THE ALL-NEW ES 300

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

Artful design is apparent in the sleek new body of the ES 300, which has been totally restyled for improved aerodynamics as well as aesthetics.

Inside the passenger compartment, you will find a whole new world of luxury. The cabin itself is roomier and trimmed in leather* of a quality that's normally reserved for sedans costing far more. Run your hand along the sculpted contours of the driver's seat—the seams almost feel hand stitched. Burl Walnut accents adorn the dashboard, console and the door panels.

Sophisticated sound absorption technology creates a hushed atmosphere, in the quietest ES 300 cabin ever. But, with the option of a Mark Levinson® Premium Sound System, one of the finest audio systems possible, you may find quiet moments an all-too-rare occurrence.

In their effort to engage all of your senses, Lexus engineers haven't overlooked the most important one: your sense of safety. To that end, a new, three-stage driver's-side airbag and new full-length side-curtain airbags have been added, which help provide protection in the event of a severe frontal or side-impact collision.

Admittedly, the new ES 300 is not the kind of art you simply want to sit in front of and admire. This automobile calls out to be driven. And with a 210-horsepower V6 engine mated to a new, five-speed automatic transmission, it could certainly qualify as performance art.

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

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


*Exhibit: The Lexus driver's seat, power passenger seat, front-seat exalted-side-impact and side-curtain airbags are a Supplemental Restraint System (SRS). The driver's and front passenger airbags are not designed to deploy face a deploying airbag, always wear seatbelts, and sit upright in the middle of the seat, and do not lean against the door. The side airbags in front of the seating area around the windshield. The air bag, Toyota Motor Sales, Inc. Lexus reminds you to wear seatbelts, secure children in rear seat.
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THE ARTS
OF THE STATE

MUSIC

Renée Fleming

Vienna Philharmonic
Bernard Haitink leads one of the world's greatest orchestras in symphonies by Mozart, Schubert, and Brahms. March 11-13, Orange County Performing Arts Center, Costa Mesa, (714) 556-3787, www.opac.org.

L.A. Philharmonic

Debussy Trio
This Los Angeles-based ensemble is noted for its unusual combination of flute, viola, and harp and its dedication to new American music. The program features works from their just-released CD Three Friends. March 7, Laxson Auditorium, Cal State Chico, (530) 895-6333, www.debussystrio.com.

Garrick Ohlsson

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

The question is no longer why. It’s how.
The solutions start here.
The question is no longer why. It's how.

The solutions start here.
Curtain Up!

Strike up the Band
Fri & Sat, Sept 20 & 21, 8 pm
Zellerbach Hall $24, $34, $46
Tony award-winning musical theater veteran Martin Charnin and celebrated Broadway conductor/arranger Joel info to bring this updated version of George & Ira Gershwin’s delightful 1927 musical comedy to Zellerbach Hall. With the Curtain Up Orchestra, and a cast featuring some of Broadway’s rising talent, Strike up the Band has all the zest, wit, and appeal of the classic Broadway show.

C A L  P E R F O R M A N C E S

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

Thr-Fri, Sept 19-22, 8 pm
Sat, Sept 23, 2 pm & 8 pm
And Sun, Sept 24, 3 pm
Zellerbach Hall $24, $32, $46
Judith Jamison’s remarkable image returns with a special program filled with excerpts of Ailey classics, plus two premieres.

Program A (Fri, Sept 19 & Sat, Sept 23)

(B) DANCE OF THE GODS

Music by MOHAMED JAMEL/FEREIDOUN/HOKE

JONI, MUSIC BY鹽川武雄(WEST COAST PREMIERE)

ALIVE/REVELATIONS

Program B (Fri, Sept 20 & Sat, Sept 23)

JONI, MUSIC BY 英雄 ROY ZYKROV/BAKING KING

RUBINSON, MUSIC BY ROY BOLTON, 前田田村

MARIAN BANCROFT,和 EDDIE GOLDS (JAPAN PREMIERE)

FOLLOWING THE SUITE CURRENT UPSET/UPSET MUSIC BY SAEKI HUSSAIN, MOHAMED JAMEL/MIYAMURA TADAO/CAWANA, ANDERSON, MUSIC BY MICHAEL, KAMO KABE/DOKE

EDDINGTON THOMAS

Program C (Fri, Sept 21 & Sat, Sept 23)


JUDITH JAMISON ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Masaaki Chaya ASSOCIATE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

CORPORATE SPONSOR: WILLS FARDO

Pascal Rioult Dance Theatre

Fri & Sat, Sept 16 & 18, 8 pm
Zellerbach Hall $24, $32, $46
Formally a principal dancer with the Martha Graham Company, Pascal Rioult has established himself as one of today’s most original and musical choreographers. For his Bay Area debut, the company will perform two programs, including the complete works of Rioult’s critically acclaimed suite of dances known as The River Project. The first time all four pieces have been performed together in North America.

Program A (Fri, Sept 16)

THE RIVER PROJECT (NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE)

RIVER/DANCE: WOMEN/MEN/CHLOROPHYLL/MOON/FIRE

Program B (Fri, Sept 16)

RIVER/DANCE: WOMEN/MEN/CHLOROPHYLL/MOON/FIRE/MUSIC BY MOZART: NO ENTRY. GET TO MUSIC BY STRAVINSKY: YIN. GET TO RIVER’S CALM

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Terpsichore's Treasures

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

BY DONNA PERLMUTTER

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

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

Shortly after Balanchine's death in 1983,
critics, unhappy with how NYCB proper
was getting along, assailed Tomasson the
West Coast keeper of the flame — so
impressed were they with his breadth and
depth of his artistic vision and his power
to infuse performances with Balanchinian
style, chans, and virtuosity, not to mention
his way with Robbins.

Now he's adding more NYCB reperto-
ire to the agenda, its choices that set up
an exceptionally sharp contrast between
his alma mater's two masters: the 1987
jewel by Balanchine and the 1969 Dance
at a Gathering by Robbins. Whether
Tomasson had it in mind or not, he illus-
trates with these particular works how
Balanchine defined neoclassicism, and
how Robbins did the same for neo-
romanticism — two models that count-
less choreographers everywhere have since
wrapped their steps around.

So admired was Dances that when
Anthony Tudor created his 1975 landmark
ballet, The Lovers Are Finding, he said, in
his typically self-deprecating, maestoso
darn, "Imagine me, an old man, finally
doing a Jerry Robbins ballet." (The truth
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Tudor's feet, as it were, and returned
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pher by giving the Dances characters names like
'Mr. and Mrs. Brown', a device Tudor used
to memorize them as people without
giving up their anonymity.

Serevinsky was to Balanchine what
Chopin was to Robbins. And just looking
at "Rubies," the middle section of Jewels,
one can feel the choky irreverence of
Serevinsky's brush but rhythmically
ordered Capriccio for Piano and Orches-
tra. It laughs, it guffaws, it mocks. And so
does the movement — women in stel-

Continued on page 79
BY DONNA PERLMUTTER

The 2x2, a superb dancer with impeccable taste, who is also an exponent of the New York City Ballet style — say, Helgi Tomasson. Give him, in his retirement from performing, a company to build on, like San Francisco’s. And just watch it bloom. The result, in this 17th season of the company, highlights what we can expect from any stellar troupe with NYCB bloodlines: the treasures of George Balanchine and Jerome Robbins. But it also rounds out the picture with works by Tomasson himself and significant innovations from new choreographers, some so successful that other companies clamor for their works. Nor does the lineup slight potentials like Gillie, the nine-year-old of 19th-century Romantic ballet.

