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HIGH SOCIETY
music and lyrics by Cole Porter
book by Arthur Kopt
directed by Christopher Reinish
based on the play The Philadelphia Story by Philip Barry
and the Turner Entertainment Co.
motion picture High Society
September 4 – October 5, 1997

A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE
by Tennessee Williams
directed by Richard Seyd
October 23 – November 23, 1997

A CHRISTMAS CAROL
adapted from Charles Dickens’s novel by Dennis Powers
and Laird Williamson
directed by Candace Barrett
November 29 – December 29, 1997

IT’S A SLIPPERY SLOPE
written and performed by Spalding Gray

INSURRECTION:
HOLDING HISTORY
by Robert O’Hara
directed by Charles Randolph-Wright
January 8 – February 8, 1998

GOLDEN CHILD
by David Henry Hwang
directed by James Lapine
February 12 – March 15, 1998

MARY STUART
by Friedrich Schiller
translated by Michael Feingold
directed by Carey Perloff
March 26 – April 26, 1998

THE GUARDSMAN
by Ferenc Molnar
translated by Frank Marcus
directed by Albert Topaznachas
May 7 – June 7, 1998

OLD TIMES
by Harold Pinter
directed by Carey Perloff
June 11 – July 12, 1998

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These informal, anything-goes sessions are a great way to share your feelings and reactions with fellow theatergoers. Audience Exchanges take place in the Geary Theater for 30 minutes immediately after selected performances and are moderated by A.C.T. staff members.

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This popular series of free public symposia is back in 1997-98 from 7 to 9 p.m. on selected Monday evenings in the Geary Theater. Each symposium features a panel of scholars, theater artists, and professionals exploring topics ranging from aspects of the season’s productions to the intersection of theater and the arts with American culture. Everyone is welcome—you need not have seen the play to attend.

**Words on Plays**
Each entertaining and informative audience handbook contains advance program notes, a synopsis of the play, and additional background information about the playwright and the social and historical context of the work. A subscription for seven handbooks is available by mail to full-season subscribers for $42 ($21 for opening night subscribers); limited copies of handbooks for individual plays are also available for purchase at the Geary Theater Box Office, located at 405 Geary Street at Mason, and at the merchandise stand in the main lobby of the Geary Theater, for $8 each.

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

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**On High Society**

**A.C.T. Prologue**
September 9, 1997, 5:30 p.m.
Featuring Director Christopher Renshaw

**Audience Exchanges**
September 16 and 21 (matinee), October 8 (matinee)
Speakers to be announced.

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High Society
(1997)

Music and Lyrics by Cole Porter
Book by Arthur Kopit
Based on the play The Philadelphia Story
by Philip Barry
and the Turner Entertainment Co.
Motion Picture High Society
Additional Lyrics by Susan Birkenhead
Directed by Christopher Renshaw
Choreographed by Christopher d’Amboise
Musical Direction by Paul Gemignani

Scenery by Loy Arcenas
Costumes by Judith Anne Dolan
Lighting by Christopher Akerlind
Sound by Tony Meola
Orchestration by William David Brohn
Dialect Consultant Deborah Sussel
New York Casting by Jay Binder, C.S.A.
San Francisco Casting by Meryl Lind Shaw
Hair and Makeup by Rick Echols

Stage Management Staff
Ray Gin, Production Stage Manager
Gregory S. Rehrig, Assistant Stage Manager
Francesca Russell, Production Assistant
Allyson Lodge, Intern

There will be one intermission.
High Society

The Cast
(in order of appearance)

Tracy Lord  Melissa Errico
Dinah Lord  Lisbeth Zelle
Mother Lord  Lisa Banes
Uncle Willie  John McMartin
C. K. Dexter Haven  Daniel McDonald
Mike Connor  Jere Shea
Liz Imbrie  Randy Graff
Seth Lord  Michael Goodwin
George Kittredge  Marc Kudisch
Ensemble  Bryan T. Donovan
Christopher Fitzgerald
George Maguire
Donna Lee Marshall
Anna McNeely
Jennifer Laura Thompson
Cliff Thorn, Kirsten Wyatt

Understudies
Tracy Lord—Jennifer Laura Thompson; C. K. Dexter Haven—Cliff Thorn
Mother Lord—Anna McNeely; Uncle Willie, Seth Lord—George Maguire
Liz Imbrie—Donna Lee Marshall; Dinah Lord—Kirsten Wyatt
Mike Connor, George Kittredge—Bryan T. Donovan
Ensemble—Anna Marie Gutierrez, Dan Johnson

Orchestra
Violin—Yasushi Ogura, Adrienne Duckworth; Viola—James Hurley
Cello—Ellen Desler; Bass—Andrew McCorkle; French Horn—Larry Osborne
Woodwinds—James Moran, Stephen Parker; Trumpet—Larry Souza
Trombone—Gordon Messick; Percussion—Scott Bleaken
Piano—Donald Eldon Wescot; Synthesizer—Ronald Valentino

Additional Credits

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Assistant Director  David Elliott
Assistant Choreographer  Denise Direnzo
Assistant Set Designer  Mikiko Uesugi
Resident Sound Designer  Garth Hemphill
Rehearsal Pianist  Donald Eldon Wescot
Music Preparation Supervisor  Peggy Serra
Local Music Contractor  Wayne Allen
Young Conservatory Vocal Coach  Kimberly Mohne

The action takes place at the Lords’ estate in Oyster Bay, Long Island.

ACT I

Overture
“High Society”

Scene I: The Conservatory
“Am I Loved”

Scene II: A Dock—The Lawn
“Ridin’ High”
“Little One”

Scene III: The South Parlor
“Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?”
“I Love Paris”

Scene IV: The Pavilion
“She’s Got That Thing”

Scene V: The Pool
“Once Upon a Time”
“I Worship You”

Scene VI: By the Water’s Edge
“True Love”

“I Am Loved”

ACT II

Scene I: Uncle Willie’s House (2 a.m.)
“High Society”
“I’m Getting Myself Ready for You”

Scene II: Dexter’s House
“Toujours”

Scene III: Uncle Willie’s House (4 a.m.)
“Let’s Misbehave”
“Your Sensational”

Scene IV: The Grounds Surrounding Uncle Willie’s House
Midsummer Madness Montage (Company)

“Why Don’t We Stay Home?”

*Additional lyrics by Susan Birkenhead
THE HIGH SOCIETY STORY

by Elizabeth Brodersen

Cole Porter (1891–1964) and Philip Barry (1896–1949) were aesthetic contemporaries, privileged members of America's social and artistic aristocracy. Although they never actually worked together, their individual efforts have been merged by others into two musicals about the foibles of the very wealthy: Happy New Year, based on Holiday (Barry's second most popular play), which appeared on Broadway in 1980, and High Society, the 1956 musical film version of Barry's 1939 hit play, The Philadelphia Story. Porter and Barry's clever "collaboration" has been reborn at A.C.T., where an array of award-winning artists has converged to create a new version of High Society for the late 20th-century stage.

PHILIP BARRY'S REDOUTABLE STORY

High Society's origins date back to March 28, 1939, when The Philadelphia Story opened on Broadway with Katharine Hepburn in the role of Barry's high-spirited socialite, Tracy Lord. One of the leading playwrights of Broadway's Golden Age and author of some two dozen plays, Barry lived a dramatic double life: a serious writer fighting an inner struggle to understand the profound issues of human existence cohabited with "the second Mr. Barry, the smiling one with a lump in his throat" (Burns Mantle). Although he wrote several serious plays on cosmic themes, Barry, like Porter a Yale graduate and son of a wealthy family, was best known for the sophisticated comic flair with which he revealed the inner workings of the elegant elite.

In such charming and perceptive comedies as Paris Bound (1927), Holiday (1928), and The Philadelphia Story (1939), Barry took a long, hard, entertaining look at the social implications of privilege. His witty dialogue and amusing plots gave voice to, while making light of, questions of love, identity, and the need for individual...
fulfillment. Barry’s plays were most successful when they exposed the rough human beings beneath the polished exterior of the old-money upper class.

