American Conservatory Theater

BURN THIS

LANFORD WILSON
American Conservatory Theater

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AMERICAN CONSERVATORY THEATER

1989-90 REPERTORY SEASON

THURSDAYS AT THE AMERICAN CONSERVATORY THEATER FOUNDATION

October 5 through December 22

Lorraine Hansberry Theater

MAY 31 THROUGH JULY 16

Lorraine Hansberry Theater

A PALE TALE OF TWO CITIES

by Charles Dickens

adapted for the stage by Nagle Jackson

November 25 through December 2

Orpheum Theatre

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

by Charles Dickens

December 5 through December 24

Organ Theater

ALMOST LIKE BEING IN LOVE

by Bally Lakey

March 1 through March 20

Palace of Fine Arts Theatre

HAPOOOD

by Tom Stoppard

March 7 through April 2

Shakespeare Theatre

TEN THOUSAND THINGS

by Peter Orlovsky

March 3 through April 14

Palace of Fine Arts Theatre

BURN THIS

by Lanford Wilson

May 1 through May 24

Stage Door Theatre

Tickets and Information: (415) 749-SACT

HONORARY TRUSTEES

In recognition of her long and distinguished career in the performing arts, the American Conservatory Theater was founded in 1966 by William Ball.
American Conservatory Theater

Lanford Wilson — With a Difference
by Dennis Powers

Lanford Wilson, the author of Burn This, has sometimes been labeled "the natural successor to Tennessee Willi- liams." As critic Ruby Cohn puts it, "In the tradition of Williams, Wilson is tender to deviants, valuing them more highly than those who preserve the norms."

In his deep compassion for the lonely, the lost and the outsider who doesn't belong anywhere and can't figure out why, and in his ability to look beyond the bravado of the tough-taking rebel to find the longing of the inarticulate poet hid- den beneath, Wilson sometimes evokes Williams's beautiful losers. But if his sensi- bility stays him as part of a recogniz- able American literary tradition, Wilson brings that sensibility to bear on distinc- tive contemporary characters whose unconventional attitudes and behavior would have automatically excluded him from the theatrical mainstream only a generation ago.

Wilson's plays have introduced us to prostitutes, hustlers, pimps, transvestites, drug dealers and their clients — not as freaks on display, but as fixtures of the American urban scene whose humanity is as rich and full as that of the more conven- tional characters with whom they often share the stage in Williams's world. He asks us to set aside our conventional values here in the darkness of the theater and to acknowledge, when all the externals have been stripped away, how much of ourselves we recognize in them — and vice versa.

Wilson's other great gallery of charac- ters is the one on view in his plays about small-town America, including those set in and around Lebanon, Missouri, where he was born in 1937 and spent his early years. But even in these works — and they are some of his most successful — he doesn't settle for the cozy sentimentality of Ernest Hemingway. Over the gentle romantic comedy-drama of Talley's Folly (1980), for instance, falls the shadow of anti-Semitism. And in The Night of July 1978, produced by A.C.T. in 1979 (prior to its Broadway opening the following season), the couple at the center of the play are two men, a pampers Viet Nam vet and his botanist lover. Wilson makes no apol- ogies for their love and, indeed, strongly suggests that their relationship has a lot more going for it than the one shared by the play's heterosexual lovers.

The urban and rural settings of Wilson's plays are far from separate worlds. Like his dialogue, in fact, they often overlap: city people are bemused by the byways of their small-town counterparts, and young people from the heartland are aghast at what they discover as they struggle to make their way through the urban jungle of the Eastern United States. Wilson tends to avoid labeling his charac- ters as either "good" or "bad." He doesn't give us villains, only people at the mercy of fate or shame or foolish dreams, doing what they have to do, surviving as best they can in a world that offers them little access to truth — even if they were equipped to recognize it. As the great French director Jean Renoir liked to say when he talked about the characters in his films, "Everyone has his reasons."

In Wilson's plays, character takes prece- dence over plot or social "milesstones"; yet several of the plays deal with topical issues — urban decay, growing alienation, drug abuse, the threat of nuclear disaster, car- cinoins in the workplace — usually in an indirect manner. Thematic material becomes an aspect of characterization rather than a subject for soap-box oratory.

When A.C.T. introduced its audience to Wilson's work in 1973 with Allen Fletcher's production of The Hot l Baltimore, the playwright had already been a mainstay of New York's off-off-Broadway scene for a decade or so. Set in a run- ning late-city hotel where the motley assortment of residents hide their time until the scheduled demolition of the building, the play won a New York Drama Critics' Circle Award. It was also the first of these Wilson plays to join the A.C.T. repertoire in the 1970s and early '80s. 5th of July (1979) was the second, followed by Angels Ruin (1984). Edward Hastings directed both productions.