Shortly after Balanchine’s death in 1983, critics, unhappy with how NYCB proper was getting along, announced Tomasson the West Coast caretaker of the flame — so impressed were they with the breadth and depth of his artistic vision and his power to infuse performances with Balanchian style, flair, and virtuosity, as to mention his way with Robbins.

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

So admired was Dance at a Gathering that when Antony Tudor created his 1975 landmark ballet, The Leaves Are Fading, he said, in his typically self-deprecating, masterful way, “Imagine me, an old man, finally doing a Jerry Robbins ballet.” (The truth is, however, that Robbins learned at Tudor’s feet, as it were, and remade the compliment to the British choreographer by giving the Dancers characters names like The Man in Brown, a device Tudor used to humanize them as people without giving up their anonymity.)

Stravinsky was to Balanchine what Chopin was to Robbins. And just looking at Jewels, the middle section of Jewels, one can feel the choky reverence of Stravinsky’s brush but rhythmically ordered Capriccio for Piano and Orchestra. It laughs, it guffaws, it mocks. And so does the movement — women in stiletto Continued on page 29

San Francisco Ballet performs its repertoire union from February 5 through May 20 at the War Memorial Opera House. For tickets and information, call (415) 863-5000 or visit www.sf Ballet.org.

Performing Arts / February 2007

10
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American Conservatory Theater presents
the world premiere of
the difficulty of crossing a field
a new opera in seven tellings
performed by kronos quartet

by Tennessee Williams

The Glass Menagerie

directed by Laird Williamson

Mar 29-Apr 28
Geary Theater San Francisco

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

Directed by Charles Randolph-Wright

KATE EDMUNDS
BEAVER BAUER
PETER MARADUDIN
GARTH HEMPFLD
PETER MALEITZKE
DEBORAH SUSSEL
RICK ECHOLS
MERIL LIND SHAY
MARGO HALL

The Cast
(in order of appearance)

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

Understudies

Edith
Ruth Condomine
Charles Condomine
Dr. Bradman
Mrs. Bradman
Mme. Arcati
Elvira

Jessica Turner
Shona Tucker
Gregory Wallace
Tom Blair
Joan Harris-Gelb
Lori Lansen
René Augesen

This production is sponsored in part by
MRS. ALBERT J. MOORMAN

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

PERFORMING ARTS

2001-02 / 35th anniversary
A.C.T.
American Conservatory Theater

Carey Perloff, Artistic Director
Heather Kitchen, Managing Director
Melissa Smith, Conservatory Director

Carrie Perloff
Artistic Director
Heather Kitchen
Managing Director
Melissa Smith
Conservatory Director

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NOËL COWARD AND BLITHE SPIRIT
by Alan Farley

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

—Noël Coward, in No Yet the Dodo and Other Verses

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

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

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

Perhaps best known today as a playwright (and the man who wrote the song “Mad Dogs and Englishmen”), Coward was a man of multiple talents, considered by many to be the greatest all-around entertainer of the first half of the 20th century. Born in 1899 in a middle-class family in Tunbridge Wells, England, he rose to become one of the United Kingdom’s leading figures in the British royal family. He was knighted in 1970, and died peacefully at his home in Jamaica in 1973.

Coward began his stage career as a child actor at the age of ten. His first great success as an actor and playwright came in 1924 with The Vortex, a succès de scandale that dealt with drugs and drag toys and established Coward the playwright as the angry young man of the 1920s. His next hits were the comedy Hay Fever and the operetta Bitter Street (1929). In 1930 he wrote Private Lives for Gertrude Lawrence and himself; they played to sell-out runs in both London and New York. In 1933, he penned Tonight at 8:30 (a collection of nine one-acts, played in repertory), which he and Gertie performed in 1936.

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

Coward was also an actor, producer, and director for stage, radio, television, and film. His film projects included Brief Encounter, written and produced by Coward, based on his own one-act play Still See You Again and others targeted to the intellect (“Mad Dogs and Englishmen”). His preshow song “The Stately Homes of England” dealt with ghosts in a light-hearted way, while at the same time pointedly commenting on the declining conditions of the country’s landed gentry. Of his wartime songs, the patriotic “London Pride” personalized the stiff-upper-lip demeanor of the British, while his satirical numbers “Won’t You Please Oblige Us with a Bum Gun” and “Don’t Let’s Be Beastly to the Germans” captured the concurrent “Dad’s Army” state of affairs.

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

In the 1950s, when postwar critics rejected the wit and charm of Coward’s boulevard comedies in favor of the gritty “low-life” (Coward’s words) drama of Britain’s new generation of “Angry Young Men,” he reinvented himself as a cabaret entertainer, based on his experience playing for troops during World War II. After several successful seasons in London, he brought his act across the Atlantic in 1953, becoming the highest-paid performer to play Las Vegas. With successful British revivals of Private Lives and Hay Fever in 1963–64, the tide turned again in Coward’s favor. In 1970 Sir Noël was awarded a special Tony for his “multiple and immortal contributions to the theatre.”

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

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

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

The following morning, Coward sat down at his typewriter and began: “Blithe Spirit. A Light Comedy in Three Acts.” Six days later the play was finished. In Future Indefinite Coward writes:

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

by Alan Farley

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And I'd rather be loved than hated
Eternity may be lonely
When my body's disintegrated
And that which is loosely termed my soul
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Coward was also an actor, producer, and director for stage, radio, television, and film. His film projects included Brief Encounter, written and produced by Coward, based on his one-act play Still Life from Tonight at 8:30. The 1945 release was number two on the list of the top 100 British films of all time compiled by the British Film Institute in 1999. And in 1945, he was awarded a special Oscar, for the "outstanding production achievement" of the film In Which We Serve, a patriotic wartime drama he wrote, produced and directed, and in which he starred.

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

BLITHE SPIRIT

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

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

One evening soon after his return to London in April 1941, he came home from dinner to find that bombs had ripped apart his flat. A few days later, while he was dining in the Grill of the Savoy Hotel (where he had taken up residence while his flat was being repaired), bombs blew in the door of the restaurant. shaken by the destruction of the Griffin, he sent a scrawled note to the flat's one-time housewife with his close friend, actress and playwright Joyce Carey (who had met him when her mother played Coward's mother in The Vortex). Carey was working on a play, and Coward had an idea for a light comedy—"chatting at the door of his mind." The first day of the holiday they spent several hours talking about his idea. The following morning, Coward sat down at his typewriter and began: "Blithe Spirit. A Light Comedy in Three Acts." Six days later the play was finished.