Barry wrote the role of Tracy Lord in *The Philadelphia Story* explicitly for Hepburn, whose stage career had lagged since her unpopular performance in *The Lake* in 1933. The 1939 Broadway production of *The Philadelphia Story*, which also featured Joseph Cotten (as C. K. Dexter Haven), Van Heflin (as Mike Connor), and Shirley Booth (as Liz Imbrie), put Hepburn back on top and ran for a remarkable 417 performances. Hepburn bought the film rights to secure for herself the leading role in any subsequent screen version of the play; she was later joined in the 1940 MGM film by Cary Grant and James Stewart as her inimitable suitors. Smarly directed by George Cukor, *The Philadelphia Story* earned Barry’s friend Donald Ogden Stewart an Academy Award for best screenplay and Jimmy Stewart the Oscar for best actor.

**COLE PORTER’S ELEGANT SOCIETY**

In 1955, soon after he finished *Silk Stockings* (which was to be his last Broadway show), Porter received offers from two film companies for movie scores and a proposal for a Broadway musical version of the film *The Shop Around the Corner*. He astounded the producers by turning down the Broadway opportunity, instead choosing to spend the summer in Hollywood writing the score for a musical film adaptation of *The Philadelphia Story*, which was released in 1956 with the new title *High Society* and a new setting in Rhode Island.

With nine original songs written for its high-powered cast and a jazzed-up feel (an unlikely number set at the famed Newport festival was inserted specifically for Louis Armstrong), *High Society* starred Bing Crosby as Dexter, Grace Kelly as Tracy, and Frank Sinatra as Mike. The film itself received mixed reviews, but “True Love,” a duet sung by Kelly and Crosby, became the most-played song of the year and was nominated for an Academy Award. Porter’s favorite tune in the film was reportedly “I Love You, Samantha”; other notable songs that helped make the movie a popular success were “You’re Sensational,” and “Well, Did You Evah!” (first heard in 1939 in *Du Barry Was a Lady*).

Although *High Society* was nominated for an Academy Award for best motion picture story, Barry fans felt the movie lacked the inherent grace and crisply stylish comedy of the original play. For many, the heart and soul of *The Philadelphia Story* had been lost in the Hollywood Society shuffle.
A CLASSIC TRANSLATION

The current reincarnation of *High Society* began four years ago, when playwright Arthur Kopit was asked to write the book for a new musical based on Barry's original play and Porter's music.

When his award-winning first play, *Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Momma’s Hung You in the Closet and I’m Feelin’ So Sad*, appeared in New York in 1962, Kopit was hailed as the new boy wonder of American drama. (*Oh, Dad* was produced by A.C.T. in 1969.) One of the few American playwrights able to survive economically by writing serious drama for Broadway, he made his theatrical mark with intelligently satirical comedy-dramas commenting on contemporary American social issues including the Vietnam War (*Indians*, 1969), the language dysfunction and emotional isolation of stroke victims (*Wings*, 1979), nuclear proliferation (*End of the World with Symposium to Follow*, 1986, produced at A.C.T. in 1988), and the rapacious greed of Hollywood (*Road to Nirvana*, 1991). Lately, Kopit has applied his talents in the musical realm as the author of the books for the 1982 Tony Award-winning *Nine*, directed by Tommy Tune, and for *Phantom*, based on Gaston Leroux’s *Phantom of the Opera* (written before the Andrew Lloyd Webber version).

For Kopit, whose credits also include an adaptation of Ibsen’s *Ghosts*, writing *High Society* was much like translating a well-known classic play. He returned to Barry’s text for the fundamental elements of plot, character, and dialogue. However, “because this is a musical,” he says, “I couldn’t just take a scene directly from the play. The method was not to find songs that fitted into the text, but to find songs that expressed what these characters might need to say in specific, pivotal moments, then reshape the structure so the songs seemed to come out naturally.”

Writing a piece of musical theater, as opposed to a play, presented Kopit with its own set of challenges. “You have to understand the function of music in the storytelling,” he observes. “At the end of a song, you have to be in a different emotional place than you were before it began. The song has to advance the story, reveal an unsuspected truth about the characters, escalate the stakes, twist the tension. It has to do something.

“And because the key moments are usually sung, you have to conceive of scenes differently—you need to find the moment where a song must emerge. So you have to construct the scene so it gets to a point where words alone are inadequate.”

In paying close attention to the lyrics while writing, Kopit was surprised to discover an emotional complexity in Porter’s bitingly clever rhymes that many listeners miss. “In most musicals, songs reveal truths. In *High Society*, however, the songs are often used as defenses, so the brittle, sophisticated Porter lyrics can be used by characters to ‘put on a tough skin’ [as Tracy says to Mike in *The Philadelphia Story*]. In that case, the song intentionally hides the truth.
“I’m no longer sure whether the dialogue in a particular scene is mine or Philip Barry’s,” Kopit confesses. “The challenge was to make it all seamless. I wanted to make it feel as though I weren’t there. The most reverent thing I could do to Barry was to be absolutely true to his characters. His characters are wonderful, and I didn’t want to make them more wonderful. I just wanted to show them in a different way, as though we were watching them through a different pair of glasses.”

HIGH SOCIETY REBORN
In October 1996, acclaimed British opera and musical theater director Christopher Renshaw attended a reading at the Manhattan Theatre Club of a draft of Kopit’s book, then called Ridin’ High. Renshaw, whose production of The King and I won the 1996 Tony Award for best revival of a musical, agreed to take on the monumental task of bringing the new Barry/Porter project to the stage. He was soon joined by a host of other collaborators well known on Broadway and beyond, including musical director Paul Gemignani, veteran of more than 25 Broadway shows (including most of Stephen Sondheim’s work) and choreographer Christopher d’Amboise.

The team eventually incorporated several designers familiar to A.C.T., including Loy Arcenas, who designed the sets for A.C.T.’s Othello, Matchmaker, and Singer’s Boy; Judith Anne Dolan, costume designer for last season’s Machinal at A.C.T., who recently won a Tony Award for her work on Candide; and Christopher Akerlind, who lit The Piano Lesson, Angels in America, and Seven Guitars for A.C.T. After a more extensive reading at the Roundabout Theatre Company in New York last January with several of the current cast members and more of Porter’s songs, the production team moved in July to San Francisco, where development of the script, music, and staging continued through August under the auspices of A.C.T.

A primary challenge facing the collaborators was the daunting task of identifying which songs in Porter’s vast repertoire would best express the uniquely personal feelings of Barry’s already well-defined and well-known characters. Renshaw, Kopit, Gemignani, and lyricist Susan Birkenhead (whose Broadway credits include Jelly’s Last Jam and The Triumph of Love) worked closely with Robert Kimball, artistic advisor to the Porter estate, who introduced them to a large selection of unpublished and unfamiliar tunes.

As musical director, Gemignani immersed himself in Porter’s repertoire, looking for songs and writing and adapting music to advance the action of the story. “My job is to serve the composer as honestly and directly as I can, to be his voice,” he says. “If I’ve done my job right, it will seem as though Cole Porter were alive and had written a new musical.

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What a Swell Party He Was
by Gerald Nachman

Of all the great musical comedy songwriters in the Broadway pantheon, Cole Porter was perhaps the one whose songs were the most biographically straightforward and, in their day, the most audacious. He dared to write about rich people and sex, taboo topics at the time, at least along cozy traditional Tin Pan Alley.

Prior to (and a long time after) Porter’s day, Broadway songwriters tended to cater to the traditional American orthodoxy—the best way to make a buck in the cutthroat songwriting racket of the 1920s, ’30s, and ’40s, when tunesmiths sought out the man in the street and his wife to serenade with scores.

Irving Berlin best personified the type, but others closely fit the pattern: George and Ira Gershwin, Jerome Kern, Oscar Hammerstein, Richard Rodgers, Howard Dietz, Arthur Schwartz, Harold Arlen, and even Lorenz Hart—Porter’s closest stylistic soul mate—all shared the same background. Many met at Catskill summer camps where they wrote their earliest shows; friendships were formed that led to later collaborations.

Porter didn’t bubble out of the Lower East Side musical melting pot. No summer camps for him, unless you count the Riviera. Porter overcame every advantage: He grew up in a wealthy family in a small Indiana town, went East at 13 to prep school, and at Yale joined its Wasp clubs. He married Linda Lee Thomas, a beautiful socialist even richer than he, and settled in Europe, where he lived off his inheritance, partied, and wrote ballets.

It was a marriage of convenience that Porter enjoyed and even winked at. He didn’t care to fit in. If anything, he reveled in remaining apart, even aloof. Party giver Elsa Maxwell, his lifelong confidante, once told him, “Your standards are too high. The wit and poetry of your lyrics are far beyond the people. But one day you will haul the public up to your own level.”

