These Men*, *Geniuses*, *Cutting Canvas* (co-authored with James Keller) and the record-breaking *Sharon and Billy*. Other productions in the Bay Area include *Tartuffe*, *Chekhov in Yalta*, *The Way of the World* and *The Rocky Horror Show*. Mr. Takazauckas continues to write with Mr. Keller. Their comedy, *An Hour for the Opera*, toured for three consecutive years. Last year he directed Molnar's *The Guardsman*, *Much Ado About Nothing* and *The Magic Flute*. Projects this season include: *Uncle Vanya*, Marin Theatre Company; *What the Butler Saw*, Berkeley Rep; *Albert Herring*, Arkansas Opera; and a visiting professorship at the University of California/Santa Barbara.

RICHARD SEGER (Scenery) has designed many A.C.T. productions, including *Sunday in the Park with George*, *The Seagull*, *The Three Sisters*, *The Holdup*, *Hotel Paradiso*, *The Little Foxes*, *The Chalk Garden*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Trojan War Will Not Take Place*, *Buried Child*, *The Girl of the Golden West*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Fifth of July*, *The Visit*, *The Bourgeois Gentleman*, *Cat Among the Pigeons*, *Macbeth* and *Something's Afoot*, which went on to Broadway. A graduate of Chicago's School of the Art Institute, Mr. Seger also created sets for the Broadway production of *Butterflies Are Free* and several off-Broadway shows. Mr. Seger's other credits include productions at San Diego's Old Globe Theatre, such as *The Country Wife*, *Othello*, *Rashomon*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Kiss Me Kate* and *Pygmalion*; *Hay Fever* and *The Unwarnished Truth* at the Ahmanson in Los Angeles; *'night*, *Mother* at the Mark Taper Forum; and new productions of *La Traviata* and *Rigoletto* for the Central City Opera Association in Central City, Colorado.

BARBARA MESNEY (Scenery) has recently designed the scenery for *Much Ado About Nothing* at the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, *Company* at Shakespeare Santa Cruz, *Pantomime* at the One Act Theatre Company and *The Wash* at the Eureka Theatre Company. Her designs have also been seen at the San Jose Repertory Company, San Francisco Lamp-lighters and the Magic Theatre, where she

created sets for both the original production and the revival of *Sharon and Billy* and the productions of *Wild Indian* and *Warhorses*, for which she received a Drama-Logue award. Her work as a scenic artist has been seen at A Contemporary Theatre and the Intiman Theatre in Seattle, and the Oregon Shakespearean Festival and at A.C.T. among others, and she recently completed a series of sixty murals with long-time collaborator Wayne R. Olds for the Showboat Hotel in Atlantic City. A graduate of San Francisco State University, Miss Mesney has also studied at Carnegie Mellon University and the High School of the Performing Arts in New York City.

ROBERT FLETCHER (Costumes) was one of the four founding directors of the famous Brattle Theatre Company in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Their first season started in the fall of 1947, making this year his fortieth anniversary in professional theatre, film and television. He has served as actor, director, producer, set designer or costume designer in every area of entertainment from grand opera to night clubs, sometimes combining two or more of those offices at one time. He has designed either sets or costumes or both for two dozen Broadway shows, such as *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*, *Little Me*, *Walking Happy*, *Hadrian VII*, *Misalliance*, James Earl Jones' *Othello*, *Doubles* and the national company of *Singin' in the Rain*. In addition to his work in theatre, he has designed for the New York City Opera, New York City Ballet and the New York Pro Musica Antiqua. He received Tony nominations for the sets and costumes for *Hadrian VII* and for producing *High Spirits*, the musical version of Noel Coward's *Blithe Spirit*. An Emmy Award-winner as well as a film veteran — his film credits include all four of the *Star Trek* movies from Paramount and *The Last Starfighter* from Lorimar — Mr. Fletcher's designs for A.C.T. include *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *The Circle*, *The Matchmaker*, *The Real Thing* and *The Seagull*. Earlier this year he designed both sets and costumes for the major revival of the musical *She Loves Me* at the Ahmanson Theatre in Los Angeles. *King Lear* marks his twenty-third association with A.C.T.

BEAVER D. BAUER (Costumes) returns to the company after designing costumes for last season's *The Floating Light Bulb*. She has worked extensively as a designer at the Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Magic Theatre, Eureka Theatre, Lamplighters' Musical Theatre, and the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival. Since

1972, she has worked in all capacities for the Angels of Light, a cabaret and theatre troupe specializing in fantastic, outrageous and magical performances. Completely self-taught in all aspects of the theatre, she was responsible for the Angels of Light productions *Holy Cow*, *Hotel of Follies* and the 1983 production *True Tales of Hollywood Horror*.

DEREK DUARTE (Lighting) returns to A.C.T. for a third season as resident lighting designer after designing eight productions last season, including *The Real Thing* and *Sunday in the Park with George*. Most recently Mr. Duarte designed lighting for the Los Angeles Theatre Center/A.C.T. production of *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* and the New York premiere of Charles Dickens' *Hard Times*. His work has been seen at Berkeley Shakespeare Festival, The Fringe Festival in Edinburgh, Scotland and at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. In 1986 he was awarded a Theatre Communications Group grant to observe lighting designers in New York City. Currently on the faculty of Chabot College, Mr. Duarte holds a MFA in theatre technology from UCLA.

STEPHEN LeGRAND and **ERIC DREW FELDMAN** began their musical collaboration with the Berkeley Repertory Theatre's production of *The Tooth of Crime*, for which they won both Drama-Logue and Bay Area Theatre Critics' Circle awards. Since then, they have composed scores for the Eureka Theatre's production of *Fen*, for which they were again honored by Drama-Logue, and for A.C.T.'s production of *The Lady's Not for Burning*, which garnered them a second BATCC award. Other scores include *The Birthday Party* at Berkeley Rep and *A Narrow Bed* at the Eureka. Last season at A.C.T. their work was heard in both *The Seagull* and *Faustus in Hell*. Mr. LeGrand also serves as resident sound designer for the company.