Continued on page 6

American Conservatory Theater

BURN THIS (1987)

by Lanford Wilson

Directed by Albert Thaneaukas
Scenery by Ralph Fuscello
Costumes by Sandra Woodall
Lighting by Derek Duarte
Sound by Stephen LeGrand

Fight Choreography by Larry Henderson

The Cast
Anna Lauren Lane
Burton Rick Hamilton
Larry Wesley Mann
Pole Richard Butterfield

There will be one intermission.

Stage Management Karen Van Zandt and Alice Elliott Smith

Understudies
Anna — Mary Beth Smith, Burton, Larry, Pole — Andrew Duras

This production is made possible in part by American Express.
American Conservatory Theater

Lanford Wilson — With a Difference

by Dennis Powers

Lanford Wilson, the author of Bur 
This, has sometimes been labeled “the natural successor to Tennessee Wil- 
liams.” As critic Ruby Colin puts it, “In the tradition of Williams, Wilson is tender to 
deviants, valuing them more highly than those who preserve the norms.” He is in his 
compulsion for the lonely, the lost and the outsider who doesn’t belong anywhere and can’t figure out why, and in his ability to look beyond 
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romantic comedy-drama of Talley’s Folly (1983), for instance, falls the shadow of anti-Semitism. And in Family Values (1979), produced by A.C.T. in 1979 (prior to its 
Broadway opening the following season), the couple at the center of the play are two men, a pampers Viet Nam vet and his botanist lover. Wilson makes no apol- 
gies for their love and, indeed, strongly suggests that their relationship has a lot more going for it than the one shared by the play’s heterosexual lovers.

The urban and rural settings of Wilson’s plays are far from separate worlds. Like his dialogue, in fact, they often overlap: city people are bemused by the folkways of their small-town counterparts, and young people from the heartland are 
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directed both productions.

Continued on page 8

American Conservatory Theater

present

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(1987)

by Lanford Wilson

Directed by Albert Placanica

Scenery by Ralph Funicello

Costumes by Sandra Woodall

Lighting by Derek Duarte

Sound by Stephen LeGrand

Fight Choreography by Larry Henderson

The Cast

Anna — Lauren Lane
Burton — Rick Hamilton
Larry — Wesley Mann
Pete — Richard Butterfield

There will be one intermission.

Stage Management — Karen Van Zandt and Alice Elliott Smith

Understudies

Anna — Mary Beth Smith
Burton, Larry, Pete — Andrew Dolan

This production is made possible in part by American Express.
About the Playwright

Laerdal Wilson received the 1990 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and the New York Drama Critics’ Circle Award for Bailey’s Folly. He is a founding member of Circle Repertory Company in New York, and is one of that company’s twenty-one resident playwrights.


His other plays include Rails in Gilead (1960), The Gingham Dog specializing in sci-fi epics that depend on high-tech special effects that push characterizations.

As Burr This opens, Anna and Larry are mourning the death of their dear friend and roommate and Anna’s frequent dancing partner, recently killed with his lover Dennis in a freak train accident. A few weeks after the funeral, Anna is resumed at five in the morning by the unexpected and unwelcome noise of Robert’s brother Paul pounding relentlessly on her door and yelling her name up and down the hallway.

It’s an unlikely beginning for one of the most powerful and honest portrayals of a relationship between a man and a woman in recent American drama — a gripping, vividly entertaining play by an outstanding American playwright at the peak of his powers.

Who’s Who

His studio roles include Clarence and Richmond in Richard III, Ben in The Little Foxes, Austin in Praise the Lord, George in The Country Wife, and Tiger Brown in The Threepenny Opera. He has played Hal Carter in Pomegranate and Carl Getting Out at City College of San Francisco. Last summer Mr Dolan appeared in Coming Attractions for the Tracks Company. He appeared as Keith Rienzi in A.C.T.’s Plays-in-Progress production Pick Up At, in Happened, A Christmas Carol, and Mr. Millions.