While a tragic 1937 riding accident that eventually cost him his legs made Porter a cripple during the last half of his life, his primary creative struggle was to overcome his posh background and to be
taken seriously as a songwriter. To many, he seemed a dilettante. "I'm not a snob," he protested. "I just like the best of everything." Living well for him wasn't just the best revenge; it was a source of inspiration. He believed in the high life that late he led.

Stephen Sondheim said, "No man except Cole Porter could write about 'gossamer wings' without blushing. Cole Porter believed in gossamer wings, just as Oscar Hammerstein believed in trees and grass and stars and beautiful mornings."

**THE SAUCY MARGARET MEAD OF THE GILDED CLASS**

It wasn't until Porter, then nearly 40, began to write about himself and the wealthy world he knew so well that his talent came into brilliant focus, defining him instantly and forever, and placing him worlds away from family values-oriented Broadway songwriters.

If Porter had only celebrated the well-heeled crowd he hung out with, however, his songs might never have attracted and amused the hoi polloi. What endeared him to America, especially during the Depression when he rose to fame, was that he made fun of the idle rich and their conspicuously consuming customs. He needledd not only high society, but also America's glamorous new celebrity society.

In the thirties, Porter became the saucy Margaret Mead of the gilded class, reporting back to the masses in rhyming anthropological detail their fancy manners and dubious morals, detailing each acquisition and affectation with wit and melodic grace, all done with seemingly effortless ease, never breaking a sweat.

Mocking the lifestyles of the rich and famous made Porter even more rich and world famous. Here was a life he knew, reveled in, and observed with a keen, wicked eye. His cleverly crafted lyrics were so amusing that, over the years, they have upstaged his superb musicianship (much as Irving Berlin's catchy melodies have sometimes detracted from his insightful verse). It's hard to find more infectious melodies than "Easy to Love" and "Let's Misbehave"—or, in *High Society*, "True Love" and "Well, Did You Evah!"

Like Sondheim, one of the very few Broadway songwriters to rival him since, Porter's verses are packed with innuendo, though Sondheim's melodies generally aren't nearly as accessible as Porter's. Porter craved popularity but, unlike Sondheim, cared little how songs fit into a plot. Porter is said to have continued on page 47
CAREY PERLOFF (Artistic Director) assumed artistic leadership of A.C.T. in June 1992. Perloff has since led the company to unprecedented success, including the receipt of the prestigious 1996 Juicymen Theatres Award and the triumphant reopening of the Geary Theater following its $275.5 million restoration. Known for directing innovative productions of classics and championing new writing for the theater, Perloff’s work at A.C.T. includes a highly acclaimed production of Timberlake Wertenbaker’s new version of Euripides’ Heraca which featured Olympia Dukakis; Tom Stoppard’s Arcadia; Tennessee Williams’s Rose Tattoo with Kathleen Widdoes; Sophocles’ Antigone; Strindberg’s Creditors; Paul Schmidt’s new translation of Chekhov’s Uncle Vanya; David Storey’s Home; the world premiere of Leslie Ayvazian’s Singer’s Boy; and the Geary Theater inaugural production of Shakespeare’s Tempest, which featured David Strathairn and the Kronos Quartet. In 1993, Perloff directed the world premiere of Steve Reich and Beryl Korot’s opera The Cave at the Vienna Festival and the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

Before joining A.C.T., Perloff was artistic director of CSC Repertory (the Classic Stage Company) in New York, where she directed the world premiere of Ezra Pound’s Elektra with Pamela Reed and Nancy Marchand; the American premiere of Harold Pinter’s Mountain Language and The Birthday Party with Jean Stapleton, David Strathairn, and Peter Riegert; Bertolt Brecht’s Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui with John Turturro and Katherine Borowitz; and many other classic works. Under Perloff’s leadership, CSC won the 1988 Obie Award for artistic excellence, as well as numerous Obies for acting, design, and direction.

Perloff received a B.A. (Phi Beta Kappa) in classics and comparative literature from Stanford University and was a Fulbright Fellow at Oxford University. She was on the faculty of the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University for seven years and currently teaches and directs in the A.C.T. Advanced Training Program.

This season at A.C.T. Perloff directs Pinter’s Old Times, featuring Turturro and Borowitz, and the world premiere of Michael Feingold’s new translation of Friedrich Schiller’s Maria Stuart.

HEATHER KITCHEN (Managing Director) joined A.C.T. as managing director in November 1996. She has extensive experience in theater management and production, has served as a strategic planning consultant for arts and educational institutions, and has taught for more than 20 years throughout Canada. Most recently she served as general manager of the Citadel Theatre in Edmonton, Alberta, where she was responsible for a five-theater complex which produced up to 16 productions annually. Prior to her work at the Citadel, she was production manager at Theatre New Brunswick for three years. Her stage management experience includes the Stratford Festival, the Canadian Stage Company in Toronto, the Canadian Opera Company, and the New Play Centre of Vancouver. She was also company manager for the Stratford Festival while on tour. Kitchen received an honors degree in drama and theater arts from the University of Waterloo and earned her M.B.A. from the Richard Ivey School of Business at The University of Western Ontario.

MELISSA SMITH (Conservatory Director), the master acting teacher of the A.C.T. Advanced Training Program, has taught acting to students of all ages throughout the United States. Before assuming leadership of the A.C.T. Conservatory in 1998, she was director of the program in theater and dance at Princeton University, where she taught acting, scene study, and continued on page 32
Shakespeare for six years. Also a professional actor, she has performed in regional theaters and in numerous off-Broadway plays. Smith holds a B.A. in English and theater from Yale College and an M.F.A. in acting from the Yale School of Drama.

**JAMES HAIRE** (Producing Director) began his career on Broadway with Eva Le Gallienne's National Repertory Theater. He also stage-managed the Broadway productions of *And Miss Reardon Drinks a Little* and *Georgy* (a musical by Carole Bayer Sager), as well as the national tour of Woody Allen's *Don't Drink the Water*. Off Broadway he produced Ilen's *Litle Eyolf* (directed by Marshall W. Mason) and Shaw's *Arms and the Man*. Haire joined A.C.T. in 1971. He and his department were awarded Theater Crafts International's award for excellence in the theater in 1989, and in 1992 Haire was awarded a lifetime achievement award by the Bay Area Theatre Critics' Circle.

**CRAIG SLAIGHT** (Young Conservatory Director) spent ten years in Los Angeles directing theater and television before joining A.C.T. in 1988. An award-winning educator, Slaight is a consultant to the Educational Theater Association and the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts and is a frequent guest speaker and adjudicator throughout the country. He has published eight anthologies for young actors, three of which have been selected by the New York Public Library as "outstanding books for the teenager." In 1989, he founded the Young Conservatory's New Plays Program; to date 11 new works by professional playwrights have been developed, nine of which have been published by Smith & Kraus in two volumes of *New Plays from A.C.T.'s Young Conservatory*.

**BRUCE WILLIAMS** (Director of Summer Training Congress & Community Programs) has had a 22-year working relationship with A.C.T., where he has taught in the Advanced Training Program (ATP), Summer Training Congress, and Studio A.C.T. (which he also administrates), directed numerous ATP studio productions, and acted in more than 40 mainstage productions. He has also performed on numerous other West Coast stages and has worked extensively in film, television, and voice-over.

**PAUL WALSH** (Dramaturg & Director of Humanities) has extensive experience as a dramaturg, translator, and adaptor, including many years collaborating with the Minneapolis-based Theatre de la Jeune Lune on such projects as *Children of Paradise*, *Germinal*, *Don Juan Giovanni*, and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. His translation of Strindberg's *Creditors* was directed by Carey Perloff at CSC in New York in 1991 and at A.C.T. in 1992. Walsh received a Ph.D. in drama from the University of Toronto and taught theater history and dramatic literature at Southern Methodist University. His critical writings appear in *The Production Notebooks*, *Reinterpreting Brecht*, *Strindberg's Dramaturgy*, *Theater Symposium*, and *Essays in Theater*.