RON McFARLAND is a founding member of Composers Inc., a group of five Bay Area composers dedicated to the performance of new American music. His interest in recent years has been drawn toward opera and musical theatre. Before the success of his three act opera, *The Donner Party*, Mr. McFarland was known primarily as a composer of songs and instrumental music. His opera, *Song of Pegasus*, was staged in 1985 on the In Performance series at Forest Meadows, San Rafael and was a finalist in the New York University American Opera

Competition in the spring of that year. A piano student of the late Ethel Leginska and Istvan Nadas, Mr. McFarland studied composition with Arnold Schoenberg. He maintains a studio in Tiburon, where he divides his time between teaching and composition.

J. STEVEN WHITE has been with A.C.T. for eleven seasons in a variety of capacities, excelling as an actor, teacher, choreographer, administrator and director. He traveled with A.C.T. to the Soviet Union in 1976 and to Japan in 1978 and spent the 1985-86 season as the Denver Center Theatre Company Acting Conservatory Director. He has acted in twenty-eight A.C.T. productions, served as a teacher and administrator in the A.C.T. Conservatory, and was director of the 1984 and 1985 Summer Training Congress. Mr. White has been fight choreographer for sixty-one productions, including the San Francisco Ballet's *Romeo and Juliet*, directed by Michael Smuin, and A.C.T.'s *Cyrano de Bergerac*, and last season was Associate Director on Smuin's production of *Faustus in Hell*. He has directed six productions in A.C.T.'s playroom, most recently serving as producer and co-director of Dalt Wonk's *Rio Seco*. Although he continues to teach stage combat at A.C.T., he hopes to spend much of the current season in New York with his wife, actress Annette Bening.

JAMES HAIRE (Production Director) began his career on Broadway with the famed Eva Le Gallienne's National Repertory Theater. Among the productions he stage managed were *The Madwoman of Chaillot* with Eva Le Gallienne, Sylvia Sydney and Leora Dana, *The Rivals*, *John Brown's Body*, *She Stoops to Conquer* and *A Comedy of Errors*. Mr. Haire also stage managed the Broadway productions of *Georgy*, a new musical by Carol Bayer Sager at the Winter Theater, *And Miss Reardon Drinks a Little* with Julie Harris and Estelle Parsons, and the national tour of Woody Allen's *Don't Drink the Water* with Sam Levene and Vivian Blaine. Mr. Haire joined the American Conservatory Theatre in 1971 as Production Stage Manager and in this capacity has managed more than one hundred productions as well as taking the company on numerous regional, national and international tours, including those to the Soviet Union in 1976 and Japan in 1978.

EUGENE BARCONE (Stage Manager) is a charter member of A.C.T. Mr. Barcone has directed for the Plays-in-Progress program and worked on the televised adaptations of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A*

Christmas Carol. He has worked on more than 70 productions at A.C.T.

KAREN VAN ZANDT (Production Stage Manager), now in her ninth season at A.C.T., has stage managed company productions of *Sunday in the Park with George*, *The Real Thing*, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Mourning Becomes Electra* and *Another Part of the Forest*. She has also worked at the Marines Memorial Theatre as Production Stage Manager for *The Boys in Autumn*, with Kirk Douglas and Burt Lancaster, and *Top Girls* by Caryl Churchill. For a year between A.C.T. seasons, Ms. Van Zandt was the production stage manager for *Greater Tuna*.

ALICE ELLIOTT SMITH (Stage Manager) began her career at A.C.T. as a stage management intern. Now in her ninth season, she has been the company's master scheduler, production coordinator of Plays-in-Progress, director of staged readings, associate director of the Troubadour program, director of the studio production *Ah, Wilderness!* and co-director of *Mornings at Seven* and *Picnic*. Last season she was co-director of the PIP production *Rio Seco*. During the past three seasons she stage managed *Opera Comique*, 'night, *Mother, Private Lives*, *The Lady's Not for Burning*, *The Floating Light Bulb* and *Faustus in Hell*.

DUNCAN W. GRAHAM (Stage Manager) is very happy to return to A.C.T. for his third season. Prior to A.C.T. he stage managed for San Jose Repertory Company, Sunnysvale Summer Repertory and the California Theatre Center, where he was production stage manager and lighting designer. Last summer, Mr. Graham was production manager for the Performing Arts Alliance Festival at Foothill College.

BRUCE ELSPERGER (Stage Manager) joins A.C.T., for the first time this season. He has been the Production Stage Manager at the Intiman Theatre in Seattle for the past three years, in addition to serving as Production Manager with the Bathhouse Theatre in Seattle. He also directed the Intiman Theatre acting intern production of *A Streetcar Named Desire* this season, and independently produced and directed various productions in Seattle. He served as stage manager and production stage manager with PCPA/Theatrefest in Solvang and Santa Maria prior to moving to Seattle. He studied in London, graduated from Drake University and worked with disturbed children as an art therapist in the Des Moines, Iowa schools.

A Man Named Shakespeare

by Jonathan Marks

William Shakespeare was, for most of his professional career, an actor with the leading theatrical troupe in London: the Lord Chamberlain's Men, later called the King's Men. His fortunes were tightly bound to those of his company; he was



a significant stockholder, with a share that fluctuated around 10%. Though he continued acting until his retirement in 1611, five years before his death, his most significant contribution to the fortunes of his company was the writing of plays, some 37 in number, to attract customers to the playhouse.

Many of these found favor among the theatregoing public; the popularity of his plays helped to keep the King's Men at the top of the English theatrical heap, and

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afforded Shakespeare the wherewithal to make significant investments in real estate.

The critics of the day generally considered Shakespeare one of the very best playwrights in London.

He was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1564, the third of eight children of John and Mary Shakespeare. His mother was a member of one of the foremost families of Warwickshire, the Ardens. His father was a successful tradesman — a glover — who participated in local politics, eventually becoming Bailiff, the highest elective office in Stratford. Numerous documents still bear John Shakespeare's name, but none bears his signature; he drew a glover's tool by his name as his mark. He may have been illiterate.

He enrolled his son William, however, in the King's New School at Stratford, which offered an excellent classical education. We don't know whether William finished the curriculum or dropped out, but it is clear that his life changed very quickly. Stratford underwent a recession; his parents suffered severe financial setbacks; and, when he was eighteen, Will impregnated and married Ann Hathaway, an heiress some eight years his senior. Two years later their daughter Susanna was joined by twins, Hamnet and Judith.

