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for California & Texas
MARCH 1987

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The
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by Margaret Morley

It is twenty years now since Alan Ayckbourn achieved success in the West End. Desperate to fit him into a niche, critics hailed the then-28-year-old playwright as the natural successor to Noel Coward on the strength of a well-constructed plot, witty dialogue and French windows. Looking back now he remembers still the reviews for Relatively Speaking. "They were good reviews," he says, "but full of references to 'delicious meringue,' and the like. It was seen as light and frothy. Only in a recent revival, directed by Alan Strachan at the Greenwich Theatre, did people see the melancholy undertones and that was because, I think, the audiences were overlaying all sorts of things from their experience of later plays."

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"I don't know whether the English never say what they mean because the language is like it is or the language is like it is because they don't like saying what they mean." — ALAN ACKBOURN

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has seldom been without an Ayckbourn play, or two or three. "They sometimes come along like London buses," he says, "in groups. I used to want to try to find out how many we could get on before everyone went barmy. I think we got to five. That was overkill, so we try to space them now. One running, one starting and one in rehearsal. Actually I'm a one a year man. That's all I write, although sometimes it does seem like more."

The author of some 32 or 34 plays (they never seem to stand still long enough to be counted) which have been performed all over the world and translated into two dozen languages, considers himself first of all a director. After all, he spends only a month writing his annual play and the rest of the time as a director and theatre administrator.

He was born in Hampstead in London and by the time he was five his father, who was concertmaster of the London Symphony Orchestra, had left home, so mother supported herself and her son by working as journalist. "She wrote prolifically for women's magazines," Ayckbourn says. "She was queen of the industry. And while she was clicking away in the kitchen at her Remington I had a baby typewriter and hammered out appalling stories."

Although he didn't like his mother's eventual second husband (the local bank manager) and didn't think on the evidence of holidays spent with them that she much did either, Ayckbourn recalls that on the whole he was happy -- even with being sent away to school at the age of seven. "I learned to survive in an institution. I didn't have an obvious winning thing about me. I wasn't a champion soccer player or cricketer or scholar. I was reasonably average and made my own niche." At his public school, Haileybury, that meant editing the house magazine, writing the end of-term play and above all acting.

"Fairly early on I knew I wanted to be in the theatre. There was a slight flirtation with the idea of journalism but that was the romantic end of journalism -- by reporter scoops all. But I sort of grew out of that." So, knowing that the theatre was where he wanted to be, "I shamelessly pulled strings." Luckily, he had a promising one to hitch onto -- his French maestro, Edgar Matthews, happened to be a friend of the great actor-manager Donald Wolfit. Ayckbourn left school on a Friday and after the weekend was taken on as Acting Assistant Stage Manager (i.e., a stage manager who also had acting parts) on a Wolfit revival of Fritz Hochwalder's The Strong Are Lonely. "My training, which wasn't any training at all, turned out to be wondrous. Because I didn't know what I was doing I worked my way through all the departments: stage management, lighting, sound. It is such a technical medium in a funny way."

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Strangely enough, that first play, *The Square Cat*, was about a 42-year-old woman, mother of two grown children who makes a secret rendezvous with a young rock and roller (Aycbourn, naturally) in a huge country house. Farce had complexity ensues. “Quite a few writers start out writing very intense, very serious autobiographical plays and move onto more objective and lighter ones, but I suppose I tackled the most difficult first. If you’re a nervous swimmer you jump in at the deep end.”

With that fledgling play, Aycbourn was already delineating his territory and demonstrating that uncanny insight into the female mind. “Well,” he says nonchalantly, “it was about a mum who got fed up with her marriage. It had quite an immediate and traceable influence. If you hear the woman’s viewpoint quite a lot — which I did in my childhood — it tends to stick with you. You get slightly brainwashed.

“The acting bug wore off, probably killed by the directing bug. An actor’s job is really to control his own area. The great actors I have known were never worried about what was happening beyond their own little space. But I always wanted to know what was going on all over the place. And, yes, there is that power in directing and a kind of objectivity.”

From Scarborough he became co-founder of the Victoria Theatre in industrial Stoke-on-Trent, where he placed himself as a director/actor rather than the other way round. Of course he was still writing plays. With his sixth (in 1964), *Mr. Whatnot*, he dipped his toe into London water but it was not welcoming, and after that failure he joined the BBC as a radio drama producer at Leeds, continuing to write his annual play. *Meet My Father* was commissioned for the Scarborough 1965 summer season. “Stephen [Joseph] asked me simply for a play which would make people laugh when their seaside summer holidays were spoiled by the rain and they came into the theatre to get dry before trudging back to their landladies. This seemed to me as worthwhile a reason for writing a play as any so I tried to comply.” Two years later, re-titled *Relatively Speaking*, it opened at the Duke of York’s Theatre in London.