**MERYL LIND SHAW** ( Casting Director) joined the A.C.T. artistic staff in 1993. During the previous 16 years, she stage-managed more than 60 productions throughout the Bay Area, including A.C.T.'s *Bon Appétit!* and *Creditors*. She was resident stage manager at Berkeley Repertory Theatre for 12 years and production stage manager at the Berkeley Shakespeare Festival for three seasons. She was active with Actors' Equity Association for many years and served on the AEA negotiating committee in 1992 and 1993. Other casting projects include the San Francisco production of *Picasso at the Lapin Agile* and the CD-ROM game *Obsidian*. Shaw also teaches in the A.C.T. Advanced Training Program.
A.C.T.'s popular symposium series continues in its fifth provocative season. Join us on selected Monday nights from 7 to 9 p.m. in the Geary Theater for in-depth, entertaining discussions. This year’s symposia feature panels of scholars and theater professionals engaged in an ongoing exploration of the themes that link several of the plays in A.C.T.’s 1997–98 season.

Admission is FREE, and everyone is welcome.

REINVENTING OURSELVES:
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For information, please call the A.C.T. Literary Department at (415) 438–2445.
THE OFFICIAL DRINK
OF JUST HAVING A DRINK.
RING IN 1998 WITH A.C.T. IN LONDON

A.C.T. invites you to venture abroad this winter for a thoroughly British theatrical adventure and "olde-fashioned" New Year's celebration. The third A.C.T. Yuletide Theatre Tour brings A.C.T. professionals and fellow theater lovers together for a dramatic journey to the heart of the English theater.

Departing San Francisco on December 26 and returning January 2, the group will spend seven days and six nights in London attending the best current theatrical offerings, including two West End shows and a production at the renowned Royal National Theatre (with a backstage tour). Other highlights include a day trip to William Shakespeare's home, Stratford-upon-Avon, for a performance by the Royal Shakespeare Company, a tour of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, which has recently been restored and reopened to the public, and a visit to Henry VIII's Hampton Court, as well as plenty of free time to shop and see the sights.

The $1,995 package price includes round-trip nonstop airfare from San Francisco, first-class hotel accommodations (including a full English breakfast daily), orchestra-seat tickets to all productions, a London transportation pass, all taxes and porterage, and a tax-deductible donation to A.C.T.

Don't miss out on this exciting opportunity to discover the magic of British theater at its finest. For a detailed information packet, please call A.C.T. at (415) 439-2313.

A.C.T. WELCOMES NEW BOARD TRUSTEES

Several prominent business executives have dedicated their expertise to A.C.T. by joining the company's board of trustees, which has expanded considerably in recent seasons. As the governing body of A.C.T., the board is responsible for the overall artistic, educational, and financial integrity of the organization. In addition to approving the A.C.T. annual operating budget and holding responsibility for major hiring, the trustees collectively review and approve policies to further A.C.T.'s artistic and educational mission and serve as A.C.T.'s custodians for the benefit of the Bay Area community.

The board, which is currently comprised of 39 individuals, is guided by the leadership of President Toni Rembe. Her fellow officers include recently elected Vice Presidents Kaatri B. Grigg and Shephard P. Pollack, Secretary Mortimer Fleischhacker, and Treasurer Toby Schreiber, who also chairs the board's finance committee.

Introducing the newest members of the board of trustees of The American Conservatory Theatre Foundation:

Joan Danforth enjoyed a career in investments, holding positions at both Dean Witter & Co. and Citicorp in New York. She currently sits on the boards of the Asian Art Museum and Oberlin College in Ohio.

Donna Goya is senior vice president of human resources for Levi Strauss & Company. She was elected to the National Academy of Human Resources in 1994 and to the International Women's Forum in 1996. She also serves as a trustee of the minority intern-placing service Inroads, the Meyer Institute, and the California Strategic Human Resources Partnership.

Bruce Alan Mann has been a partner at the law firm Morrison & Forster since 1987. Previously he was administrative managing director at L. F. Rothschild, Unterberg & Towbin, and was a partner for 16 years at Pillsbury, Madison & Sutro. He has chaired several committees of the American Bar Association's business law section and is a member of its ABA standing committee on ethics and professional responsibility.

J. Sanford Miller is senior marketing director and director of technology investment banking at Montgomery Securities. Previously he held the same position at Merrill Lynch in San Francisco. He has also served as a senior vice president of Donaldson, Lufkin & Jenrette, a strategy consultant with Bain & Company, and a securities lawyer with Pillsbury, Madison & Sutro.

Cheryl Sorokin became corporate secretary of BankAmerica Corporation and Bank of America NT&SA in 1986—the first woman to hold this position at BofA. She also manages corporate communications and government relations and is group executive vice president. She is a longtime drama enthusiast and also serves on the board of directors of the San Francisco Opera.

KICKING OFF ANOTHER EXCITING ACT 1 SEASON

ACT 1 is off and running for its third consecutive season, with another outstanding lineup of A.C.T. plays and special events. A social and educational affiliate of A.C.T., ACT 1 members are closely involved in A.C.T. through education, special events, volunteer work, and fundraising. Formed in 1995 by A.C.T. Trustee Julie Stein to generate interest in live theater among young Bay Area residents, ACT 1
now has more than 150 members and has become a vital part of the A.C.T. family.

ACT 1 members may choose to subscribe to a package of three plays, which in the 1997–98 season includes the world-premiere musical High Society, the 50th-anniversary production of Tennessee Williams's Streetcar Named Desire, and Golden Child, the moving new comedy-drama by David Henry Hwang, the author of M. Butterfly. Before attending performances in the ACT 1 subscription series, members are invited to private cocktail receptions at elegant Union Square restaurants. ACT 1 also sponsors special events to raise much-needed funding for A.C.T. programs; for the past two seasons the group has hosted Comedy Night at the Geary, an evening of laughs with nationally recognized comedians, raising $50,000 for the A.C.T. Advanced Training Program.

ACT 1 members who subscribe to the three-play ACT 1 series receive a host of benefits, including priority seating and discounts when purchasing tickets to other A.C.T. performances; discounts on extra tickets for guests; a free subscription to Preview, A.C.T.'s informative newsletter; significant discounts at more than a dozen Union Square restaurants and retailers; and a discount on tickets to the third annual ACT 1 Comedy Night at the Geary, scheduled for April 29, 1998.

Membership in ACT 1 is $50 per person or $85 per couple. If you are already an A.C.T. subscriber and want to join ACT 1, you can easily reschedule your performance dates by calling the A.C.T. Box Office at (415) 749–2ACT.

To get in the act with ACT 1, please call ACT 1 Vice President Elizabeth Sennett at (415) 536–8548.

Halloween is just around the corner

Do you have a favorite costume from a memorable A.C.T. performance? Why not wear it to your next fancy—or fanciful—dress affair or Halloween bash? Plenty of costumes, from elegant period dress to outrageous getups, are available from A.C.T. Costume Rentals. You, too, can star in one of hundreds of ensembles that have appeared on the A.C.T. mainstage.

Halloween is a busy time at A.C.T.'s costume shop, located at 1420 4th Street, so be sure to make an appointment for a visit and fitting soon by calling (415) 439-2379.
A.C.T. NEWS

A.C.T. RECEIVES MELLON FOUNDATION TRAINING GRANT

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation has awarded A.C.T. a generous $250,000 grant, to be distributed over the next three years, for the further development of A.C.T.'s acclaimed theater training programs. This grant builds on earlier support from the Foundation which helped make possible the establishment of a full-time core faculty in the ATP, ensuring students year-to-year continuity in instructors and courses. With the resources available to A.C.T. from the Mellon Foundation, and under the leadership of Conservatory Director Melissa Smith, A.C.T. has created core faculty positions in speech, voice, movement, acting, and humanities.

Smith is committed to integrating well-rounded humanities education into professional actor training. Under the auspices of A.C.T.'s previous Mellon grant (and a National Endowment for the Humanities planning grant), the conservatory has enhanced its humanities program to include courses in “Texts in Context,” which seek to incorporate literary, historical, and cultural materials into actors' performance preparation. The Mellon grant also supports A.C.T.'s efforts to refine the recently expanded three-year master of fine arts program to include larger-scale public performance opportunities for students.

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, established in 1969, reflects the strong artistic interests of its founders, Ailsa Mellon Bruce and Paul Mellon. The Foundation awards approximately $12–15 annually to visual and performing arts institutions nationwide.