Shakespeare did not go on to university, but what he did next is a mystery; from the birth of the twins in 1585, history tells us nothing about William Shakespeare for seven years. When he resurfaces in 1592 he is in the metropolis, London; he is an actor, and he is gaining success as a playwright.

The first mention of his new career was in a deathbed tract by a university-educated playwright, Robert Greene. Addressing his colleagues — other

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THE AMERICAN CONSERVATORY THEATRE

presents

KING LEAR

(1605 - 1606)

by William Shakespeare

Directed by Edward Hastings
Scenery by Richard Seger
Costumes by Robert Fletcher
Lighting by Derek Duarte
Music by Ron McFarland
Sound by Stephen LeGrand
Duels staged by J. Steven White
Battle staged by John Loschmann
Wigs by Rick Echols
Associate Director Christina Yao

Cast

(in order of appearance)

The Fool Luis Oropeza
Earl of Gloucester William Paterson
Earl of Kent Steven Anthony Jones
Edmund Daniel Reichert
Goneril Jeanne Paulsen
Duke of Albany Drew Eshelman
Regan Megan Cole
Duke of Cornwall Garland J. Simpson
Cordelia Fredi Olster
Lear Peter Donat
Barry Kraft (Oct. 24*, Nov. 5,11*,14,25*,28*)
Duke of Burgundy Brian Crawley
King of France Will Leskin
Edgar Richard Butterfield
Oswald Rick Hamilton
Old Man Joseph Bird
Cordelia's Captain Don Piper
Doctor Paul Coolbrith
Herald David Maier
Knights, Officers, Messengers, Martin Bedoian, Joseph Bird,
Soldiers, Attendants Benjamin Bratt, Mark Daniel Cade,
David Carrera, Paul Coolbrith,
Brian Crawley, Hugh Dignon,
Alan Kopischke, Will Leskin, Chi Muoi Lo,
David Maier, Don Piper,
David Matthew Proctor, Martin Robinson,
Jonathan Scott, Steven C. Weingartner

There will be one intermission.

*matinees

UNDERSTUDIES

The Fool-Ed Hodson; Kent-Paul Coolbrith; Gloucester, Old Man, Cordelia's Captain-Frank Ottiwel; Edmund, Herald-Scott Freeman; Goneril-Paula Markovitz; Albany-Will Leskin; Regan-Carlotta Scarmack; Cornwall-David Maier; Cordelia-Jenny Roblin; Burgundy-Howard Swain; France, Oswald, Doctor-Don Piper; Edgar-Brian Crawley; Soldier, Attendant-Joey Dismore.

Fight Captain: Jonathan Scott

Stage Management Staff: Karen Van Zandt and Bruce Elesperger

**This production is made possible in part through a generous grant
from Simpson Paper Company.**

Scenery and costumes for *King Lear* were constructed in the A.C.T. Studios.

Listening to "Lear"

by Dennis Powers



Laurence Olivier as Lear and Alec Guinness as the Fool. Old Vic production, 1946.

"Of all Shakespeare's plays," wrote Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Macbeth* is the most rapid, *Hamlet* the slowest, in movement. *Lear* combines length with rapidity — like the hurricane and the whirlpool, absorbing while it advances." Coleridge went on to rate *King Lear* as "the most tremendous effort of Shakespeare as a poet."

Other major poets of the early nineteenth century were also drawn to the play. Shelley called it "the most perfect specimen of dramatic poetry existing in the world." Keats put it this way: "The excellence of every art is in its intensity, ACT:10

capable of making all disagreeables evaporate, from their being in close relationship with Beauty and Truth. Examine *King Lear*, and you will find this exemplified throughout." Goethe paid tribute to the universality of Shakespeare's aging monarch when he observed that "an old man is always a King Lear."

In fact, the universality of the play, its timelessness and its undiminished ability to speak directly to us in human terms, are the foundations on which A.C.T. Artistic Director Edward Hastings has built his production. Instead of locating the drama in its most familiar setting of prehistoric Britain, Hastings has opted for a more abstract context.

Working closely with designers Richard Seger (scenery), Robert Fletcher (costumes), Derek Duarte (lighting) and Stephen LeGrand (sound), as well as composer Ron McFarland, Hastings has placed Shakespeare's work in an evocative, nonspecific environment that underscores its human qualities rather than its historical ones. Without referring to any single period in history, Fletcher's costumes suggest a society where wealth, power and military might are revered and where greed, cruelty and ruthlessness are often masked by tradition and formality. Seger's setting, with its reversible back wall and movable panels, combining rough wood and elegant metallic surfaces, fluidly accommodates both interior and exterior locales. And, as the director points out, it has the added value of eliminating tedious scene changes that might inhibit the production's momentum.

Hastings' rationale for freeing the play

from its usual moorings of time and place? "I think it throws the emphasis onto Shakespeare's words," he says. "I hope it will make our audiences listen harder and, as a result, feel and understand more about the play and respond in a deeper way to the characters and the poetry. *King Lear* isn't a play about Stonehenge, after all. It's a drama about people whose humanity we recognize at once and whose problems we face in our own lives."

In addition, Hastings wants the scenery and costumes to extend and support the series of dualities that he sees as central to the play—appearance and reality, vision and blindness, reason and madness, kindness and cruelty, and the stark combination of roughness and elegance that characterizes not only the society portrayed but the towering poetry of the play as well.

In Shakespeare's opening scene, old Lear falls victim to the hypocrisy of his two elder daughters, Goneril and Regan, whose effusive protestations of love conceal their hostility and resentment, while he banishes Cordelia, the youngest and most truly loving of his daughters, as a punishment for her blunt honesty in speaking to him. Later, when Goneril and Regan show their true colors, Lear is devastated and strikes out on his own in the company of a few ragged followers, exchanging castle and crown for a hovel and a bed of straw. Bereft of power and privilege, he plumbs the depths of sorrow and madness — and in the process discovers his own humanity.