In Future Indefinite Coward writes:

My gift for comedy dialogue, which I feared might have atrophied from disuse, had obviously profited from its period of inactivity. Beyond a few typographical errors I made no corrections, and only two lines of the original script were ultimately cut.
The idea for the subject of the play may have been a result of Coward's friendship with author Radclyffe Hall (author of the lesbian classic *The Well of Loneliness*), who, together with her great friend Una Troubridge, had visited a professional medium in hopes of contacting Hall's late lover, Mabel Batton. In fact, according to Terry Castle in *Noël Coward and Radclyffe Hall*, they contacted Batton through a young Indian girl, who communicated by rapping on a table in response to questions—much as happens in *Bilitis Spirit*.

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

> [T]he very curious opening night it was. The audiences, socially impeccable from the journalistic point of view and mostly in uniform, had to walk across planks laid on rubber caused by a recent air raid to see a light comedy about death. They enjoyed it, I'm glad to say, and it ran from that sunny summer evening through the remainder of the year and out the other side. Later on the play was produced in New York, where it ran for eighteen months, and I am prepared to say, here and now, with the maximum of self-satisfaction, that those six days in Port Merrion in May 1941 were not wasted. Early in his career, Coward devised his plays with an eye to performance, and usually wrote what he called a “whacking good part” for himself. This was not the case with *Bilitis Spirit*, although he did play Charles Goodsumine in the West End for two weeks and on tour in the United Kingdom for seven months in 1942-43. He was worse about the part, as Judy Campbell, who played Elvira with him on that tour, remembered in a 1990 KAWL interview:

> [He] wanted to play Charles Goodsumine and then when he came to do it, he said, “I had no idea what a bloody awful part it is! It is extremely long, and Cecil Parker (the original Charles) is quite brilliant to have sustained it on that level,” he said, “because I do all the work, and you get all the laughs!” You know, Madame Arceati and the wizers get all the laughs, and he said, “I’m there, never off the stage, doing all the work! Great mistake!”

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

In 1964, Coward directed *High Spirits*, a musical version of his play, with music and lyrics by Timothy Gray and Hugh Martin. It played 373 performances on Broadway with his longtime friend Beatrice Lillie as Madame Arceati.

**ELEGANT IMMORALITY**

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

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

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

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**Historical Note**

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

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

Wallace’s characterization is also inspired by the story of jazz pianist, singer, and notorious womanizer Leslie “Hutch” Hutchinson, born in Trinidad. Hutch also began his career in Harlem; he relocated first to Paris in 1924 and then to London three years later. Widely popular with the British swingin set, he enjoyed a long string of high-society affairs (while his wife languished, largely ignored, in their home in Hampstead); Hutch’s more famous lovers included Lady Edwina Mountbatten (wife of one of Coward’s close friends), Tallulah Bankhead, film star Merle Oberon, and comedien Cole Porter. Hutch appeared, with great success, in several revues written by Coward in the late 1920s, and performed with Coward at parties in the playwright’s home.
The idea for the subject of the play may have been a result of Coward’s friendship with author Radclyffe Hall (author of the lesbian classic *The Well of Loneliness*), who, together with her great friend Una Troubridge, had visited a professional medium in hopes of contacting Hall’s late lover, Mabel Batton. In fact, according to Terry Castle in *Noël Coward and Radclyffe Hall*, they contacted Batton through a young Indian girl who communicated by rapping on a table in response to questions—much as happens in *Blithe Spirit*.

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

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

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

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

Wallace’s characterization is also inspired by the story of jazz pianist, singer, and notorious womanizer Leslie "Hotch" Hutchins. Born in Grenada, Hutch also began his career in Harlem; he relocated first to Paris in 1924 and then to London three years later. Widely popular with the British swing crowd, he enjoyed a long string of high-society affairs (while his wife languished, largely ignored, in their home at Hampstead); Hotch’s more famous lovers included Lady Editha Mountbatten (wife of one of Coward’s close friends), Tallulah Bankhead, film star Marlene Dietrich, and composite Cole Porter. Hutch appeared, with great success, in several revues written by Coward in the late 1920s, and performed with Coward at parties in the playwright’s home.
DIFFERENT GIFTS:  
THE MEDIUM THROUGH THE AGES

by Rod O'Neal

There are different spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit gives them....
To one is given faith, to another healing....
To one is given prophecy, to another understanding of spirits....

1 Corinthians 12, 4-11

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It was through the second-generation mediums that Spiritism spread beyond the United States, first to London in 1852 with the arrival of Mrs. Hayden, who advertised her services in the Times. Her sittings may not have been as dramatic as some—she sat quietly, sometimes reading to herself, while rapping and table tilting went on about her—but they were convincing. Her clients ran their fingers down an alphabet board1, each rap indicating the next letter of the message, which often contained details of private matters Hayden could not possibly have known.

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

Within five years after the Fox sisters’ discovery in Hydesville, the movement had spread to Germany and France, then quickly spanned the globe. Transmissions from the dead were published as books that became the foundation of a new philosophy and eventually a recognized religion. Much of society, including the scientific world, was fascinated. In 1882, several prominent members of academia founded the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) in London to investigate Spiritualists’ claims using the rigors of scientific method, and the field of parapsychology was born. William James, the eminent Harvard psychologist and philosopher, was among its many eminent members. His intensive research into psychic phenomena over three decades profoundly influenced his work as well as the development of the fledgling field of psychology.

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

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

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

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The 240-hp Acura MDX. Consider the profound beauty of saying "no." Instead, say "yes" to getting out there. With an advanced electronic 4-wheel-drive system for exceptional on- and off-road performance, the MDX predicts wheelslip before it happens. And leather trimmed seats, room for seven and available Acura/Bose® Music System with 6-disc CD changer make it clear: Not every social obligation is obligatory. Call 1-800-TO-Acura or visit acura.com. Taking the SUV to a place it's never been before. Acura.
Relative values

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

The one and only Janie Dee

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

Now booking
The hottest selling ticket is sure to be the brand new stage musical, Clive. Clive! Rang Rang. London’s most expensive show ever, it fields a spectacular cast which includes Vicoool Boll, as Caesars Potts, and Richard O’Brien.

One to Watch
Watch out for 22-year-old Lyndsey Marshall as the not-so-innocent housemaid who has been entangled in two different stages of spies. Joe Warismer and Anna Chancell are the victims of their love in David Warren’s recent Marriage.

Front of house
West End news: Jerry Hall in Pearson’s Women, Martin Clunes as Tartuffe, and the Regis Frances McDormand reading for the UK?

THE FLAME KEPT ALIVE

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

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

In 1944, a prominent Spiritualist medium, Helen Duncan, was imprisoned, tried, and convicted under the Witchcraft Act of 1735. Her public trial was one of the first events in the history of the modern witch trials. Duncan and her colleagues, who were tried under the same act, were convicted of witchcraft and were sentenced to death. Duncan’s trial was one of the most controversial events in the history of Spiritualism, and it led to a major change in the way the medium was perceived.

Some attribute Spiritualism’s enormous rise in popularity in Britain during the 1920s and 30s to the movement’s ability to inspire the religious imaginations of soldiers caught in the nightmarish horror of World War I. Many of them returned from the front with eerily similar stories of ghosts and spirits materializing in their presence, often in the form of their loved ones from the war. The reason, whatever it was, led to the rise of Blithe Spirit, “the most successful British play in the history of the West End.”