HONORING A.C.T.'S FRIENDS

Do you enjoy working with diverse people and learning more about the theater? The Friends of A.C.T., the company's volunteer auxiliary, offers many opportunities for people interested in contributing their time and talent to A.C.T. Volunteers assist with mailings and work with administrative departments, help at selected performances, staff the library, and more.

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

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For information about the Friends of A.C.T., call (415) 439-2301. For information about ushering, call (415) 439-2349.
“Porter is an exceptional lyricist,” adds Gemignani, “and his songs endure because he wrote about people. His love songs, like ‘True Love’ and ‘He’s A Right Guy,’ are timeless—they could have been written yesterday. He speaks to your heart, and it’s very easy to tell a story with his songs. Each one of them is a scene in itself.”

Eventually most of the songs from the 1956 movie were retained (“If they don’t mean something to the story, we’re not using them,” says Gemignani), augmented by such Porter classics as “Ridin’ High” (originally from Porter’s 1936 musical Red, Hot & Blue!), “I Love Paris” (Can-Can, 1953), and “Let’s Misbehave” (included in Porter’s score for Paris, 1928, but not used). Unlike many artists’ trustees, the Porter estate was generously willing to permit experimentation with Porter’s words (except for certain standards, which had to be performed unchanged), allowing Kopit and Birkenhead to add verses and revise passages where necessary to fit the flow of the story.

The setting of Barry’s play was shifted from the elegant rooms of the Lords’ Main Line Philadelphia mansion to the shores of Oyster Bay, Long Island, with its equally grand homes and romantic ocean views. “Oyster Bay is also a traditional location for the American aristocracy,” says Renshaw, “and it’s a very sexy place. You’re surrounded by water, and the sea and sky are particularly beautiful. We wanted to set the action outdoors, and Loy [Arcenas]’s set is very much inspired by the vistas of Long Island.”

In reinventing Barry’s vintage play as a musical, Renshaw and Kopit wanted to be true to the period, but filtered through a contemporary sensibility. “We wanted to take a postmodern view,” adds Kopit, “which meant that even in the staging, it had to have a sense of spareness, which we could only achieve using the stage techniques available today. There’s a fluidity of movement from scene to scene that traditional musicals didn’t have when they had a lot of flats. A dreamlike approach was the only way to capture the romance and enchantment of the piece, the fairy-tale sense of this princess who isn’t quite as happy as one would have thought.”

“Arthur’s original book read very much like a screenplay,” says Renshaw, “and I wanted to free up the stage by approaching the design of the show with the kinesis of film. I wanted the production to be very fluid, very abstract.

“But this is a musical about real people, their sorrows and their joys. It’s Chekhov as opposed to Christopher Marlowe, and we are trying to give it as much truthfulness and character depth as possible.

“When I first heard the script, I immediately thought of A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” Renshaw concludes, “of the healing that can come from a kind of magical drunken revelry. Our High Society is like madness on a midsummer night, where pain is healed in the magic of the garden.”
dropped his songs off at the theater, paying scant attention to a show before opening night, which was for him mainly another excuse for a party. His only creative failing was allowing superior tunes to be surrounded by inferior books—with two major exceptions, *Kiss Me, Kate* and *High Society*, both based on classic plays in sophisticated sync with Porter's sublime scores.

**BEYOND WIT INTO THE DIVINE**

In songs like “You’re the Top,” “Let’s Do It,” and “Anything Goes,” Porter made famous the “list song,” enumerating the names, romantic games, toys, trends, and scandals of the well-born chic. They read like gossip and society columns set to music.

Although certain references have dated, the songs retain their sense of fun. Porter plucked pop culture clean, populating his songs with the likes of Irene Bordoni, Lady Mendll, Lydia Pinkham, and Judge Crater, as well as the catch phrases, products, fads, and news events of his day. His lyrics are equally riddled with classical references and playful word games: “If a Harris pat means a Paris hat, OK!” “It’s lovely.” “If a holy Hindu man can, / If a gangly Anglican can, / If in Lesbos, a pure Lesbian can, / Baby, you can can-can too.” Many Porter numbers, like “Can-Can,” run five or six refrains.

The songs’ spirit needs no translation, and what delights us, more than half a century afterwards, is the tunes’ dazzling wordplay. His only rivals as a rhymester (not counting W. S. Gilbert) were Sondheim, Hart, and Noel Coward, whose smart lyrics paved the way for Porter.

Porter’s adroit flippancy did limit him a little. Unlike Hart, Berlin, Sondheim, or Hammerstein, he avoided the complexities of love and romantic reality and wrote more often of pure throbbing passion, often to exotic tempos: “Night and Day,” “So in Love,” “In the Still of the Night,” “I Love Paris,” “Begin the Begin.” His very, wordy-wearie songs (“Let’s Fly Away,” “Most Gentlemen Don’t Like Love,” “It’s Bad for Me”) reflected his own worldliness, verbal snapshots of places he’d been to and glitterati he had met.

In addition to the list song, Porter perfected the lust song. About sex, he was more open and direct than any other lyricist; no wonder his songs were recently revived on an unlikely hit CD (Red, Hot + Blue) sung by nineties rockers whose raw emotions his lyrics prefigured, if more poetically (“Too Darn Hot,” “All of You,” “I've Got You Under My Skin”). Porter played with the tricky, teasing nature of sexuality and love, refusing to take it too seriously. In “Just One of Those Things,” “It’s All Right with Me,” and “Always True to You in My Fashion,” his people have hot flings rather than warm romances. He also wrote sardonic anti-love songs like “I Hate Men” and “Get Out of Town” and “Miss Otis Regrets.”
Porter had his most fun tattling on and ribbing the pre-jet set in tunes whose countless verses get more bawdy as they progress. Explicit songs such as “I’ve Got You Under My Skin” and “Love for Sale” were banned from radio, and “But in the Morning, No” and “The Laziest Gal in Town” were a kind of soft-core porn. In “Kate the Great,” he details his heroine’s appetite for men, women, and room-service waiters. In “Nobody’s Chasing Me,” there’s a hint of bestiality. Gay allusions abound: “I’m a Gigolo” contains a line about “a dash of lavender”; “Well, Did You Evah?” mentions a girl being “pinched in the Astor Bar,” but the real joke is that it was actually a gay bar; and in “Farming,” Porter refers to a bull who’s “beautiful but gay.”

Although he wrote few tender ballads (“After You, Who?” “Ev’rytime We Say Goodbye,” “So in Love,” “Easy to Love”), the High Society film score is blessed with two: “True Love,” the hit, and “Mind If I Make Love to You?” in which Porter takes his typically nonchalant approach to romance; “Little One” is a sweet beddy-bye ballad.

Porter was joyously adept at mixing, like a fizzy cocktail, the highfalutin with the lowdown, as in “You’re the Top,” where Dante and Durante meet in the same line, or when he dashes off, “You’re a Botticelli, / You’re Keats, / You’re Shelley, / You’re Ovaltine!” As the years went on, he added verses, as if feeling a need to top his own unstoppable self: “[E]very kattydid, do it! . . . Moths in your rugs do it, / what’s the use of moth balls?” . . . and, kidding himself, even “Lithuanians and Letts do it.”

His songs resound with satisfyingly perfect rhymes that go beyond mere wit into the divine: “Like the moon / Growing dim / On the rim / Of the hill / In the chill / Still / Of the night,” and, “You do / That voodoo / That you do / So well.” Such keen imagery, fused with his sublime melodies, makes you both gasp in awe and giggle with joy at the unquenchable marvel, the marvelous, that was Cole Porter.

Gerald Nachman was a theater critic with the San Francisco Chronicle for 13 years. He writes a humor column for the New York Times syndicate and has just finished a book on the Golden Age of radio.

LISA BANES® (Mother Lord) has appeared on Broadway in Rumors and Arcadia. Off-Broadway credits include Look Back in Anger (Theatre World Award), Three Sisters, My Sister in This House (Obie Award), Isn’t It Romantic (Drama Desk Award nomination), On the Verge, Antigone, Emily, Fighting International Fat, Ten by Tennessee, and The Cradle Will Rock. Regional theater credits include roles at the Long Wharf Theatre, Yale Repertory Theatre, Old Globe Theatre, Mark Taper Forum, and Ahmanson Theatre. Film credits include The Hotel New Hampshire, Marie, Cocktails, Young Guns, Miami Rhapsody, and the soon-to-be released films The Jackal and Pre. Television credits include the series “The Trials of Rose O’Neil,” 12 television movies (including Hemingway and Avenging Angels), and guest appearances on “China Beach,” “Life Goes On,” “L.A. Law,” “Murder One,” “Sisters,” “Roseanne,” and “Frasier.” Banes is a graduate of The Juilliard School.