"The play," as critic Kenneth Muir points out, "is not only a tragedy of parents and children, of pride and ingratitude: it is also a tragedy of kingship. Power corrupts not only the possessor's capacity for loving, but the spontaneity of others' love. He can never be sure that the professed love of friends and relations is disinterested, since it may easily be purposeful flattery. What is

Interfering With The Present

Shakespeare does not retell history but recreates it in the movement of life — there is no end to it and you cannot find a beginning. The curtain falls in the theatre but in history it all continues. The texture builds up layer after layer swelling with the blood and tears of generations . . .

Take the year I was working on *Lear*: there was war first at one end of the world then at the other; every day without fail people were killed, there was arson in world capitals, whole districts were burnt down; grenades of tear gas flew about; students revolted and troops stormed into the universities; it was the hour of the Kommandants, the tanks rolled into the town. Martin Luther King was murdered — the fighter against violence. Photographs appeared in the newspapers of a new police uniform — a steel helmet covering the head with only a narrow slit for the eyes; the whole body was covered with armour, like an enormous shield . . . What century was this?

The so-called "epoch" in the tragedy is not confined by historical time, but is an expanse laid open by history; it is all movement, there is nothing at all of the past; the primeval darkness creeps into the future; the extinct light of hope is set alight, and flames; everything moves forward. Where? . . . The roads behind lead backwards into prehistory; the way forward is longer, steeper, beyond the horizon. At an undefined point the times intersect: the past threatens to become the future, and the future has already happened. Who said that the author was reflecting history? He is interfering with the present.

— from *King Lear: The Space of Tragedy*,
by Grigori Kozintsev, director of the
1970 Soviet film version.

more, the appetite for flattery grows by what it feeds on; those who refuse to flatter are hated and banished, while the flatterers are rewarded."

Shakespeare's subplot, paralleling the story of Lear and his daughters with that of Gloucester and his two sons Edgar and Edmund, has occasionally been the subject of unfavorable criticism. One of its most celebrated detractors was Leo Tolstoy, who argued in 1907 that the



A 19th century German painting by Pecht depicting Lear and Cordelia.

A Man Named Shakespeare

Continued from page 8

learned poets who dabbled in playwriting — Greene lamented the fact that this new fellow who was attracting crowds to the theatre was not a university man, as a writer should be, but rather came from the ranks of the actors, "those Puppets (I meane) that spake from our mouths, those Anticks garnisht in our colour." This young Shakespeare was just "an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers": an actor doing the work of a man of letters, writing plays.

And an actor he would remain. Aside from the sonnets, and some poetry he wrote during the plague years when the theatres were closed, Shakespeare showed little interest in the literary life. He never bothered to publish his plays; some came out in pirated (and garbled)

ACT:12

subplot is "utterly superfluous" and serves only to "distract one's attention."

Irish critic Edward Dowden made a convincing case for the defense, however, when, in discussing the relationship of the parallel story lines in an 1879 essay, he noted that "one story of horror serves as a means of approach to the other, and helps us to conceive its magnitude."

In writing *King Lear*, scholars believe, Shakespeare characteristically drew on several sources, including an existing play, *The True Chronicle History of King Leir*, of unknown authorship. Among the other sixteenth-century works to which Shakespeare turned were Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queen*, Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles* and Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*. When *King Lear* was first performed, probably in 1605 or 1606, the title role was played by Shakespeare's associate Richard Burbage. Notable later interpreters include Thomas Betterton, David Garrick, Edmund Kean, William Macready, Henry Irving and, in our own time, John Gielgud, Michael Redgrave, Orson Welles and Laurence Olivier.

editions during his life, but eighteen of them remained unpublished until seven years after his death, when two of his fellow actors published an authoritative edition of his works for posterity.

William Shakespeare showed little interest in posterity. He wrote for his fellows: the actors and the theatregoing public.

And his fellow actors knew what we all now know: that William Shakespeare was not just one of the best playwrights of his day, but the best writer mankind has produced. And their descendants, the players of today, know what many tend to forget: that he wrote his plays for one purpose only: for the actors to perform for the entertainment and stimulation of the public.