Looking back now, Alan Aycbourn says, “The wind was in the right direction for it. A few years earlier no one would have wanted it for London, but after years of what became known as the ‘sink’ school of playwrighting, audiences were pleased to get out of the kitchen.” *Relatively Speaking* ran 355 performances and although audiences and critics were delighted by the comic intricacies of the
borough, on the Yorkshire coast — again as an acting assistant stage manager — but thought he wasn't getting enough to do on the acting side. Joseph said that he had better write a good part for himself if that was the way he felt, and that was exactly what the 38-year-old Ayckbourn did.

He was by this time married and now looks back on it with a kind of wonderment in his soft brown eyes. "I must have been married at 18. I had a child at 19. Not so surprising, I suppose. I was an only child having gone to a public school, having never seen girls. My burning ambition, apart from being an actor, was to get married. I married the second woman I met, really." Although the family get together for holidays, he and his wife have been separated for many years. "Neither of us showed any inclination to marry again, so we never divorced."

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plot and the superb craftsmanship; they didn't realize that this was their introduction to what has become Ayckbourn country: that English middle-class territory full of husbands who don't understand their wives, wives who can't comprehend their lives, misunderstanding, adultery and private anguish. It is, above all, a territory where no one ever says what they mean. "I don't know whether the English never say what they mean because the language is like it is or the language is like it is because they don't like saying what they mean."

The "New Ayckbourn" became the annual must at Scarborough and in 1970 he left the BBC to become artistic director of the Library Theatre there, soon establishing a permanent company. He likes having a company around him and prides himself on being able to establish a friendly atmosphere. "I seem to have the knack, rather like a host getting the right people to the party. Occasionally we break each other's toys and fall out, but normally speaking, we seem to get along."

Richard Benjamin and Carole Shelley in the Ahmanson Theatre production of The Norman Conquests.

With regularity the annual Scarborough play found itself re-cast and re-directed on the West End stage. "When Peter Hall was producing my early stuff he felt it would look terribly bad for me to direct it myself and I got quite wary because it was obviously not the thing to do — but in films no one has ever said that I or I or I or I or I or I should direct their own material. The writer/director in the theatre is rarers. It's un-fashionable."

However, having directed more than 150 plays by such authors as Miller, Pinter, Priestley and Chekhov, he finally prevailed and now re-directs his own plays from Scarborough for the West End. "In general, I'm the best person to direct my plays. Of course it is more demanding than directing someone else. I really mean the bottom line."

Now Alan Ayckbourn finds himself having a two year sabbatical from Scarborough and directing a company at the National. But happy with his Scarborough empire, with the 350-seat Stephen Joseph Theatre in the Round to which daily he could walk along the beach from his large Georgian house, why did he commit himself to London for two years? He smiles and looks out of the window. He ties knots in the cord of his anorak. He unties the knots. "Sir Peter Hall is a real charmer," he says. "You know he actually said that he knew I could get along without the National but that the National couldn't get along without me. For a moment, when I was with him I actually believed he meant it . . . . He may have his suspicions about the sincerity of that remark, but Sir Peter has gone on record about his respect for Ayckbourn. "In 100 years time," Hall said, "when he's been forgiven for being successful, people will read his plays as an accurate reflection of English life in the 1960s, '70s and '80s. They represent a very important social document."

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The Taper—
A Conversation with Gordon Davidson

by Eric Wilson

In his program notes to the audience of Ghetto earlier this season, Gordon Davidson, Artistic Director and Producer of the Mark Taper Forum, wrote: “The effort to make art matter has been at the heart of our work since the Taper was founded.”

In a similar vein, the stated policy of the theatre is not to “sacrifice to a process of artistic natural selection,” but rather to pursue a “commitment to develop new work and to bring theatre to the broadest possible audience.”

Since the Taper opened its doors 30 years ago, the theatre has presented Los Angeles audiences with 33 world premieres, 36 West Coast premieres and 10 American premieres. The world premieres have included Conor Cruise O’Brien’s Murderous Angels (1970), Daniel Berrigan’s The Trial of the Catons—
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ville Nine (1971), Michael Cristofer's The Shadow Box (1975), and Mark Medoff's Children of a Lesser God (1979) — all of which were directed by Gordon Davidson — as well as Luis Valdez's Zoot Suit (1978), directed by Valdez, and Lanford Wilson's Burn This, directed earlier this year by Marshall W. Mason.

Children of a Lesser God went on to receive three Tony Awards; The Shadow Box received two Tony Awards and a Pulitzer Prize.

It takes 17 typescript pages to list all the awards that have been received by the Mark Taper Forum; 22 of these awards have gone to Gordon Davidson.