And in 1941, when the New York Times recently reported that some of the families of the victims of the September 11 attacks have turned to comfort from mediums as a way to cope, Spiritualism is experiencing a comeback in the United States.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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1 If this reminds you of the Ouija board, you're right. "Ouija," derived from the French and German words for "yes" (oui and ja), developed as an adaptation of the original Fox sisters' code for interpreting caps applied to an alphabet board. In 1853 French Spiritualist M. Planchette refined the idea as a large piece of paper with a heart-shaped wedge (now known as a "planchette"), with wheels on two ends and a pencil attached to the third. One or more people would place their fingers on the planchette, which would move to draw pictures or form words. The modern Ouija board, which now bears numbers and letters, was developed in 1922 by Elipha J. Bond and Willard Paul in Baltimore. Parker Brothers bought all rights to the concept in 1936. The Ouija board has been one of Parker Brothers' most successful properties, exceeded only by the game of Monopoly.
GALLERY AT THE GEARY: ABOUT AVAILABLE LIGHT

Find yourself with some extra time before a performance or during intermission? Want to expose yourself to more fine art, but don’t make it to the art galleries as often as you’d like? Now you need look no further than the Geary Theater itself. A.C.T. invites you to visit the second floor of the theater (just outside the auditorium doors, along the north bank of windows, and by the elevators) to view original artwork by a diverse range of artists in a series of rotating exhibits throughout the 2001-2002 season.

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

There will be a reception honoring the artist at the Gallery at the Geary on March 7 from 5 to 7 p.m. Each artwork purchase benefits A.C.T. For more information about Diane Boote, please contact Margaret Danielak at (415) 683-9922 or visit the artist’s Web site at www.dianeeboote.com.

“COOL HOLLYWOOD BLONDES” COMING TO THE GEARY THEATER

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

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

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

Last year Stagebill, the publisher of A.C.T.'s acclaimed performance programs since 1995, acquired Performing Arts magazine, a California publisher of programs for the performing arts. As part of Stagebill's efforts to consolidate its West Coast operations, the company has transferred the production of programs for its California venues, including A.C.T., to Performing Arts's operation in Los Angeles. We'd like to hear what you think about our program's new look and content. Drop us a line at A.C.T. Publications, 30 Grant Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94110, or e-mail us at juweiner@act-sf.org.
The A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program presents

Peer Gynt Feb 26–Mar 16
by Henrik Ibsen translated by Paul Walsh directed by Susan Fancher

The A.C.T. Young Conservatory presents

Dancing Conversations: The Music of Simon and Garfunkel
Mar 22–31
World Premiere!
directed by Craig Slaight
music director Krista Wigle

Reindeer Soup Jul 20–30
by Joe Pintaric directed by Craig Slaight
A New Play by Sarah Daniels
Aug 15–25
World Premiere!
A collaboration with the National Theatre, London by Sarah Daniels directed by Doménique Lazzaro

click or call
act-sfbay.org
415 749-2ACT

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Who’s Who

RENE AUGENSET (Senior), an A.C.T. artist and core company member, made her Geary Theatre debut last season in The Visit and appeared earlier this season in The Beard of Avon and Celebration and The Rose Tattoo. She has also appeared in Spinning into Butter at Lincoln Center Theater, Macbeth (with Alec Guinness), and Othello at Stratford Festival (directed by Peter McDonald). She has received several Obie awards, including the world premiers of The Beard of Avon and The Hollow Lands, at South Coast Repertory; and productions at the Great Lakes Theatre Festival, Baltimore Center Stage, the Los Angeles Cape Playhouse, Seattle Shakespeare Company, and Stage West. Film and television credits include The Battle Studies, Law & Order, “Guiding Light,” Another World, and Hallmark Hall of Fame’s Saint Maybe. Augenset is a graduate of the Yale School of Drama.

TOM BLAIR (Mr. Bradburn) has worked extensively in Bay Area theater, including Eunice W. Wetherington, Babel & Daphnis, The Pajama Game, The Cheyenne Social Club, and The Tale of Love at Berkeley Repertory Theatre and Mr. Mickey Collins at Sacramento Theatre Company. Other regional theater appearances include such productions as The Cemetery Club, Cleveland Play House, Blackstone Theatre in Chicago, and 15 years at Milwaukee Repertory Theatre. Blair has also directed plays in many regional theaters and in Japan, and has appeared in feature films and on television. He most recently played Mr. Myers in Spinning into Butter at TheatreWorks and Calico in My Fair Lady at the Berkshire Theatre Festival.

JOAN HARRIS-GELB (Mrs. Bradburn) recently performed in A Christmas Carol at A.C.T. Stage credits include Miranda in the world premier of David Hirsrom’s Young Mountain at A.C.T. and on Broadway, Eleanor Widener in the original Broadway company of Titanic, and Mrs. Walker and others in the original Broadway company of Who’s That Woman? She also performed in Big River on Broadway. Gelb has performed her solo show, Mother, Where Were You When I Woke Up Sleeping and My Red Bed Ris on Fire in the West End of London as well as all over New York City. Her television credits include The Last Day in the Life of Brian Darlly for HBO, Woman About; and “Law & Order.”

LORI LARSEN (Madame Ardelia) made her A.C.T. debut in Blithe Spirit. A Seattle native, she has spent most of her 30-year acting career on stage and in regional theater stages. She most recently played Elizabeth I in The Beard of Avon at Seattle Shakespeare Company. She has appeared in Any Freud’s The Psychic Lives of Strangers at Seattle’s Empty Space Theatre and in San Francisco’s As You Like It at the Victory Gardens in the 1970s and where she has performed in 35 productions. Recent credits include Wit, Indiscriminat, Quiffs, Cymbeline, Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf? at the Berkeley Repertory Theatre and Cymbeline also includes productions at the Long Wharf Theatre, Madison Repertory Theatre, and Source Theatre Company, and tours to Russia, Switzerland, and Norway with The Odyssey. Larsen also works as an operating director in the 90s, directing Tales of Hoffmann, The Ballad of Baby Doe, Town, Rigoletto, and La Boheme for San Francisco Opera, as well as appearing in The Daughter of the Regiment. The last time she played in San Francisco (1987), she performed in Open Cowboys’ E.D., by Darro & Co., at the Fortuna Theatre. Larsen also played Mrs. Lefleur on “Northern Exposure.”

SHONA TUCKER (Bath Condiman) has appeared at A.C.T. in Servitude and Revelation: Holding History, both directed by Mary Louise Wilson. She recently appeared in Constant Star (directed by Ianowell Thompson) at Arena Stage. Tucker also has credits in productions at the Public Theater, Circle in the Square, Plimouth Plantation, the New Victory Theatre, the Stratford Theatre Club, and the New York Shakespeare Festival, as well as A Light Shining in Buckinghamshire (OBE Award) and Investigation of the Death of Mr. Patric in the New York Theatre Workshop. She has worked at many regional theaters, including Syracuse Stage, Seattle Repertory Theatre, the Arizona Theatre Company, Double Bind Shakespeare Repertory Theatre, the Acting Company, the Goodspeed Opera House, Actors Theatre of Louisville, and Arena Stage. Screen credits include “Third Watch,” Boys on the Side, Woody Allen’s Alice—“New York Undercover,” and “One Life to Live.” Tucker received her B.F.A. from Northwestern University and M.F.A. from New York University and has been honored with a Fullbright Scholarship and an ADELECO Award for excellence in black theater.