Since his return to A.C.T. in 1986 RICK HAMILTON has appeared as Basad in A Tale of Two Cities, the Baliff in Nothing Sacred, Bill in Woman in Mind (which he also played last summer at the Westport Playhouse with Sally Kirkland), Oswald in King Lear, Paul Conran and Jim in End of the World . . . Max in The Real Thing, and Elliot in Private Lives. He was a member of the company that toured Europe through 1976, during which time he appeared in Desire Under the Elms (which toured the Soviet Union), General Grenier, The Threepenny Opera, and as Travi in The Ringing of the Bells, which was televised for the PBS series “Theater in America.” During his ten seasons with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival he played such roles as Benedick in Much Ado About Nothing, Tom in The Glass Menagerie, Hypatia in Henry IV, Part I, Marc Antony in Julius Caesar, and Petrocchi in The Taming of the Shrew. He has also spent seasons with the Alley Theatre, Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, Dallas Shakespeare Festival, and the Los Angeles Theatre Center Mr. Hamilton was a member of the original cast of Bennett, and played Jack Harkley in the film The Principal. This season he recently directed and appeared in the Plays-in Progress production Inside Technicolor.

Who recently graduated from the Conservatory’s Advanced Training Program, where she has played Arkadina in The Seagull, Nelly and Charlotte (the wretched) in As You Like It, and Lavinia in Another Part of the Forest. This season she appeared in The Imaginary Invalid and Judith克莱文, and played Lila in Dutchman and the title role in Cities in the A.C.T. Lorna Hanberry co-production 2 Acts of Passion. Last season she appeared in Mr. Millions at the Geary. Her regional theater credits include the Dallas Theatre Center and Stage West in Fort Worth, Texas. She has spent two seasons with Encore Theatrical Company appearing in Coming Attractions and No End of Blame. Ms. Lane is a graduate of the University of Texas at Arlington.

WILLY LANCE recently graduated from the Conservatory’s Advanced Training Program, where he has played Rinaldo in The Rover, Lady and (the wrestler) in As You Like It, and Lavinia in Another Part of the Forest. This season he appeared in The Imaginary Invalid and Judith克莱文, and played Lila in Dutchman and the title role in Cities in the A.C.T. Lorna Hanberry co-production 2 Acts of Passion. Last season she appeared in Mr. Millions at the Geary. Her regional theater credits include the Dallas Theatre Center and Stage West in Fort Worth, Texas. She has spent two seasons with Encore Theatrical Company appearing in Coming Attractions and No End of Blame. Ms. Lane is a graduate of the University of Texas at Arlington.

RICHARD BUTTERFIELD, who is now in his fourth season with the company, has appeared as Claudio in The Imaginary Invalid, Charley Darnay in A Tale of Two Cities, Edgar in King Lear, the Soldier in Sunday in the Park with George, Tony in Woman in Mind, Captain Cummings in Diamond Lil, Billy in The Real Thing, Young Scrooge in A Christmas Carol, Miles Gloriosus in A Piazzetta Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum, Blue-beard in Saint Joan, and in Side by Side by Sondheim, Pinafore, and Prunella in Hell. He has also worked with the San Jose Repertory Theatre, Berkeley Shakespeare Festival, and Berkeley Jewish Theatre. Last summer he acted in two productions in Connecticut: A.C.T.’s Saint Joan at the American Festival Theatre in Stratford and Woman in Mind at the Westport Playhouse. Mr. Butterfield is a graduate of Stanford University (with honors in international relations) and A.C.T.’s Advanced Training Program, where he now teaches and directs in the A.T.P., teaches in the Young Conservatory, and serves on the Board of Trustees as one of two artist members.

Laerdal Wilson is a graduate of the New York Drama Critics’ Circle Award, the Outer Critics Circle Award, Childe of The Bar (1979), The Mound Builders, a Dramaticus Award for 5th of July and Bailey’s Folly, the Vernon Rice Award for The Elements of Eternity, and Tony nominations for Bailey’s Folly, 5th of July, and Angus Pickel. He has received the Brandeis University Creative Arts Award in Theatre Arts and the Institute of Arts and Letters Award. Burr This opened at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles in 1987 and later played on Broadway. He is currently writing the screenplay for the film version.

Laerdal Wilson makes his home in Bag Harbor, New York.

In writing Burr This, Wilson set him- self a formidable challenge: to create a romantic drama that doesn’t pull any emotional punches, yet is plausible in the context of contemporary 60s Manhattan’s solo district — not the fantasy lifestyles of the rich and famous, but the lives of New Yorkers who grit their teeth and face the subway every morning, and try not to worry about margaritas every night. Anna is a gin-soaked waitress with a small but well-established dance company. Now in her early thirties, she’s hoping to make the transition to choreographer when her dancing days are over. She shares the loft that doubles as her studio with Larry, a gay man who earns his living as an advertising copywriter. Professionally, the most successful of the characters is Burton, Anna’s boyfriend, a screenwriter
American Conservatory Theater

LAUREN LANE recently graduated from the Conservatory’s Advanced Training Program, where she has played Arbolina in The Seagull, Nazarya and Charley (the wrestler) in As You Like It, and Lavinia in Another Part of the Forest. This season she appeared in The Imaginary Invalid and Justine, and played Lila in Duchessen and the title role in Claire in the A.C.T./Luminare Hamlet co-production 2 Acts of Passion. Last season she appeared in Marolo Millions at the Geary. Her regional theater credits include the Dallas Theatre Center and Stage West in Fort Worth, Texas. She has spent two seasons with Encore Theatre Company appearing in Coming Attractions and No End of Blame. Ms. Lane is a graduate of the University of Texas at Arlington.