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KING LEAR

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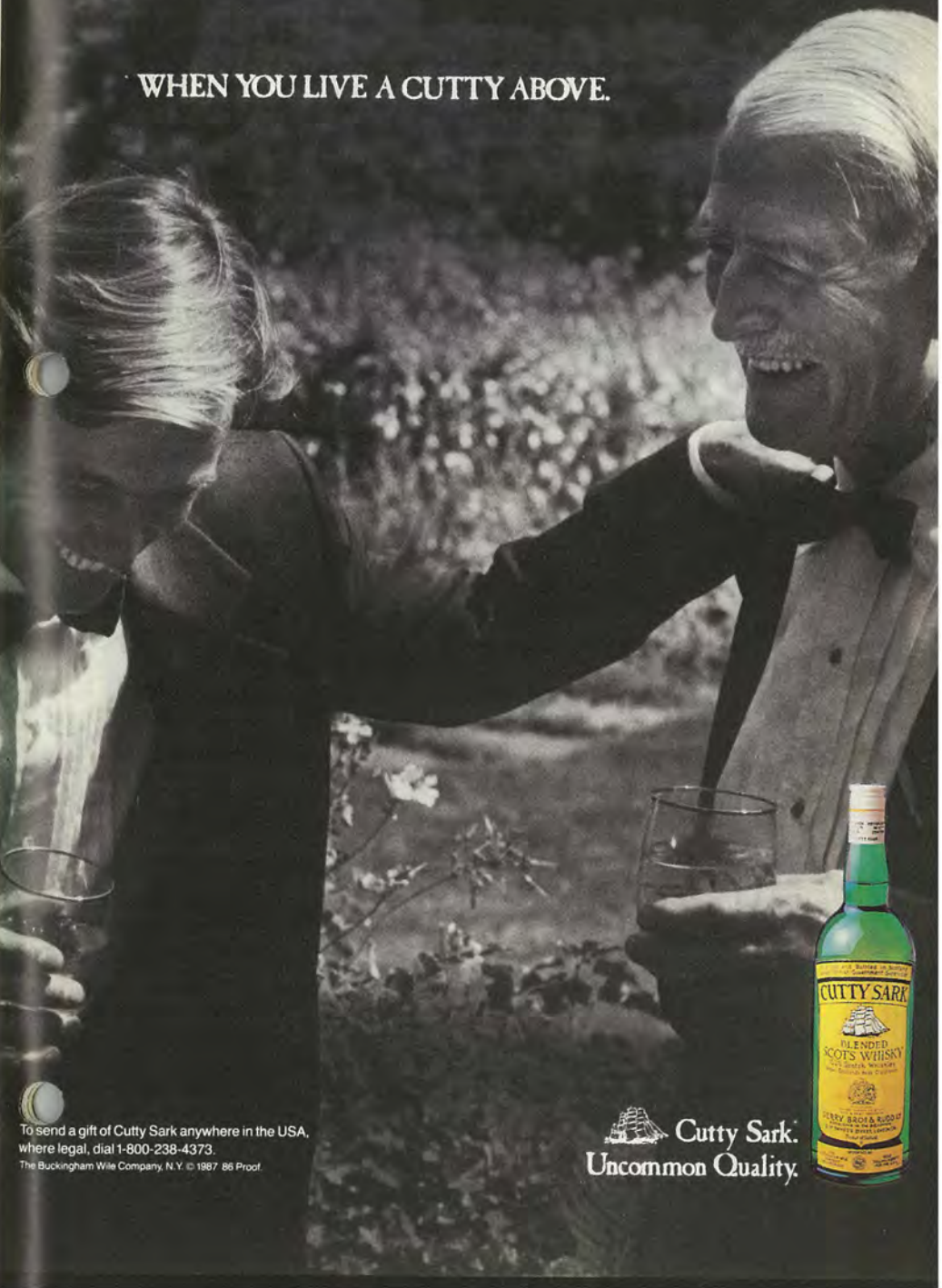
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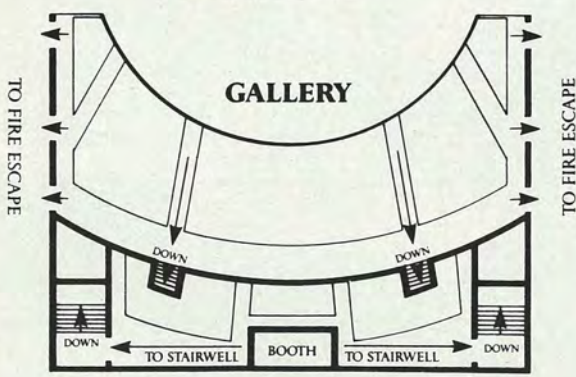
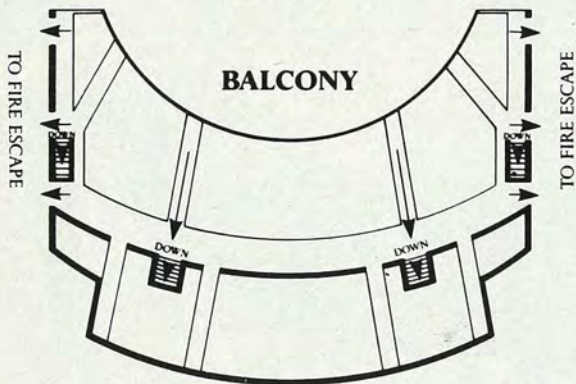
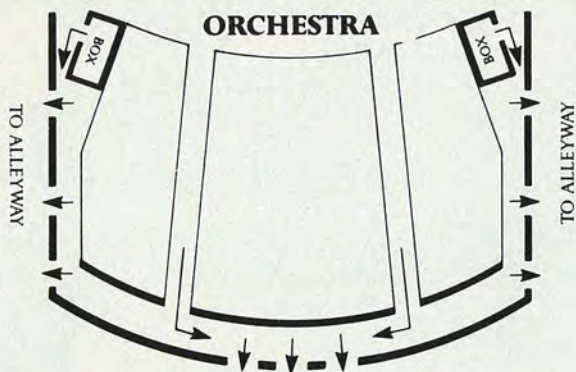
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Casting the Musical

From "Sondheim & Co."

by Craig Zadan



A poor first audition caused Alexis Smith — at right, with Follies co-star Dorothy Collins) — to be eliminated from consideration for a role in which she scored the greatest triumph of her career.

THE process of casting a Broadway musical is usually as vague to most producers as it is to actors. To accommodate the enormous task of finding the right performer for the right role, producers employ casting directors. One of the most skilled in her profession is Shirley Rich, who worked for Rodgers and Hammerstein and Harold Prince before opening her own independent casting office.

"I have my own philosophy of how to treat actors," she says, "having begun as

one myself. A casting director must be knowledgeable about every aspect of the theatre. It takes a lot of time and energy and patience. I don't feel you can cast unless you cover talent . . . I don't think you can do it just from interviewing and auditioning actors. You must see them in performance, notice aspects of their singing, acting, dancing, and try to remember them by storing these facts in the back of

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your mind for future reference.

"Actors by nature are so busy trying to sell themselves they make a lot of mistakes. They often talk too much at auditions. Instead of singing numbers *not* normally done — and they can be found if they look hard enough — such as songs cut from shows, usually every year there is a song that everybody sings . . . The year of *Man of La Mancha* three hundred out of five hundred actors sang 'The Impossible Dream.' Obviously, the production team sitting out there all day listening to the same song done over and over is going to be much harsher on you

you are going to go through such tortuous weeks, months, years. That's why you should study all the time while you are unemployed. Unless you are working on scenes or working with a vocal coach or dancing all the time, you're never going to make it. You also have to be prepared to find work outside the business while you're studying and training — nobody can make money in show business fifty-two weeks a year.

"A major problem the casting director must face is that some of the most talented people in the world can't give a good audition, and if you go by that and discard these people you would miss some of the most gifted people in New York. So you have to do their readings in different ways and take more time with them. I think frankly, even with a lousy reading, there is something that you're going to see. And then, at the other end of the spectrum, there are actors who come in and give extraordinary readings, get hired, and then the show goes into rehearsal and they never go further than the reading in performance. But when I see someone I believe in, I will go to the moon to help him get the part."