BRYAN T. DONOVAN® (Ensemble, Understudy) has performed off Broadway in No Solace in Goodbyes and A Face in the Bottle. His regional theater credits include Another Midsummer Night, Keely and Du, Actors’ Nightmare, Pygmalion, The Secret Garden, and The Most Happy Fella. He also toured Europe with The Phantom of the Opera. Television audiences may remember him as Jim on “All My Children.”

MELISSA ERRICO® (Tracy Lord) has appeared on Broadway as Eliza Doolittle in My Fair Lady, opposite Richard Chamberlain; Kitty in Anna Karenina; and Cosette in Les Misérables. She recently played Gwenolyn in Tony Walton’s production of The Importance of Being Earnest at the Irish Repertory Theatre (1997 Drama Desk Award nomination). In the Encores series at City Center in New York, she performed the leading role in Call Me Madam, with Tyne Daly, and the title character in Kurt Weill’s One Touch of Venus (1996 Lucille Lortel Award). This summer, at the Bay Street Theatre in Sag Harbor, New York, she portrayed Betty Comden in Make Someone Happy, the new Comden and Green musical with a book by David Ives. On television, Errico spent a year as Alex on CBS’s “Central Park West,” and she recently made her film debut in Loose Women with Charlie Sheen. She is a graduate of Yale University and the British American Drama Academy at Oxford.

CHRISTOPHER FITZGERALD® (Ensemble) is a 1996 graduate of the A.C.T. Advanced Training Program (ATP), where he appeared in studio productions of Twelfth Night, Awake and Sing!, The Voysey Inheritance, and Machinal. He has completed four seasons with the Williams Town Theatre Festival, where he performed in The Milk Train Doesn’t Stop Here Anymore with Olympia Dukakis, As You Like It, Filumena, The Love of Three Oranges, and, most recently, the revival of Dead End, directed by Nicholas Martin. He has also performed with the Maine State Music Theater, Central Piedmont Summer Theater, New England Vaudeville Festival, and The A Cappella Fellas. His television credits include ABC’s Kingdom Chums.
MICHAEL GOODWIN* (Seth Lord) has performed on Broadway in the musical Cyrano (with Christopher Plummer); the musical Ambassador (with Howard Keel); A Patriot for Me (with Maximillian Schell); and Charley's Aunt (with Louie Nye). His off-Broadway credits include Colette, Tango, What Every Woman Knows, and Hamlet. Regional theater credits include Wild Oats, Mary Stuart, and Arms and the Man at The Guthrie Theater; Coming of the Hurricane at Arena Stage; Betrayal at the Long Wharf Theatre; and Much Ado About Nothing and The Taming of the Shrew at the Dallas Shakespeare Festival. He has been featured in the films Road to Wellsville, Dead Pool, and Number One with a Bullet; the television movies Timepiece, Murderous Intent, Letters from Frank, and Linda; and numerous television series.

RANDY GRAFF* (Liz Imbrie) has performed on Broadway in Moon over Buffalo (with Carol Burnett), Lotta, Lotta, Lotta, Lotta at the 23rd Floor, and Elliot, the Strange, City of Angels (1990 Tony and Drama Desk awards), Les Miserables (original cast; Helen Hayes Award nomination), and Grease (original Broadway production). Her off-Broadway credits include A...My Name is Alice, Coming Attractions, Jerry’s Girls, and Pins and Needles. Screen credits include Keys to Tulsa (with Eric Stoltz and James Spader), “Mad About You,” “Law & Order,” “Love and War,” and “The Tonight Show.” Graff sings on the recordings of Les Miserables (Broadway cast), City of Angels, and Doing Something Right–Randy Groff Sings Cy Coleman.

MARC KUDISCH* (George Kudrisch) is on leave from his role as Gaston in the Broadway production of Beauty and the Beast. His Broadway credits also include Reuben in Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat (U.S. cast recording). He played Conrad Birdie in the recent national tour of Bye Bye Birdie (with Tommy Tune and Ann Reinking), a role he reprised for the Hallmark/ABC TV film directed by Gene Saks (cast recording). His off-Broadway credits include Tamara: The Living Movie and Quiet on the Set. Regional theater credits include Shenandoah at the Goodspeed Opera House, Phantom at the Northshore Music Theatre, Picnic at the Cadillac Theatre Company, and, most recently, the world premiere of the musical Jekyll and Hyde at the Starlight Theatre in Kansas City. Television credits include “Another World” and the role of Ralph Barnes on “Loving.”

GEORGE MAGUIRE* (Ensemble, Understudy) has acted for 34 years on and off Broadway, with regional theaters around the country, and in television and film. He was The Host in the Broadway production of The Canterbury Tales, appeared in the national company of Nicholas Nickleby, and costarred in The Sound of Music (opposite Maureen McGovern and Constance Towers). He received a Bay Area Theatre Critics’ Circle Award for The Prince and the Pauper and two Drama-Logue Awards for directing Equus and The Secret Garden at the Solano College Theater, where he is artistic director. Screen credits include Murder in the First, Dream with the Fishes, Heart & Souls, NBC’s Fine Things, CBS’s Stolen Innocence, and The Game with Michael Douglas.

DONNA LEE MARSHALL* (Ensemble, Understudy) just created the role of Eleanor in the workshop of the Broadway-bound Footloose. Her Broadway credits include King David, Big (in which she originated the role of Diane), A Christmas Carol, and The Pirates of Penzance. She played Grizabella in the touring production of CATS and also toured with The Music of Andrew Lloyd Webber and The Magic Show. Marshall’s credits also include Cherry County’s Chess (the role of Florence), Anyone Can Whistle at Carnegie Hall, No, No Nanette (at Papermill Playhouse), The Human Comedy, The Rothschilds, Annie Get Your Gun, Sidewalkin’, and By Strouse, among others.

DANIEL MCDONALD* (C. K. Dexter Haven) comes to A.C.T. from his Broadway debut in Steel Pier (Drama Desk, and Tony Award nominations, Theatre World Award). Other theater credits include First Night at the West Side Theater in New York, The Beautiful Lady at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles, Heartbeats at the Old Globe Theatre in San Diego, and his own creation, Chesterfield, at the John Drew in East Hampton. Television credits include “MURDER, SHE WROTE,” “Columbo,” “New York News,” “New York Undercover,” “Herman’s Head,” “Mr. President,” “All My Children,” The Betty Ford Story, Thompson’s Last Run, Homefires, A Year in the Life, and Better Off Dead. Film credits include The Falcon and the Snowman, Million Dollar Mystery, Where the Boys Are, Pacific Heights, Dave, and the upcoming films At Risk, Let It Be Me, and The Ice Storm.

JOHN MCMARTIN* (Uncle Willie) recently performed in Show Boat on Broadway (Tony Award nomination) and in Chicago. Other Broadway credits include Love for Love, The First, Follies, The Great God Brown (Drama Desk Award), the original cast of Sweet Charity (Tony Award nomination), Artist Descending a Staircase, and Don Juan (Drama Desk and Tony award nominations). He has appeared in A Little Night Music at the Ahmanson Theatre and in the title role of Julius Caesar at Joe Papp’s Public Theater. Television credits include “Cheers,” “Coach,” “Frasier,” “Murder, She Wrote,” “Law & Order,” and the award-winning specials “Concealed Enemies,” “Day One,” “Murrow,” “Citizen Cohn,” “Fear on Trial,” “Separate But Equal,” Gore Vidal’s “Lincoln,” and Alex Haley’s “Roots Christmas.” Film credits include Sweet Charity, All the President’s Men, Legal Eagles, Pennies from Heaven, Brubaker, Blow Out, A Shock to the System, and Native Son.