JESSICA TURNER (Edith) is a third-year student in the A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.) Program and made her Geary Theatre debut in The Beard of Avon. Her regional theater credits include Marina in Pericles and the title role of Sleeping Beauty with Shakespeare in Santa Fe, Celia in As You Like It, Good Angel in Doctor Faustus, and Lady Rosa in The Alchemist at the Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey. She was a member of the Wisconsin Shakespeare Festival’s Rhetoric in A Christmas Carol at Dallas Theater Center; and Helen of Troy in The Trojan Women with
The Western Stage. Her favorite M.F.A. roles include the title role of Hedda Gabler, Hoffie in No For An Answer, and Richard III.

GREGORY WALLACE (Charles Condict) an A.C.T. associate artist and one company member, has been seen at A.C.T. in the Celebrations, The Room, "Master Harold..." and the boys, The Maids, Edward II, A Christmas Carol, and Present Laughter. Wallace received his M.F.A. from the University of Washington, and the U.S. Navy. He is the founder of the A.C.T. Opera Scenes Workshop, and the A.C.T. Opera Scene Festival. He has also directed a number of operas, including The Marriage of Figaro, Don Giovanni, and The Magic Flute, at the University of Washington and the University of San Francisco. He is the artistic director of the San Francisco Opera Festival and the San Francisco Opera Guild. He is the founder of the A.C.T. Opera Scene Festival, and the A.C.T. Opera Scene Festival. He is the founder of the A.C.T. Opera Scene Festival, and the A.C.T. Opera Scene Festival.

MICHAEL GENE SULLIVAN (Understudy) has appeared at A.C.T. in The First Picture Show, Moonlighting, Portrayal, and four seasons of A Christmas Carol. He is a founding member of the Theatre of the New City, and has appeared in productions of A Christmas Carol, The Love of the Last Tycoon, and The Maids. Sullivan received his B.F.A. from the University of California, Berkeley, and his M.F.A. from the Yale School of Drama. He is the founder of the A.C.T. Opera Scene Festival, and the A.C.T. Opera Scene Festival.

FLOATING WORDS. Acting credits also include references to "Silver Lake" by Slick, "Duck Me Hot," by Joe Rivers, "Firework Show," by Natasha Lyonne, and "Haircut" by Karen O. Wallace teaches at the A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program.

MAURICE ZIMMER (Understudy) has appeared at A.C.T. in The First Picture Show, Moonlighting, Portrayal, and four seasons of A Christmas Carol. He is a founding member of the Theatre of the New City, and has appeared in productions of A Christmas Carol, The Love of the Last Tycoon, and The Maids. Sullivan received his B.F.A. from the University of California, Berkeley, and his M.F.A. from the Yale School of Drama. He is the founder of the A.C.T. Opera Scene Festival, and the A.C.T. Opera Scene Festival.

MARGO HALL (Understudy/Assistant Director) directed as assistant director on the Celebrations, The Room, "Master Harold..." and the boys, The Maids, Edward II, A Christmas Carol, and Present Laughter. She has also directed a number of operas, including The Marriage of Figaro, Don Giovanni, and The Magic Flute, at the University of Washington and the University of San Francisco. She is the founder of the A.C.T. Opera Scene Festival, and the A.C.T. Opera Scene Festival.

MAUREEN MCCARTHY (Understudy) is a founding member of the Theatre of the New City, and has appeared in productions of A Christmas Carol, The Love of the Last Tycoon, and The Maids. Sullivan received his B.F.A. from the University of California, Berkeley, and his M.F.A. from the Yale School of Drama. He is the founder of the A.C.T. Opera Scene Festival, and the A.C.T. Opera Scene Festival.


REBECCA ELDERS (Wendy) has appeared at A.C.T. in The First Picture Show, Moonlighting, Portrayal, and four seasons of A Christmas Carol. She is a founding member of the Theatre of the New City, and has appeared in productions of A Christmas Carol, The Love of the Last Tycoon, and The Maids. Sullivan received his B.F.A. from the University of California, Berkeley, and his M.F.A. from the Yale School of Drama. He is the founder of the A.C.T. Opera Scene Festival, and the A.C.T. Opera Scene Festival.

PETER MARABO (Wendy) is a founding member of the Theatre of the New City, and has appeared in productions of A Christmas Carol, The Love of the Last Tycoon, and The Maids. Sullivan received his B.F.A. from the University of California, Berkeley, and his M.F.A. from the Yale School of Drama. He is the founder of the A.C.T. Opera Scene Festival, and the A.C.T. Opera Scene Festival.

EARTH HEMPHILL (Sound Designer) is in his fifth season as A.C.T.'s resident sound designer. He designed more than 100 productions, including for A.C.T., The Board of Directors, The Room, "Master Harold..." and the boys, The Maids, Edward II, A Christmas Carol, and Present Laughter. He is the founder of the A.C.T. Opera Scene Festival, and the A.C.T. Opera Scene Festival.

KATE EDMONDS (Scenic Designer) has designed many productions for A.C.T., including The House of Mirth, Long Day's Journey into Night, and the Paycock, Hedda, Old Times, Antigone, Uncle Vanya, Rosenman, and Guildenstern Are Dead, Osborn, Avesina, and Other Plays. Recently she was in A Life Of Her Ear at San Jose Repertory Theatre and portrayed Alison Walker in the musical Funny Girl at the Palace. In Los Angeles she has worked at the Golden Playhouse and LATC. In San Francisco she has been featured in of A.C.T.'s All New, All Different, The Courage of the Wives, and several shows at Marin Theatre Company, Magic Theatre, and the Eureka Theatre Company. Since 1994 she has been working as a scenic designer on various venues and took part in the 100th-birthday party for Neil Gaiman at the Phish Room in 1999. Film and television credits include: Nine, The Lost Boys, Reckless, Business, Bad Luck, Full House, and the soon-to-be-released High Crimes.

THANKS TO OUR SPONSOR: MRS. ALBERT J. MOORMAN

Moore Sirlo is sponsored in part by a generous contribution from Mrs. Albert J. Moorman, Mrs. Moorman's dedicated commitment to A.C.T. dates back more than 25 years, which she had her late husband, the first A.C.T. President (1943-1955). The A.C.T. Board of Directors has designated Mrs. Moorman as a "Public Trustee" for the A.C.T. Board of Directors, and Mrs. Moorman's generous contributions to A.C.T. have been the cornerstone of A.C.T.'s success. Mrs. Moorman's contributions have supported the artistic work of A.C.T. and its educational programs, and have been the cornerstone of A.C.T.'s success.

In 2016, Moorman joined the A.C.T. Board of Directors, and in 2019, she was appointed to the A.C.T. Board of Directors. Moorman has continued to support the artistic work of A.C.T. and its educational programs, and has been the cornerstone of A.C.T.'s success.
AN INVITATION TO JOIN THE PROSPERO SOCIETY

Nominated as the wit and benevolent magician in William Shakespeare’s The Tempest, A.C.T.’s Prospero Society has been established to honor those who wish to support A.C.T. by including the organization in their estate plans.

For more information, contact Michele Gross at (415) 439-2651, or send an email to mgross@act-sf.org.