Joanna Merlin, also from an acting background — and today, at times, still active in that profession — took over casting in the Prince office when Shirley Rich exited, at the tail end of casting *Company*.

"Casting begins on a show," she says, "when Actors' Equity posts a casting notice and anyone who's a member can come and be interviewed. What that means is that you spend a few minutes with each person trying to find out if the actor is physically right for a role, what his background is, and if he's qualified enough to be auditioned. The big problem is that you don't have unlimited auditioning time. You get a résumé and sometimes that résumé is all made up and you don't know that. You don't really know if the person is right until you audition



Stephen Sondheim (right) and Harold Prince

if you are the ninety-ninth actor singing the *same* song. And, in general, you're always safer *never* to sing a song written by the composer you're auditioning for.

"An actor who's new to singing should go any time he can to audition . . . There's only one way to be trained to audition well and that is to audition as much as possible — not in your apartment and not in a coach's studio, but on the stage. The one thing that you've got to be able to do if you are going to remain in a profession such as this, where there is little employment for most of its actors, is to keep your inner confidence, because



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him and that is the sad thing about the casting business. You can't audition everyone and you obviously will overlook people who are talented. I think that after a while you begin to develop a sense. You can't tell how well someone sings from what's on his résumé and a lot of Steve's scores require legitimate, trained singers. But in addition, Hal believes that actors are very important to musicals, and that you can't use singers who sing terrifically and can't act at all.

"There are many offices where you don't get an audition unless you have other Broadway credits. Hal doesn't feel that way at all. He takes great pride in discovering new people. That's the reason you can look at a lot of his shows and see lots of new faces.

"During the interviewing period we send a breakdown of the parts to agents, which we try to make as complete as possible, and then they send in submission lists. I also make up my own submission list of people I think would be right for a particular part and give it to Hal. Then, of course, there are the people who are *not* represented. . . . I would say they have as much chance. Or if an agent calls me and says, 'I just heard this girl and she's perfect for the role,' I would absolutely give that girl an audition provided that I trusted the agent. There are some less reliable than others. Then I get together with the musical director who has gone over the music with Steve and we determine what the vocal ranges are, and we start auditioning. I generally screen people with the musical director. We hear them sing and if they want to use their own accompanist they can, otherwise they use the one we have. I try beforehand to give them some sort of idea what kind of music we want to hear. Generally we ask them to bring a ballad because it tells the musical director more about the voice because the notes have to be sustained. If they sing badly I usually don't have them read. If they sing

well, then I ask them to read some scenes that they already picked up at the office a few days before and have been preparing. They do the scene with the stage manager, and *sometimes*, even if they're not vocally right, I have them read so I can get some kind of sense of what their acting abilities are for future reference — or should the vocal requirements change.

"After a few screenings they audition for the director, the choreographer, and the writers. I generally read with them at the first audition. Then there is a group decision and the roles are cast after a series of call-backs where the staff decides who is right for which role.

"There are lots of times where people audition and don't get a role but study and then try again. As a matter of fact, Alexis Smith was auditioned in California for *Follies* and was eliminated because she sang so badly. She called later and asked if she could have another crack at it and Hal said he'd see her again. So she flew out from Los Angeles on her own and of course the second time she was terrific. She had been working on her voice and she felt more confident. It's wonderful when an actor feels he's right and pursues it until he's seen. Hermione Gingold was not at all close to the original conception of that role in *A Little Night Music*, but she read the script and asked for an audition. The minute Hal heard her read, it was clear she was indeed right for the role. She turned it into her own and now it's hard to imagine anyone else playing that part.

"The major concern of stars is that they do not like to work in ensemble shows, and Hal's productions are not really framed around a star. They are really more of a group effort. There have been many stars whom we wanted to audition, but once they read the script and realized that they could not use the show as a vehicle, they would not even consider it. But that's all part of the crazy kind of psychology we have to deal with." □



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Here are the Playwrights

An upbeat assessment of the state of contemporary American drama
by one of our foremost directors and critics.

by Robert Brustein



LARRY MERKLE

A scene from the A.C.T. production of Ma Rainey's Black Bottom by August Wilson.

PERHAPS the question most frequently asked in the American theatre is, "Where are the playwrights?" Each generation believes that the past was a golden age of dramatic writing and the present is barren by comparison. I remember hearing the question in the fifties, when Williams, Miller, Hansberry, Gibson, and Inge were dominating the stage. It was asked again in the sixties, when Albee, Gelber, Kopit, Bullins, Feiffer and Ribman were generating plays. And it has been insistently posed in re-

cent years — a period, paradoxically, when American playwriting may very well have been entering a renaissance. Even American playwrights are sometimes prone to accept the legend of their invisibility. In a recent article in the *New York Times*, Albert Inaurato bemoaned the cultural conditions that were making it

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impossible for dramatists like himself to work: insufficient royalties, indifferent audiences, unavailable actors, unadventurous producers. The situation sounds dismal — until you notice there are more talented playwrights around the theatre today than at any other time in our history.

Playwrights are a stubborn breed. Potentially the most ballyhooed writers in our society, they rarely enjoy consistent public or critical approval. One day they are lions, the next day goats. They can



Anne Pitoniak (at left) and Kathy Bates of the original cast in a scene from Marsha Norman's 'night, Mother.

work for years on a script, rehearse it for months, and see it die in a week. They may experience every form of discouragement known to a writer; yet, unlike our actors and directors, they rarely abandon the stage permanently for movies or television (many have the option to moonlight in these lucrative fields). Playwriting is not so much a craft as an obsession. Playwrights often seem to have no other choice than to write plays.

I know good dramatists who haven't had a work produced in New York in over ten years. Yet, every season, like clockwork, they submit a new script. In the past, one could argue, they were playing the odds. With one Broadway hit, followed by tours, out-of-town productions, and publication in the Samuel French catalogue, their financial future was assured. Nobody expects this anymore. Today, a serious American play stands as much chance on Broadway as a classical revival, which is to say a brief

LACOMBE



Stockard Channing and John Mahoney in the recent New York production of John Guare's *House of Blue Leaves*.

run at best, even in the unlikely event it gets produced. American playwrights are exiles in their own land, their traditional territory having been usurped by British imports, formula musicals, and lightweight comedies.