Earlier this season, Davidson stepped next door to join forces with the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Working in collaboration with composer/conductor André Previn — as well as author Tom Stoppard, who had come to Los Angeles for the event — Davidson directed Every Good Boy Deserves Favour: a "piece for actors and orchestra," set in a mental institution in the Soviet Union.

Most recently at the Taper, Davidson directed the English-language premiere of Joshua Sobol's Ghetto: a play about theatre in the Jewish Ghetto in Vilna during the Second World War; a play inspired by the defiant slogan of the Vilna ghetto: "One does not perform theatre in a graveyard."

In 1977, the Mark Taper Forum itself was given a special Tony Award for Theatrical Excellence.

In 1976, a Margo Jones Award was presented jointly to Gordon Davidson and the Mark Taper Forum "for the most significant continuing effort to encourage playwrights by including new plays in the regular season production schedule."

Gordon Davidson has been Artistic Director of the Mark Taper Forum since its creation in 1967. In addition to his 20 years of directing at the Taper, Davidson was co-producer of the theatre portion of the 1984 Olympic Arts Festival. He has staged Children of a Lesser God on Broadway, as well as in London’s West End and in Spoleto, Italy. In New York he directed The Shadow Box at the Moroso Theatre and Savages at the Hudson Guild Theatre. His staging of Leonard Bernstein's Mass opened the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.

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THE Mark Taper Forum is a 752-seat theatre with a thrust stage. Although Gordon Davidson feels it is “one of the best theatres I’ve ever worked in” and is enthusiastic about its “great relationship between audience and stage,” problems arise from the fact that the building is round.

Anyone who has attended the Taper knows all too well that there’s “no lobby,” as Davidson explains, “because they made the assumption that people would go outdoors — which is true in good weather. “But more important than that,” he is quick to add, “is that there’s no backstage. I mean: it’s a crescent, a curve. And hand in hand with the backstage — there’s no

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Animated, Davidson begins to get into the spirit of things, as if he is doing this right on the spot:

"I've punched holes in ceilings. I've figured out a way to fly things, we've crammed things in the corner . . . and even in Ghetto, for the first time in 20 years, we had a small orchestra pit — which is not really a pit. If you would have seen them underneath there, it's a small miracle . . ."

In this small, round theatre, Gordon Davidson succeeded in making waves with the very first play he produced — a work by John Whiting based on Aldous Huxley's The Devils of Loudun.

Davidson recalls: "When I opened the theatre with The Devils, everything hit the fan. Although choosing this play was admittedly "a kind of naiveté on my part," nonetheless Davidson "didn't think it would be the subject of such an outcry."

Davidson's reasons to open with this play, it turns out, were not so much ideological as dramatic:

"I opened with this not because I knew it would create a furor, whereas there are other plays I knew might. I opened with it because it was a big play — a play of language, a play of some spectacle, a play that would use the theatre space well. It allowed for the kind of gestures — physical and theatrical gestures — that I thought were appropriate to this theatre."

Gordon Davidson and the Mark Taper Forum stirred up the community from the outset with their production of John Whiting's controversial The Devils, which opened the theatre in 1967.
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Gordon Davidson and the Mark Taper Forum stirred up the community from the outset with their production of John Whiting's controversial The Devils, which opened the theatre in 1967.
As opposed to starting with a realistic play — a small, internal, psychological play —

Davidson explains that because of a "reactionary attitude," the play was perceived to be critical of the church:

"There was a hate and cry — that this is not the kind of thing that should be done in a publicly supported theatre." But he is quick to add: "It turned out, this was exactly the kind of thing that should be done in a publicly supported theatre. And it helped define who we were better than any manifesto, any document, any speech, any article or interview. Because those are only words. This was showing people: Look, theatre is about ideas..."

Here Davidson looks both amused and resolute:

"That's the one thing that I would agree with — with people who are afraid of ideas. They're right to be afraid of them, because they are dangerous."

In its 20 years, Davidson explains, the Taper has consistently tried to present socially relevant plays:

"Plays that ask some interesting and tough questions about the society we live in, about the nature of relationships within that society. And in particular, often looking at historical events — whether they were the atomic bomb in In The Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer, or genocide amongst the Brazilian Indians in Slaves. Or Murderous Angels, which dealt with Dag Hammarskjöld and Patrice Lumumba, or right now, having just concluded Ghetto. That is certainly a strain, or note — a through-line for this theatre and I'm very proud of that."

An example of a play dealing with personal relationships, Davidson cites Lanford Wilson's Burn This, presented by the Taper as a world premiere earlier this year. He feels the piece is both "tough-minded" and "as truthful as anything I've seen in terms of its view of how people interact today. How people may or may not fall in love."