RICS BULLETERD, who is now in his fourth season with the company, has appeared as Claudio in The Imaginary Invalid, Charley Darragh in A Tale of Two Cities, Edgar in King Lear, the Soldier in Sunday in the Park with George, Tony in Woman in Mind, Captain Cummings in Diamond Lil, Billy in The Real Thing, Young Scrooge in A Christmas Carol, Miles Gloriosus in A Peaceful Theater Happened on the Way to the Forum, Bluebeard in Saint Joan, and in Side By Side by Sondheim, Pippin and Follies at Helm. He has also worked with the San Jose Repertory Company, Berkeley Shakespear Festival, and Berkeley Jewish Theatre. Last summer he acted in two productions in Connecticut: A.C.T.’s Saint Joan at the American Festival Theatre in Stratford and Woman in Mind at the Westport Playhouse. Mr. Bulterfield is a graduate of Stanford University (with honors in international relations) and A.C.T.’s Advanced Training Program. He now teaches and directs in the A.T.P., teaches in the Young Conservatory, and serves on the Board of Trustees as one of its art members.

Since his return to A.C.T. in 1986 RICK HAMILTON has appeared as Barlow in A Tale of Two Cities, the Bailiff in Nothing Sacred, Bill in Woman in Mind (which he also played last summer at the Westport Playhouse with Sally Kirkland), Oswald in King Lear, Thad Comin and Jim in End of the World . . . . Man in The Real Thing, and Elroy in Private Lives. He was a member of the company from 1971 through 1976, during which time he appeared in Desire Under the Elms (which toured the Soviet Union), General Gorgon, The Threepenny Opera, and as Tranio in The Betrothed of the Shire. He was also seen with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival where he played such roles as Benedick in Much Ado About Nothing, Tom in The Glass Menagerie, Hotspur in Henry IV Part I, Marc Antony in Julius Caesar, and Petruchio in The Taming of the Shire. He has also spent seasons with the Alley Theatre, Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, Dallas Shakespeare Festival, and the Los Angeles Theatre Center. Mr. Hamilton was a member of the original cast of Anya, and played Jack Harkley in the film The Principal. This season he recently co-directed and appeared in the Plays-in-Progress production insulin Technicolor.

RICHARD RICHARD BULLETERD, who is now in his fourth season with the company, has appeared as Claudio in The Imaginary Invalid, Charley Darragh in A Tale of Two Cities, Edgar in King Lear, the Soldier in Sunday in the Park with George, Tony in Woman in Mind, Captain Cummings in Diamond Lil, Billy in The Real Thing, Young Scrooge in A Christmas Carol, Miles Gloriosus in A Peaceful Theater Happened on the Way to the Forum, Bluebeard in Saint Joan, and in Side By Side by Sondheim, Pippin and Follies at Helm. He has also worked with the San Jose Repertory Company, Berkeley Shakespear Festival, and Berkeley Jewish Theatre. Last summer he acted in two productions in Connecticut: A.C.T.’s Saint Joan at the American Festival Theatre in Stratford and Woman in Mind at the Westport Playhouse. Mr. Bulterfield is a graduate of Stanford University (with honors in international relations) and A.C.T.’s Advanced Training Program. He now teaches and directs in the A.T.P., teaches in the Young Conservatory, and serves on the Board of Trustees as one of its art members.

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WESLYN MANN made his A.C.T. debut this season as Pete in Tenth Night. He has appeared extensively at PCPA (appearing in The Foreigner, Our Town, Cinderella, Crucified of Blood, Greater Tuna, and John Ford’s magnificent production of A Midsummer Night’s Dream which also had a successful run at the Westwood

About the Playwright

Lanford Wilson received the 1980 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for Bully’s Folly. He is a founding member of Circle Repertory Company in New York, and is one of that company’s twenty-one resident playwrights.


His other plays include Bully in Glad (1980), The Gingham Dog (1966), The Sinners of Edith (1967), Lemon Sky (1969), Bully and Son (the third play in the Bully Trilogy, 1986), and some twenty produced one-acts. He has also written the libretto for Leo Holby’s opera of Tennessee William’s Summer and Smoke and two television plays, Theat! and The Migrapants (based on a short story by Tennessee Williams). His play adaptation of Ochlock’s The Three Sisters was commissioned and produced by the Hartford Stage Company.