Yes, it's true that Marsha Norman's *'night Mother*, David Mamet's *Glengarry Glen Ross*, August Wilson's *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, and David Rabe's *Hurlyburly*, perhaps a few others, have enjoyed pro-

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ductions on Broadway in the past five years. All of them originated at resident theatres and none, I believe, made profits on their commercial runs. John Guare's *The House of Blue Leaves* will transfer to Broadway after successful showings first at the Mitzi Newhouse, then at the Vivian Beaumont in Lincoln Center. My guess is this play won't make a profit either, though it's closer than most to having a successful formula. With this kind of record, even the most adventurous Broadway producers are being forced to recognize that they can't return investments with serious plays, and this in turn inhibits any desire to risk capital in the hope of advancing American theatre. The situation will not improve, it will deteriorate further.

So where are the playwrights? They're here, all right, though not in commercial venues. They are still being welcomed by

resident companies, off-Broadway and beyond, and by the various playwriting festivals in Louisville, Waterford, and the Berkshires. Their fees range from pin money to modest royalties, but the possibility of the Big Bonanza is becoming more and more remote. A Broadway playwright once remarked that you can't make a living in the theatre, only a killing. Now you can't even make a killing. Your best hope for a living is an NEA or Rockefeller or Guggenheim grant, or a play that makes the rounds of the non-profit theatres, possibly followed by a modest movie sale.

I am going to propose a strange hypothesis; I hope it will not be construed as showing insensitivity to the American playwright's material need. But it is my growing conviction that the very conditions blocking commercial success are proving responsible for artistic



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Lynn Redgrave and Chad Allen in Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All For You by Christopher Durang "distilling his special brew of denatured venom."

developments of a very high order. In the past, the pattern of American playwriting has usually been one or two major successes, accompanied by phenomenal media acclaim, followed by a succession of disappointing failures and a critical write-off. This was the pattern of O'Neill, who was forced to abandon the stage for almost a decade and afterwards watch his masterpiece, *The Iceman Cometh*, rejected by press and public alike. It was the experience of Clifford Odets, who couldn't ring a cash register on Broadway after *Awake and Sing* and *Golden Boy*. It was the fate of Arthur Miller after *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman*, a dramatist of world acclaim who hasn't managed to make a significant theatrical impact in



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almost twenty years. It was the biannual response to Tennessee Williams, whose later offerings were met with continual discouragement and impatience. And it was the pattern of Edward Albee, who hasn't even had a minor success since *A Delicate Balance* in 1966, or launched a commercial production since five or six years ago, with the short-lived *Man with Three Arms*.

The criticism most frequently heard about the playwrights of past generations, particularly Williams, was that they were repeating themselves. If this was true, it was less an artistic choice than a conse-



Jason Robards in a recent production of Eugene O'Neill's The Iceman Cometh.

quence of immeasurable cultural pressure to match their past triumphs. The successful American playwright was forced to pay dearly for his momentary fame, largely because it was so incredibly inflated. More than the novelist, certainly more than the poet, the Great American Playwright became a source of hopes and expectations so magnified it was virtually impossible to fulfill them. Perhaps because plays reached the public more directly than novels or poems, the hit playwright was instantly catapulted into the kind of celebrity usually enjoyed only

by movie stars and sports heroes. But just as fatigue invariably follows familiarity, so the reputable playwright soon discovered that nothing he could produce, not even clones of past hits, would satisfy the sensation-hungry palate of a fickle public, a jaded press.

Now, of course, whether by choice or circumstance, even a Miller or an Albee has little access to the commercial stage. No wonder, when Sam Shepard, one of our most celebrated writers (and movie actors), has yet to see his first Broadway production. But this has not limited Shepard's powers. Indeed, unlike those



Al Pacino in the 1984 London revival of David Mamet's *American Buffalo*.

predecessors who wilted under such conditions, Shepard has flourished in a state of marginality. With the exception of his most recent play, *A Lie of the Mind* (the first to show overt signs of self-consciousness), Shepard's work has been a model of growth and variety. The same may be said of his gifted contemporaries — I suspect for much the same reasons. David Mamet's initial Broadway production of *American Buffalo*, a masterpiece of writing and acting, was greeted with critical jeers and audience incomprehension, which may be why he followed that

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work not with more naturalistic proletarian dramas but with new departures: the theatrical *Life in the Theatre*, the socially explosive *Glengarry Glen Ross*, the mysteriously metaphysical *The Shawl*. David Rabe, following his somewhat self-righteous off-Broadway Vietnam plays, *Pavlo Hummel* and *Sticks and Bones*, went on to develop a passionate drama of social documentary, culminating in the scorchingly written (though superficially produced) *Hurlyburly*. Ronald Ribman, whose only Broadway entry was the realistic *Cold Storage* in the mid-seventies, has been developing quietly, methodically, and meticulously into one of the most haunting dramatic poets our stage has ever seen, with three new plays announced for next season that have the capacity to make theatrical history.

With *Marie and Bruce*, savaged by the New York press, Wallace Shawn emerged as a playwright of courage and intellect. And although I was not among the

admirers of *Aunt Dan and Lemon*, it could not have been predicted by anything Shawn had yet written. Christopher Durang has been distilling his special brew of denatured venom for about a decade now, each new work a deeper incision into the source of the pain that produced it. Arthur Kopit has moved gracefully from absurdist comedies to the interior journeys of *Wings* to the satiric indignation of *End of the World*. These, I believe, are all major playwrights. But even less ambitious, less versatile, or less prolific writers — Lanford Wilson, Marsha Norman, Terrence McNally, Keith Reddin, Albert Inaurato, Robert Auletta, A.R. Gurney, Beth Henley, August Wilson, Richard Nelson, Charles Mee, Jr. Harry Kondoleon, William Hauptman, and many others — are composing plays with serious intentions, powerful themes, rigorous craftsmanship, and subtleties of character and action.