All inquiries will be held in strictest confidence.
"That's American"
Langston Hughes (1902-1967)

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

Theme for English B

The instructor said,

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

I wonder if it's that simple?

I am twenty-two, colored, born in Winstead-Salem.

I went to school there, then Durham, then here to this college on the hill above Harlem.

I am the only colored student in my classes.

The steps from the hill lead down into Harlem, through a park, then I cross St. Nicholas, Eight Avenue, Seventh, and I come to the Y, the Harlem Branch Y, where I take the elevator up to my room, sit down, and write this page:

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

From The Collected Themes of Langston Hughes, by Langston Hughes, copyright © 1994 by The Estate of Langston Hughes. Used by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, a division of Random House, Inc.
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I am twenty-two, colored, born in Wiston-Salem. I went to school there, then Durham, then here to this college on the hill above Harlem. I am the only colored student in my class. The steps from the hill lead down into Harlem, through a park, then I cross St. Nicholas, Eighth Avenue, Seventeenth, and I come to the Y, the Harlem Branch Y, where I take the elevator up to my room, sit down, and write this page:

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

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A New Eye on
Hollywood
Hidden Treasures on the Boulevard

TEXT BY NORM CHANDLER FOX
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID DAIGLE

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

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

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

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

Hollywood’s Evolution

Hollywood was born in 1883 when real estate developer Harvey Wilkins bought 120 acres of property, which he named as the suggestion of his wife. The town flourished in the early part of the century, as movie companies from the East Coast saw an opportunity to film year-round in the mild climate of Southern California. Besides having studios and theaters, the community developed a “train street,” Hollywood Boulevard, which from the 1920s through the 1960s was regarded as the “Fifth Avenue of the West” due to its upscale retailers.

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

The Grand Movie Palaces

Built during Hollywood’s Golden Age of the 1920s, these opulent and ornate movie palaces were meant to entice the middle-class audiences away from live theater. Many had five stage shows along with the movie to justify the $1.50 admission price.

The first movie palace was the Egyptian Theatre (6712 Hollywood Blvd.), which opened in 1922 with Douglas Fairbanks’ Robin Hood. The motif was inspired by ancient Egypt, and before performances, “Egyptian” guards patrolled the rooftop while harem girls ushered patrons to their seats. This theater gave birth to the movie premiere, replete with a red carpet, celebrities introduced while awaiting from limousines, and searchlights crossing the sky. The American Cinematheque restored and reopened this theater in 1998. In 1926, the El Capitan (6038 Hollywood Blvd.) opened for live theater. It was designed in the ultra-ornate Churriguresque style. Over 120 live plays were produced here, including No, No, Nanette, Anything Goes, and Ah, Wilderness. In 1942, the theater was covered by a sleek modern facade and became the Hollywood Paramount, a movie house. When this theater fell into disrepair, the Walt Disney Company bought it and began a two-year

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The Edmund Fitzgerald

and Nine Inch Nails

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*For the sake of the cover, Annie Oakley was compared to the Edmund Fitzgerald. The Edmund Fitzgerald is a person. Annie Oakley is a fictional character. Therefore, this cover illustration does not represent artistic collaboration. This cover illustration is the responsibility of the artist. This cover illustration is the responsibility of the artist. This cover illustration is the responsibility of the artist. This cover illustration is the responsibility of the artist. This cover illustration is the responsibility of the artist. This cover illustration is the responsibility of the artist.
A New Eye on Hollywood

Hidden Treasures on the Boulevard

TEXT BY NORM CHANDLER FOX
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID DAIGLE

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

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

You can always buy a guidebook and set out on your own, but a much more enjoyable way to do it is as a cultural walking tour of Hollywood. Launched last summer, Red Line Tours offers one- and two-hour-long trips and exclusively permits interior glimpses into certain landmark buildings (Hollywood Tour Center at the Stella Adler Theatre, 6773 Hollywood Blvd. (323) 462-1074). Tour patrons receive live audio headsets which pick up the docent’s running commentary and block out the sometimes maddening street noise.

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

Hollywood's Evolution

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$65 million museum-quality restoration. The Capitol re-opened in 1991 as a movie theater with occasional live Disney entertainment.

Sid Grauman, with partners Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks, opened his Chinese Theater (6925 Hollywood Blvd.) in 1927. Built as a temple of museum to Chinese arts, architecture, and culture, Grauman’s theater used imported Oriental antiques, Chinese gowns, and incense to perfume the auditorium. After accidentally being washed away with warm cement, Grauman conceived the idea of celebrities putting their footprints, handprints, and signatures in cement in the theater’s forecourt.

REMEMBERING OLD HOLLYWOOD

Just south of Ripley’s Believe It Or Not Odditorium on the southeast corner of the intersection of Hollywood and Highland is the exquisite art deco Max Factor Building — which is to be transformed this year into the Hollywood History Museum. Factor coined the term “make-up” and had specially decorated rooms that would complement the complex and hair colors of such stars as Claudette Colbert, Joan Crawford, Lana Turner, and Rita Hayworth.

Across the street, look at the two-story Solaris Arts building with concrete arches and the bright awnings of Hollywood Music and Movies (6765 Hollywood Blvd.). The town’s first nightclubs, the Mezzataro Cafe, opened on the second floor in 1922. It was here that Charlie Chaplin, Marion Davies, and Rudolph Valentino cavorted nightly, and Joan Crawford was discovered after winning a Charles dancer contest. A few doors west is the Snow White Cafe (6769 Hollywood Blvd.), which was opened by Walt Disney himself in 1949 after Disney claimed that he couldn’t find a decent cup of coffee in town. Look inside to see reproductions of the original murals from the film, Snow White.

NEW REFLECTING OLD

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

The most impressive part of Hollywood
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Offers many event spaces and can accommodate up to 1,100. The Grand Lobby and Promenade are perfect for seated dinners up to 300 or receptions of 1,100.

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The Lobby and Pavilion can be utilized for a seated dinner of 350 to 450 and receptions up to 1,100.

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For more information, call 415-221-1933.

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The most impressive part of Hollywood
red short tunas, red toe shoes, and tight bodices, their insistent legs punctuating the tone of social afflout, their feet ringing in this newfound but elegant anarchy. Here is truly the Balanchine epiphany in action, where an observer can "see the music and hear the dance."

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

But Jewels finds its highest peak in "Rubies," while "Emeralds," to music of Fauré, really doesn't boast such definition and coherence, and "Diamonds," to Tchaikovsky's, is lovely as an example of the recurring Swan Lake ghosts that haunted Balanchine (and which he finally honored in his staging of the second act). In "Diamonds," look for the swooning ballerina on pointe, leaning against her partner, her head covering inside folded arms that undulate like the Swan Queen's protective wings. While Robbins was a many-faced dancemaker, he could arguably go down in dance history for his ingenious settings of Chopin piano music. With Dancers he suffused our consciousness with the composer's humanity — his limp grace, veiled melancholy, quiet joy, gentle humor. Indeed, Robbins defined a genre: the piano ballet. Ever afterward it was called that by others — any number of whom mimed the same gold, if not with his sensitivity or inspiration. Set to a group of Chopin études, waltzes, mazurkas, a nocturne, and a scherzo for five women and five men, Dancers abounds in elusive grace, its power can hold a spectator rapt. In a fine performance, with the calibre of dancing that projects all manner of exquisite nuance, one often doesn't hear a breath being drawn in the audience. It is these personal, intimate fragments of interaction that tell whole chapters about the human condition — and bequeath Robbins his laureate. 