Mr. Wilson’s other awards include the New York Drama Critics’ Circle Award, the Outer Critics Circle’s Award, Obies for The Hoi J Baltimore and The Mound Builders, a Drama Logue Award for 5th of July and Billy’s Folly, the Vernon Rice Award for The Sinners of Edith, and Tony nominations for Billy’s Folly, 5th of July, and Angels Folly. He has received the Brandeis University Creative Arts Award in Theatre Arts and the Institute of Arts and Letters Award. Burn This opened at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles in 1987 and later played on Broadway. He is currently writing the screenplay for the film version.

Lanford Wilson makes his home in Sag Harbor, New York.

Who's Who

His studio roles include Clarence and Richardson in Richard III, Ben in The Little Foxes, Austin in Paez Wharf, Sergeant in The Country Wife, and Tiger Brown in The Threepenny Opera. He has played Hal Carter in Pennin and Call, Getting Out at City College of San Francisco. Last summer Mr. Dolan appeared in Coming Attractions for the Eureka Company. He appeared as Keith Rienai in A.C.T.’s Plays-in-Progress production Pick Up Ax, and in Happened, A Christmas Carol, and Marolo Millions.

ANDREW DOLAN recently graduated from A.C.T.’s Advanced Training Program.
Playhouse in Los Angeles). Mr. Mann has been seen in such other plays as Down Town, Chekhov's The Seagull, and Robyn Hood, and in the feature films Who's Harry Crumb?, My Boyfriend Is an Alien, Charlie Bubbles, and Back to the Future II, and the television shows "Liv- 

MARY RETH SMITH last appeared with the company in Feathers. At Shakespeare: Santa Cruz she has played Katharine in Love’s Labour Lost and Susan Walker in ONCE in a Lifetime, and she recently toured with the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream. She has also performed with Encore Thea- ter Company, TheatreWorks, and the Pacific Jewish Theater. Ms. Smith received her B.A. in theater and English from the University of the South in Sewanee, Ten- nessee, and then trained at A.C.T. in the Conservatory’s Advanced Training Pro- gram, where her studio roles included Susie in Acme, Ronnie Hart in Chicago, Perdita in The Winter’s Tale, and Elyse in Ladyhouse Blues.

This theater operates under an agreement between The League of Resident Theaters and Actors’ Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States.

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

Champagne by Ariel Vineyards is used in A.C.T. Please note our thanks to Mary’s California for her’s suit and Larry’s quote.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

BOX OFFICE INFORMATION


Ticket Information: (415)749-2228 Charge to Visa, American Express, MasterCard.

Box Office Hours: Monday through Saturday, 10 a.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Performance Times: Tues-Sat. Evens, 8 p.m.; Wed., Sat., & Sun. Mat. 2 p.m.

Other performance times as announced.

Mail List: Call 749-2228 to request advance notice of shows, events, and subscription information.

Gift Certificates: Give A.C.T. to a friend, relative, co-worker or client. Gift Certifi- cates are perfect for every celebration.

Theater Parties: For groups of 15 or more, call Linda Graham at (415)366-7760 for special group prices.

Discounts: Half-price tickets can be pur- chased at STBII in Union Square in San Francisco. Student and Senior Rush tickets at half price are available begin- ning at 5 p.m. for evening performances.

Senior Rush tickets for matinees only are just $6.

Ticket Policy: All sales are final, and there are no refunds. Only current subscribers enjoy ticket exchange privileges or lost ticket insurance. If at the last minute you are unable to attend, you may make a worthwhile contribution by donating your tickets to A.C.T. The value of donated tickets is tax-deductible and will be acknowledged by mail. Tickets for perfor- mances already past cannot be considered as a donation.

Photographs and Recordings of A.C.T. performances are strictly forbidden. Flash cameras can dangerously distract the actors. Reels: If you carry a beeper, watch, or cellular phone with alarm, please make sure that it is set to the "OFF" position while you are in the theater to avoid dis- turbing the concentration of performers and audience.

Educators: Call 749-2230 for information about $7 Student Matinee Program tickets, teachers’ handbooks, backstage tours. Call 749-2231 for information about A.C.T.’s Speakers Bureau.

Conservatory: A.C.T. offers community classes, training, and advanced theater study. Its Young Conservatory program offers training for students between the ages of 8 and 18. Call 749-2550 for a free brochure.

Stage Door Theater

![Stage Door Theater Diagram]

Please note the nearest exit.

In an emergency, WALK, do not run, to the nearest exit.