The numbers alone suggest that

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something unusual is happening in our theatre, but the general quality and intelligence of the work is the real measure. Because they so rarely have Broadway hits, few of these playwrights have found their way into the feature sections of newspapers and magazines. Their existence is not a significant fact in the minds of the literate public at large. But this may be the very reason they continue to write with such obdurate intensity, with such astonishing unpredictability. Obscurity has advantages as well as disappointments, just as sudden fame can prove to be the greatest enemy of promise. In the past, a few notable writers — J.D. Salinger, Edmund Wilson — made a conscious decision to refuse celebrity on the premise that it was death to talent. In Salinger's case, so far as we know, the talent died anyway. At the present time, celebrity is electing to refuse quite a few notable writers — with somewhat more encouraging results. The

effect on the income of such writers is damaging, the drain on their egos debilitating. But the impact on the development of their gifts has been unquestionably salutary. Today's playwrights may not have as much chance as yesterday's to get momentarily rich and famous. But they have a better shot at something more elusive and more satisfying — the capability to last the course with dignity, without compromising their talents. So the next time you hear someone ask, "Where are the American playwrights?" tell him, "They're here!" □

Robert Brustein is Artistic Director (and founder) of the American Repertory Theatre in Cambridge, Mass., and Director of the Loeb Drama Center at Harvard University, where he is also Professor of English. He was the dean of the School of Drama at Yale for 13 years and formed the Yale Repertory Theatre. Drama critic of The New Republic since 1959, he is the author of seven books, including The Theatre of Revolt and Making Scenes.

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LONDON REPORT *continued from page 22*



A Festival Fringe juggler entertains the crowd.

tion, set in a kind of computerized Rubik-cube by Hans Hoffer, was the *only* representative of contemporary European theatre at its most sparkling in Edinburgh this year, but the piece itself is too long to sustain either its novelty or delicate weight.

Otherwise, the Berliner Ensemble's newish *Troilus and Cressida* was the most interesting work I saw from Europe, directed by Manfred Wekwerth and Joachim Tenschert and designed with austere beauty by Manfred Arund. Far from signifying an upturn in the company's artistic fortunes, however, it confirmed one's fears that the Ensemble is trapped in a rigid aesthetic ill-suited to an argued play like *Troilus*, further abusing its inheritance with a performance of gross selfishness by its star actor, the bull-like Ekkehard Schall, Brecht's son-in-law.

Edinburgh — and the British Cultural establishment generally — is very bad at hospitality and organizing events around distinguished guests: the turnover of shows is so fast and the money for grand occasions simply isn't there — so it was left, as so often, to the Traverse Theatre to offer a sympathetic, young environment to Schall, Barbara Brecht and (on a separate morning) the artistic director of the Moscow Art Theatre. Discussion,

questions, jokes, a sense of shared community.

The Traverse, founded in the sixties and one of the most influential studio fringe theatres in Britain, is still at the unfashionable end of medieval Edinburgh. Now run by a young, lively, idealistic and cosmopolitan director, Jenny Killick, it remains the heart of new writing on any Edinburgh Festival Fringe. This year the Traverse also hosted *Le Lavoir*, the Market Theatre Johannesburg, and a new play from the National Theatre Studio, most of whose work is not publicly performed. Mick Ward's *Apart from George* is a small, true tragedy set in the flat Fen country of East Anglia; it confirms the arrival of another new, keen writing talent, and comes to London for a short run in November.

The Traverse has two spaces in its tenebrous premises: tiny, on the ground floor, and less tiny, under the roof. During the Festival it turns round, on average, ten shows a day from morning coffee to midnight. Yet there is no skimping, never a sense of routine: acting and direction are the best available; design is outstanding. The best piece this year was Manfred Karge's *Man to Man*, a marvelously eccentric monologue for a German woman who survives the Depression and Third Reich by taking over her husband's crane-driving job, clothes and personality when he unexpectedly dies during a period of mass unemployment around 1932. (Karge is a bit vague on chronology.)

Man to Man is witty and touching, an adventure of fearlessness; a comedy of gender, a lament for the lost identity of woman forced by history and a male world to deny her own self. It was performed at the Traverse with heartbreaking simplicity by Tilda Swinton, a tall, pale, sandy-haired actress smothering her beauty in dirty punk wig, hideous male undergarments and chalky white face. It comes to the main theatre at the Royal Court in London in January, and should

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Only one other show matched the best of the Traverse this year. American work of quality is seen and heard under ideal conditions among the roving and ravenous audiences of the Edinburgh Fringe. They are hungry to recognize it when — too infrequently — it comes. Very much in the Traverse tradition of meticulous ensemble in writing, direction and acting was *Hauptmann*, from the Stormfield Theatre Company of Chicago. John Logan's documentary about the man electrocuted in 1936 for the murder of the Lindbergh baby managed to remain ambiguous while being clearly partisan. *Hauptmann* received and hid some of the ransom money but was never involved in the kidnap, Logan believes.

The play was superbly directed by Terry McCabe and acted by a flawless ensemble movingly led by Denis P. O'Dwyer as the arrested victim: devious, plausible, pitiful, foolish.

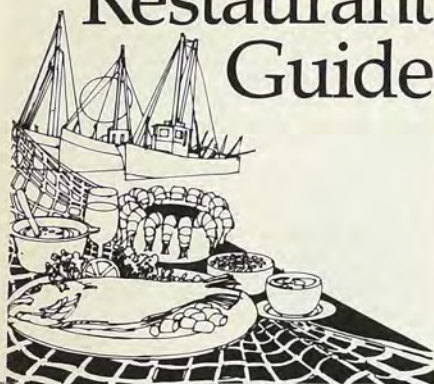
Such experiences are too intimate for the Festival itself, although last year Andrzej Wajda's famous Cracow production of *Crime and Punishment* played in what would normally be a Fringe venue, with an audience restricted by the director himself to about a hundred people, staring spellbound through half-open windows and doors into small rooms where a murderer and his hunter played a game to the death. Such events can never be "cost-effective," but they are events, and that is what Festivals, as distinct from the rest of the year, are for.

The Edinburgh Festival has never been more popular and survives the use made of it by politicians of all kinds. What it now needs is to retain its popularity while regaining some of the daring innovation and influence it used to have. When that happens, I shall be happy to go on the Edinburgh Diet for three weeks without a break. □

Michael Ratcliffe is the theatre critic of *The Observer* in London.

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