Kudos to Tomason for spreading the wealth.

Donna Permatas, a recipient of the ASCAPErthemer Taylor Award, is a widely published journalist and critic who writes regularly for Performing Arts Magazine.
& Highland is the Babylon Court: a monumental pagan temple archway with black and white (and grey) surrounding fountains, facing gigantic columns topped by cruising elephants. It’s a reproduction of one of the most famous movie sets of all time, from D.W. Griffith’s 1916 masterpiece Intolerance.

WHERE TO STAY

The Renaissance Hollywood Hotel was open at press time, but the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel (700 Hollywood Blvd., [323] 467-7788) has a wood-paneled setting and well-seasoned waiters. Try the seafood platters, juicy grilled lamb chops, and sublime rice pudding. Helped by Musso’s enormous martinis, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Dorothy Parker, William Faulkner, and Raymond Chandler formed an ‘Algonquin Round Table West’ at this restaurant in the early ’20s. One can only expect that tradition to be revived, too.

Now in its 887-year, Musso & Frank Grill (6667 Hollywood Blvd., [323] 467-7788) has a wood-paneled setting and well-seasoned waiters. Try the seafood platters, juicy grilled lamb chops, and sublime rice pudding. Helped by Musso’s enormous martinis, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Dorothy Parker, William Faulkner, and Raymond Chandler formed an ‘Algonquin Round Table West’ at this restaurant in the early ’20s. One can only expect that tradition to be revived, too.

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28 PERFORMING ARTS / FEBRUARY 2007

29
WINES FROM OUR OWN BACKYARD: The Best of Southern California

by Dennis Overstreet

For most of the world, California’s fine wines can be summed up in one four-letter word: Napa. As in the Valley. Yes, over the past decades, many splendid wines have arisen from relatively unheralded viticultural areas of the state, including our own backyard: Southern California. For the purposes of this discussion, that’s a pretty big backyard, extending from the Temecula or Rancho California area southeast of Los Angeles right up to Paso Robles, which is just over 100 miles northwest of Santa Barbara. Southern California is perceived as a uniformly and undeniably region whose wine is a precious resource and the only way to grow gneiss is to irrigate heavily. In reality, there are plenty of varied microclimates that have proven hospitable to the cultivation of wine grapes. At the beginning and end of the day, and all through the night, the convecor atmospheric flow off the Pacific Ocean cools with Southern California’s coastal mountain ranges to provide the cool, foggy lowland conditions favored by such “northern” grapes as Chardonnay, Riesling, and Pinot Noir. Southern California summers, dry, hillyside microclimates are often ideal for ripening not only the classic California Cabernets but also the Rhône varieties, especially Syrah, as well as the Italian Sangiovese. Because Southern California is a vast area with so many distinct microclimates, it’s safe to say the region is nowhere near fulfilling its wine-growing potential. And that’s an exciting prospect.

The wines of Southern California tend to reflect the area’s wide-open, up-front, media-oriented culture. What it may lack in subtlety, it more than makes up for in personality and style. As a rule, you’ll find riper fruitings and bolder, more assertive Cabernet Sauvignons, Zinfandels, and Syrahs. Not surprisingly, numerous captains of local industry have taken up the winemaking gauntlet. One of my favorites is Tim Jones, the former head of Napa Grump Corporation. With all the determination and know-how he used to develop the health bomber, he started a winery, Mosca Vineyards, at his Bel Air estate and has created a fabulous Bordeaux-style Cabernet Sauvignon blend and an excellent Sauvignon Blanc.

Several prominent Los Angeles restaurants have also converted their passion for wine into second careers as viticulturists and winemakers. Michael McConnell, founder and proprietor of Michael’s of Santa Monica, has his own Malibu vineyard, which produces a Bordeaux blend and other superbly crafted reds. Manfred Krankl, which built the La Brea Bakery and Campanile Restaurant into highly successful businesses, produces very fine Syrah, Pinot Noir, and Chardonnay at his Sine Qua Non Winery in Ventura. And Michael Bonacorsi, the sommelier at Wolfgang Puck’s world-famous restaurant Spago, now located in Beverly Hills, began making wonderful Chardonnays, Pinot Noirs, and Syrahs in the 1990 vintage with grapes from Santa Barbara County. Here are a few more of my top Southern California picks: Babcock Winery & Vineyards, Lampuga — Winemaker Bryan Babcock is considered one of the hottest young talents around. Among his wines are a Sauvignon Blanc called Eleven Oaks, various single-vineyard Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs, a Gewürztraminer as well as Italian (Sangiovese and Pinot Grigio) and Spanish (Tempranillo and Albariño) varietals. Fess Parker Winery & Vineyard, Los Olivos — Founded by the actor who’s most famous for his roles as Davy Crockett and Daniel Boone on television and located in the Santa Ynez Valley of Santa Barbara County, this winery features Rhône varieties such as Syrah and Viognier, as well as Burgundian varietals such as Pinot Noir and Chardonnay grown on the estate itself and other vineyards in Santa Maria and the Santa Rita Hills. (A geographical aside: Santa Rita is a quadrangular Southern California wine-growing region, situated at the western end of the Santa Ynez Valley close to the Pacific. Another top Southern California locale is the Edna Valley, south of San Luis Obispo. If you turn north, you’re entering to ocean breezes; hence the excellence of local Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs.)

Justin Winery, Paso Robles — This classy operation features a Meritage (Bordeaux-style blend) called Isocroothes. The Paso Robles area, warmer and drier than other local viticultural zones, is home to some fine Zinfandels, Syrah, and Cabernet Sauvignons. The Malibu Estate, Malibu — The creation of real estate and hotel developer George Rosewall, it’s located at elevations of around 1,500 feet and produces an outstanding Bordeaux-style Cabernet Sauvignon blend.

Other top Southern California producers: Alban Vineyards, Arroyo Grande; Andrew Murray, Los Olivos; Az Bote Chard- nes and Chépé, Santa María; Jim Clendenen is the winemaker); and Zaca Mesa, Los Olivos. [ ]
WINES FROM OUR OWN BACKYARD:
The Best of Southern California

by Dennis Overstreet

For most of the world, California's fine wines can be summed up in one four-letter word: Napa. But as in the Valley, across the rest of the state, including our own backyard, Southern California, fine wines have arisen from relatively untamed viticultural areas of the state, including our own backyard. Southern California, for the purposes of this discussion, a pretty big backyard, extending from the Temecula or Rancho California area southeast of Los Angeles right up to Pismo Beach, which is just over 100 miles northwest of Santa Barbara.