ANNA MCNEELY* (Ensemble, Understudy) comes to A.C.T. directly from Broadway’s Beauty and the Beast, in which she plays the Eggtimer and covers Mrs. Potts and Madame de la Grand Bouche. Other Broadway credits include Jennynaydoots in CATS (original cast), Electra in Gypsy (with Tyne Daly), and Mrs. Kenworth in Little Johnny Jones (with Donny Osmond). Television and film credits include Electra in Gypsy with Bette Midler, Disney’s Hunchback of Notre Dame, “The Phil Donahue Show,” “One Life to Live,” and “All My Children.” She can be heard on the original cast recordings of CATS, Gypsy (film and Broadway), Beauty and the Beast, and The Hunchback of Notre Dame.
JERE SHEA* (Mike Connor) has appeared on Broadway as Giorgio in Passion (Theatre World Award, Tony and Drama Desk award nominations) and Sky Masterson in Guys and Dolls. His regional theater credits include Rocket to the Moon and Time of My Life at the Williamstown Theatre Festival, Damn Yankees at the Old Globe Theatre, Ovetime at Manhattan Theatre Club, Waiting for Godot at Dublin’s Abbey Theatre, and As You Like It for the New York Shakespeare Festival. Screen credits include the 1997 feature film Brass Monkeys (PBS), Path to Paradise (HBO), the animated film Anastasia, “Law and Order,” “The Cosby Mysteries,” and the miniseries “A Season in Purgatory” (CBS). Shea received his M.F.A. from New York University and has studied at the Moscow Art Theatre School and Dublin’s Abbey Theatre.

JENNIFER LAURA THOMPSON* (Ensemble, Understudy) was last seen in San Francisco in the national tour of Carousel, in which she later took over the role of Julie Jordan. Other credits include Mary in Jesus Christ Superstar, Luisa in The Fantasticks, Laura in The Glass Menagerie, and Corie in Barefoot in the Park. She recently portrayed Ariel in the workshop of Footloose, directed by Walter Bobbie. Thompson received her B.F.A. in musical theater from the University of Michigan.

CLIF THORN* (Ensemble, Understudy) recently played Milt Gitch in the national tour of How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying. Off-Broadway and other New York credits include Cole Porter’s On a Clear Day You Can See Forever at City Center and the roles of Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. in America’s Sweetheart at Theatre Off Park, Smudge in Forever Plaid at McGraw’s, The Teacher in Appelando’s Dreams at the Vineyard Theatre, Ted in Kiss Me Quick, and James Livingston in The New Yorkers at Musical Theatre Works. He originated the roles of Roger in Topper at the Helen Hayes Performing Arts Center and Kyle in Love Comices at the George Street Playhouse. Thorn’s screen credits include “Designing Women” and Megaville.

KIRSTEN WYATT* (Ensemble, Understudy) is a 1997 graduate of the University of Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, where she performed the roles of Ado Annie in Oklahoma, Emma in Song & Dance, Gutrune in Das Barbecu, and Squeaky Fromme in Assassins. Other favorite roles include Chava in Fiddler on the Roof, Wendy in Peter Pan, and Cordelia in Falsettos.

LISBETH ZELLE* (Dinah Lord) has appeared on Broadway in Show Boat, and in the national tours of The Sound of Music (with Marie Osmond) and Annie. She has also appeared on “Late Night with David Letterman,” “Day One,” “Guiding Light,” “Another World,” and “As the World Turns.” She currently attends the Professional Performing Arts School in New York City.

ANNA MARIE GUTIERREZ* (Understudy) has appeared off Broadway in Equity Liberty Theatre’s revival of New Faces of 1952 and in the national tours of Evita and CATS (as Grizabella). Her regional theater credits include Evita and Fiddler on the Roof at Paper Mill Playhouse, Side by Side by Sondheim at Stage West, Lucy in Dracula: A Musical Nightmare at San Jose Stage Company, Closer Than Ever at CitArt, and, most recently, Louisiana Purchase at 42nd Street Moon. She is also featured on several recordings of vintage theater and film music.

DAN JOHNSON* (Understudy) performed most recently in the gala opening of San Francisco’s Ira and Leonore S. Gershwin Theatre. A graduate of the A.C.T. Advanced Training Program, he appeared in the mainstage production of The Duchess of Malfi and has taught in the conservatory. Local theater credits also include My Fair Lady (Bay Area Theatre Critics’ Circle [BATCC] Award nomination), Cycles (BATCC Award for best ensemble), the title role of The Will Rogers Follies, City of Angels, and The Secret Garden (1995 Drama-Logue Award for best actor). He also performed in Tune the Grand Up: The Showtunes of Jerry Herman [BATCC Award] at the Aleazar Theatre. This fall Johnson joins the faculty at New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts.

ARTHUR KOPIT (Book) is the author of the plays Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Mamma’s Hung You in the Closet and I’m Feelin’ So Sad (Vernon Rice Award, Outer Critics’ Circle Award), Indians (1969 Tony Award nomination), Wings (1979 Tony Award nomination), End of the World with Symposium to Follow, Road to Nirvana, and numerous one-act plays. He wrote the books for the musicals Nine (1982 Tony Award for best musical) and Phantom, as well as a new translation of Ibsen’s Ghosts. Current theater projects include the musical Zhivago and a play, Discovery of America. He is the recipient of a Guggenheim fellowship, Rockefeller grant, and American Institute of Arts and Letters Award for literature. Kopit is a member of The Dramatists Guild Council.

SUSAN BIRKENHEAD (Additional Lyrics) wrote the lyrics for Jelly’s Last Jam (Tony Award nomination and Drama Desk Award) and What About Luv? (Outer Critics’ Circle Award) and cowrote Working (Tony Award). She also wrote the lyrics for Triumph of Love, which will open on Broadway in October, and collaborated with playwright Arthur Kopit and composer Lucy Simon on Zhivago, which will be produced in New York next season. She is currently working on The Night They Raided Minsky’s with Charles Strouse and Evan Hunter. Birkenhead is a member of The Dramatists Guild Council and is a Frederick Lowe Master Teacher at New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts.

CHRISTOPHER RENSHAW (Director) directed the Broadway revival of The King and I (1996 Tony Award for best musical revival; Drama Desk Award, Outer Critics’ Circle Award nomination, and Tony Award nomination for best director); the national tour recently opened under his direction. Other recent credits include hit revivals of Oklahoma, How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying, South Pacific, and Hello, Dolly! He has directed opera around the world, including Eugene Onegin at the Aldeburgh Festival (conducted by Rostropovich), Lucrezia Borgia in Rome (with Joan Sutherland), Falstaff in Monte Carlo, Luisa Miller (with Luciano Pavarotti) in Philadelphia, and productions for the Australian Opera at the Sydney Opera House, Opera North, and a new production of Britten’s

CHRISTOPHER d’AMBOISE (Choreographer) danced in more than 30 principal roles with the New York City Ballet (1978–87) and in Andrew Lloyd Webber’s Song and Dance on Broadway (Tony Award nomination). He has choreographed over 40 ballets, including Just One of Those Things (music by Cole Porter and Irving Berlin), and has received commissions from the San Francisco, Royal Flanders, Dutch National, and New York City ballets. From 1990–94 he served as artistic director of the Pennsylvania Ballet. His television credits include the Kennedy Center Honors, “Live from Studio 8H,” and the documentary He Makes Me Feel Like Dancing (Academy and Emmy awards). D’Amboise has received fellowships from the Carlisle Project, New York Foundation for the Arts, and National Endowment for the Arts.

PAUL GEMIGNANI (Musical Director) has been the musical director for more than 25 Broadway shows, including 1776, Crazy for You, Jerome Robbins’ Broadway, Esin, Dreamgirls, Smile, and the Stephen Sondheim musicals Passion, Assassins, Into the Woods, Sunday in the Park with George, Sweeney Todd, Pacific Overtures, Follies, and Merrily We Roll Along. His American Theatre Orchestra can be heard on numerous recordings, including Sondheim: A Mustard Celebration at Carnegie Hall, Betty Buckley at Carnegie Hall (CD and video), Standing Room Only, In the Real World, and Golden Days. His film and television work includes Kramer vs. Kramer, Reds, A Little Night Music, Follies Live at the Philharmonic, Into the Woods, Sunday in the Park with George, and Passion. In 1989 Gemignani received Drama Desk and Los Angeles Critics’ Circle awards.