Southern California is perceived as a uniformly and densely populated area where water is a precious resource and the only way to grow greenly is to irrigate heavily. In reality, there are plenty of varied microclimates that have proven hospitable to the cultivation of wine grapes. At the beginning and end of the day, and all through the night, the converging airflow off the Pacific Ocean with southern California's coastal mountain ranges provide the cool, foggy lowland conditions favored by such "northern" grapes as Chardonnay, Riesling, and Pinot Noir. Southern California winemakers, driven by these microclimates, are often ideal for growing not only the classic California Cabernets but also the Rhône varieties, especially Syrah, as well as the Italian Sangiovese. Because Southern California is such a vast area with so many distinct microclimates, it's safe to say that the region is nowhere near fulfilling its wine-growing potential. And that's an exciting prospect.

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

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Here are a few of my top Southern California picks: Buahvnek Winery & Vineyards, Lompoc — Winemaker Bryan Babcock is considered one of the hottest young talents around. Among his wines are a Savignan Blanc called Eleven Oaks, various single-vineyard Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs, a Gewurtzraminer as well as Italian (Sangiovese and Pinot Grigio) and Spanish (Tempranillo and Albarino) varietals.

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Other top Southern California producers — Alban Vineyards, Arroyo Grande; Andrew Murray, Los Olivos; Aztec Cellars and Quipé, Santa Maria (Jim Cline is the winemaker); and Zaca Mesa, Los Olivos.
California Cuisine

San Francisco

Scal's Bistro

Now aubout to celebrate its seventh anniversary, this lively spot, only a few blocks from the theater district, continues to be one of our most popular restaurants. I hadn't been here since former chef Donna Scala departed, and I was anxious to sample the cuisine of the current executive chef, Stefan Terje. My verdict is that the food is even better this time.

The interior is designed with tile floors, mahogany booths, stucco fan ceiling, and open kitchens, this establishment has an inviting, warm glow. At peak hours, it can be somewhat noisy, but everyone is having such a good time that they don't seem to notice. Over a dozen wines are offered by the glass, and the list of wines is extremely reasonable. The servers are among the city's best, so let them guide you through the large and tempting menu.

I started with a giant bowl of garlic mashed potatoes served in wine served, as in Europe, with a mound of crisp French fries and lemon slices. There is also a slith of garlic mashed calamari and shrimp with fennel, under grilled octopus with a chilli vinaigrette, and a slab of roasted salmon filet. And for a memory of the Italian Riviera, try the sumptuous pasted salt cod with onions and potatoes. Other early appetizers include a Caesar salad with baby greens and candied walnuts or a seafood and avocado salad topped with a slather of Roquefort cheese. And for something completely different, how about a small pizza crowned with a delightful combination of pear, caramelized onion, and Gorgonzola?

Pasta arrives under a delicious topping of bacon, chili, and pecorino cheese, while a dish of spinach gnocchi is feathery light on a bed of tomato and basil. There's also rigatoni in a rich duck and olive sauce and sweet squash-filled ravioli in butter and sage. Chef Terje handles fish beautifully, as exemplified by the juicy seared salmon with butternut squash and lemon sauce. If you're yearning for a juicy flavor, try the garlic grilled polk chop with artichokes or a great lamb chop with a pomegranate glaze. There's also a memorable beef braised in Burgundy wine accompanied by celery paste.

Save room for dessert like a perfect caramelized apple tart with apple brandy ice cream or a piquant quince sorbet. Unfortunately, the bread pudding is too heavy, but the huckleberry and almond cake is light and wonderful. And if you're in a sweet tooth, you must order the chocolate extravaganza, consisting of dark chocolate cake layered with milk chocolate mousse and chocolate pecan brittle—topped with chocolate brownie ice cream. What a way to go!

Since the kitchen remains open until quite late, this is a perfect choice for after-theater supper as well.

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

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

I start with a giant bowl of garlicy mussels steamed in wine served, as in Europe, with a mound of crisp French fries and lemon slices. There is also a dish of green seas fried calamari and shrimp with fennel, under grilled octopus with a chilli vinaigrette, and a slab of velvety seared foie gras. And for a memory of the Italian Riviera, try the sumptuous pastel salt cod with onions and potatoes. Other entrée options include a per- simmon salad with baby greens and candied walnuts or a roasted beet and avocado salad topped with crumbled Roquefort cheese. And for something completely different, how about a small pizza crowned with a delightful combination of pear, caramelized onion, and Gorgonzola?

Next arrives under a delicious topping of bacon, chilli, and pecorino cheese, while a dish of spinach gnocchi is feathery light beneath a mantle of tomato and basil. There’s also rigatoni in a rich duck and olive sauce and sweet squash-filled ravioli in butter and sage. Chef Terje handles fish beautifully, as exemplified by the juicy seared salmon with butternut English peas, and a large chunk of roast cod with a sesame glaze. There’s a memorable seafood braised in Burgundy wine accompanied by celery paste.

Save room for desserts like a perfect caramelized apple tart with apple brandy ice cream or a pillowy quince soufflé. Unfortunately, the bread pudding is too heavy, but the huckleberry and almond cake is light and wonderful. And if you’re an inveterate chocoholic, you must order the chocolate extravaganza, consisting of dark chocolate cake layered with milk chocolate mouse and chocolate pecan brittle — all topped with chocolate brownie ice cream. What a way to go!

Since the kitchen remains open until quite late, this is a perfect choice for after-theater supper as well.

SCALA’S BISTRO, Sir Francis Drake Hotel, 432 Powell St. (between Post and Sutter), San Francisco, (415) 395-8555. Open for lunch, Monday through Friday, 11:30 AM to 2:30 PM; dinner daily, 5:30 PM to 10 PM. Closed Sunday.

ASIA DE CUBA — When budgeter lan Schrager purchased and remodeled the Cliff House Hotel, I knew it would look hip and urban. However, I was unprepared for designer Philippe Starck’s truly astounding rendering of this restaurant. The place is breathtaking with its burnt-red walls, soaring ceilings, ultra sexy lighting, tall curved booths, and dramatic adjoining bar. It looks like one of the places in which the heroes of Sex and the City would congregate regularly. Executive chef Mints Masso has created a vivid menu that crosses Asian and Latin American dishes with flare. Huge portions are meant to be shared family-style, which makes it fun to come with a group. The servers couldn’t be more amiable, and despite a very nice wine list, I put off the specialty drinks like the rum-infused Havana Iced Tea or the vodka and lychee martini.

For appetizers, I try wonderful lobster potstickers, spicy Thai beef salad with cucumber and orange, juicy escallop and crab cakes with a fiery chipotle remoulade, and grilled foie gras seasoned with Chinese five spice and mango salsa atop French toast. My sole disappointment is a rapidly flavored tuna tartare despite the addition of currants, almonds, olives, and coconut. As main courses, don’t miss the spicy Peking duck atop honey noodles, tender grilled ostrich steak with parsnips and pommes, rare red tuna with garlicy Argentinian chimichurri sauce, or the lovely marinated lamb on Japanese eggplant. A whole calf is stuffed with crabmeat and wrapped in a filo crust, and I enjoy an unusual pork chop marinated in ruum and topped with koh choy. There are two side dishes that are required tasting for the table: flavorful black bean croquettes and the mashed potatoes filled with chunks of lobster.

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

ASIA DE CUBA, Cliff House Hotel, 495 Geary St. (corner, Taylor), San Francisco, (415) 929-2300. Open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner daily. Without alcohol, two can dine for $85 including tax and tip.

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