LOY ARCENAS (Scenic Designer) has designed Singer’s Boy and The Matchmaker at A.C.T., and The Ballad of Yachiyo and An Almost Holy Picture at Berkeley Repertory Theatre. His Broadway credits include Love! Valour! Compassion!, Prelude to a Kiss, Once on This Island, The Glass Menagerie, Face Value, and The Night of the Iguana. He designed the New York and/or world premieres of Bloom Sideways Through Life, The Baltimore Waltz, The Day Room, Mountain Language, Three Postcards, Blue Window, Three Hotels, Spic-o-Rama, and Spunk. His opera credits include Cosi Fan Tutte and Tales of Hoffmann for Portland Opera, and Elektra for Dallas Opera. He has received an Obie Award for sustained excellence in set design, a Los Angeles Drama Critics’ Circle Award, a Jeff Award, and a Drama Desk Award nomination. He also directed Flippozoids and Swoony Planet in New York. For the A.C.T. Advanced Training Program, Arceñas has directed Dark Ride and Buried Child.

JUDITH ANNE DOLAN (Costume Designer) has designed costumes for opera, film, television, and theater, including Machinal at A.C.T. She has worked with Harold Prince on Candide (1997 Tony Award for best costume design) for New York City Opera, Willie Stark for the Houston Grand Opera, Stephen Sondheim’s Merrily We Roll Along on Broadway, and The Petrified Prince at Joe Papp’s Public Theater (Lucille Lortel Award for excellence in costume design and Drama Desk Award nomination). Dolan’s designs have also been seen at The Abbey Theatre in Dublin, Theatre Clwyd in Wales, The Old Vic in London, the Taormina Festival, the Cambridge Festival, the Kennedy Center, and the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Upcoming projects include a new Broadway musical for Harold Prince entitled Parade.

CHRISTOPHER AKERLIND (Lighting Designer) designed the lighting for the A.C.T. productions of Seven Guitars (Tony Award nomination), Angels in America, and The Piano Lesson (American Theatre Wing Design Award nomination). His work is seen frequently on and off Broadway, and at theater and opera companies across the country, including the New York Shakespeare Festival, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse, Boston Lyric Opera, Hartford Stage Company, New York Theatre Workshop, Huntington Theatre Company, Lincoln Center Theatre, McCarter Theatre Center for the Performing Arts, Seattle Repertory Theatre, American Repertory Theatre, Roundabout Theatre Company, Classic Stage Company, and Opera Theatre of St. Louis, where he is resident designer. His recent credits include Randy Newman’s Faust at the Goodman Theatre, The Rake’s Progress at the Santa Fe Opera, and Philadelphia, Here I Come! and She Stoops to Conquer at The Guthrie Theatre. Along with Anita Stewart, Akerlind is the artistic director of the Portland Stage Company in Maine.

TONY MEOLA (Sound Designer) designed the sound for the Broadway productions of Disney’s Lion King, Juan Darien, The Last Night of Ballyhoo, Steel Pier, Forum, The King and I, Company, Moon Over Buffalo, Smokey Joe’s Cafe, Anything Goes, Face Value, Guys and Dolls, Chronicle of a Death Foretold, A Month in the Country, A Christmas Carol, Five Guys Named Moe, She Loves Me, Picnic, Whorehouse Goes Public, The Red Shoes, and A Grand Night for Singing. He also designed the West End productions of Smokey Joe’s Cafe and Anything Goes, the national tours of Driving Miss Daisy and Les Miserables, and the off-Broadway productions of Violet, Dark Rapture, Durang, Durang, Perdigones, Groucho, Butterfly (Goodspeed), One Man Band, and Positive Me. Meola was a sound consultant for the Spoleto Festival 1985–90.

WILLIAM DAVID BROHN (Orchestrator) orchestrated the scores for Miss Saigon, The Secret Garden, Crazy for You, Carousel, and Show Boat. His arrangements can be heard on CD recordings of Placido Domingo, Marilyn Horne, Jerry Hadley, Thomas Hampson, James Galway, Frederica von Stade, Barbara Cook, and Mandy Patinkin. His adaptations of Prokofiev’s film scores for Alexander Nevsky and Ivan the Terrible, and his special arrangement of Donizetti’s Don Pasquale, are frequently played in symphonic concerts. Agnes de Mille commissioned Brohn to orchestrate her ballet The Informer; he has also arranged dance scores for Jerome Robbins and Twyla Tharp, including Tharp’s Everlast, which premiered at the San Francisco Opera in 1988.

DEBORAH SUSSEL (Dialect Consultant) trained at Carnegie-Mellon University with Edith Skinner and was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship for study in London. She is currently in her 23rd season with A.C.T. She has been featured in numerous plays and has served as speech and dialect coach for more than 20 A.C.T. productions, including Mrs. Warren’s Profession, Travels with My Aunt, Arcadia, The Matchmaker, Gaslight, Angels in America, Othello, Hedda, Full Moon, and Oleanna. In recognition of her work on the faculty of the A.C.T. Advanced Training Program for the past 21 years, she was awarded an honorary M.F.A. by the conservatory in 1995. Sussel is also on the faculty at Mills College and UC Berkeley and is in private practice as a voice, speech, and communications consultant. She has also served on A.C.T.’s board of trustees.

RICK ECHOLS (Wigs and Makeup) has designed hair and makeup for more than 200 A.C.T. productions since 1971, including the company’s touring productions to Connecticut, Hawaii, Russia, and Japan. He also created wigs and makeup for A.C.T.’s television productions of Cyrano de Bergerac, A Christmas Carol, and The Taming of the Shrew, as well as for
many other television and film productions. He designed hair and makeup for the original production of Cinderella at San Francisco production, Hamlet for the American Shakespeare Festival, A Life for the Citadel Theatre in Edmonton, Canada, and Angels in America at Eureka Theatre Company. Echols has been on the road for the last 4½ years with the national tour of Les Misérables.

RAY GIN* (Production Stage Manager) returns to A.C.T. for High Society after an 18-year absence. He has spent the last seven years stage-managing the Los Angeles and San Francisco productions of The Phantom of the Opera. During his earlier tenure at A.C.T., he stage-managed Tiny Alice, The Taming of the Shrew, The Visit, The Ruling Class, A Month in the Country, and the original production of A Christmas Carol, among others. His Broadway and national tour credits include Les Misérables, As Is, CATS, Torch Song Trilogy, Monday after the Miracle, A Little Night Music, Side by Side by Sondheim, and Sammy Cahn’s Words and Music.

GREGORY S. REHRIG* (Assistant Stage Manager) has stage-managed Me and My Girl, My Fair Lady, and Lunch at American Musical Theatre of San Jose (AMTSJ); The Boys from Syracuse for the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival; and Hair, The Rocky Horror Show, City of Angels, The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas, Phantom, Kiss Me, Kate, Hello, Dolly; and The Most Happy Fella (with Giorgio Tozzi) at the Barn Theatre in August, Michigan. He has also performed as a puppeteer in Kaleidoscope, a Fluorescent Fantasy at the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas and in a cage for the acclaimed AMTSJ production of Man of La Mancha. Rehrig has also worked at the Pasadena Playhouse, Skylight Theatre, and Beverly Hills Playhouse.

DENISE DIRENZO (Assistant Choreographer) has performed on Broadway in CATS, A Chorus Line, 42nd Street (original company), and Sophisticated Ladies. Recent regional theater credits include Trina in Falsettos, Audrey in A Little Shop of Horrors, Yum Yum in Hot Mikado, and the title role in Peter Pan. Her directing and choreographing credits include Guys and Dolls, Hello, Dolly!, The Pirates of Penzance, Annie, George M., Funny Girl, and Show Boat for regional theaters, as well as numerous industrials and musical revues which have toured in the U.S., Europe, and Japan.

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Bar service is available one hour before the performance in Fred's Columbia Room on the lower lobby level and in the Sky Lobby on the second balcony level. Reservations for refreshments to be served at intermission may also be made, at either bar or in the main lobby, during the hour before performance. Food and drink are not permitted in the auditorium.

Beepers!
If you carry a pager, beeper, cellular phone, or watch with alarm, please make sure that it is set to the "off" position while you are in the theater. Or you may leave it and your seat number with the house manager, so you can be notified if you are called.

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A.C.T. performances begin on time. Latecomers will be seated before the first intermission only if there is an appropriate interval.

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Photographs and recordings of A.C.T. performances are strictly forbidden.

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A.C.T. is a constituent of Theatre Communications Group, the national organization for the nonprofit professional theater. A.C.T. is a member of the League of Resident Theaters, Theatre Bay Area, Union Square Association, San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, and San Francisco Convention & Visitors Bureau.

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

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