In contrast to such works, Davidson refers to "the kind of play we tend not to do — which simply reassures people that everything is perfectly okay."

A "through-line" that emerges from Davidson's conversation is his concern that "the divisions in the society are becoming greater — even though the attempt is made to smooth this over and make people feel everything is okay."

Obviously wishing things were different, he states quietly:

"I want things to be okay, I really do. But I want them to be okay in a kind of valuable sense of the word 'okay.' Which is not just simply whether your budget balances or whether you're paying less taxes..."

In light of his concern for social relevance, then, has Davidson ever presented a play he would label as pure "entertainment?"

"Well," he recalls, "we did one Neil Simon play, I Ought to Be in Pictures — a world premiere at the Taper in the 1979-80 season — and we were roundly criticized for it.

Yet here, too, Davidson's own particular bias comes through:

"Actually, I was glad we did it, because Writers . . . go where they know people, or go where other writers they trust have had good experiences. This is why the Mark Taper Forum, under Gordon Davidson's leadership, has produced an unparalleled list of American writers for the stage. We like Gordon, but more importantly, we trust him.

— Marsha Norman

The building, as everyone is quick to point out, was not meant to be a theatre so much as a concert hall. There are no closets for costumes, no wings for sets, no space for the crew, no green room for the actors. Yet over the years, people have burrowed in, nested, made space — struggling for every inch — and settled.

— Rene Auberjonois
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"Neil’s instinct has always been, until recently, to go for the laugh and not to confront the audience. His perceptions were generally reassuring to an audience. And I think he has tried, over this last group of plays, to go a step further."

When asked to recall some of the biggest risks he has taken in his 20 years with the Taper, Davidson explains that he doesn’t tend to think in terms of “risks”:

“...It’s mostly what other people think is risky. For instance: a play about a deaf woman and a hearing man might be considered a risky idea. Because — who will want to see it? How do you make it work? Does anyone care? Will sign language...? It never entered my head that this was quite ‘risky’.”

When asked if this play, *Children of a Lesser God* had been turned down by other theatres, Davidson admits:

"It was even turned down by my own staff. There were people who didn’t see the play. In a calm statement of fact, he says: “I saw the play.”

Some of the risks Davidson has taken in the theatre have been on a personal level:

"I remember the experience of working with Phyllis Frelich in *Children of a Lesser...""

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**IN THE A.C.T.**

**News of the American Conservatory Theatre**

"**MA RAINNEY** PREMIERES**

A.C.T.’s West Coast premiere engagement of *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom*, by August Wilson, marks the return to the Geary stage of Ann Weldon, a leading member of the A.C.T. acting company during its early San Francisco years. A favorite of A.C.T. playwrights for her performances in *The Rose Tattoo, The Merchant of Venice, Antony and Cleopatra, A Flea in Her Ear, In White America, The American Dream, Under Milkwood* and many others. Weldon also earned a loyal following as a singer among cabaret and club audiences in cities across the country. Recent years have found her playing featured roles in films and television series.

In Wilson’s award-winning drama, Weldon is seen as the legendary Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, famed as the “mother of the blues.” Joining her to make their A.C.T. debuts under Claude Purdy’s direction are Charles S. Dutton, reprising the role he played in both the 1984 world premiere engagement at Yale Repertory Theatre and the subsequent Broadway production; Nick LaTouer and Vernon Washington, recruited by Purdy in Los Angeles; Abdul Salaam El Razzac from St. Paul; Bay Area actors Kent Minault and Larry P. Radden; and A.C.T.’s Sydney Walker, Kimberley LaMarque and Stephen Rockwell.

The production also marks the first time that A.C.T. has joined forces with another resident theatre in the presentation of a play. *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom* is a cooperative effort bringing together the combined resources and talents of A.C.T.

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**SUMMER AT A.C.T.**

The deadline for applications to the 10-week Summer Training Congress, June 22 through August 26, is May 15. The Congress offers full-time professional training to college students, high-school seniors, teachers and others with some perform-
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"I remember the experience of working with Phyllis Frelich in Children of a Lesser..."
new London Theatre Museum and Stratford-on-Avon. Participants will also discuss the plays with Hastings and a London critic, director and actor. On the tour schedule are the R.S.C. production of Macbeth, starring Jonathan Pryce, the National Theatre’s King Lear with Anthony Hopkins in the title role, and the new hit musical, Phantom of the Opera, starring Michael Crawford and featuring a score by Andrew Lloyd Webber.

PACIFIC TELESI AND A.C.T. REACHING OUT

The Pacific Telesis Foundation recently awarded a $15,000 grant to underwrite a three-play subscription series for deaf theatre goers and to expand A.C.T.’s services to deaf-impared patrons.

The special subscription package offered discounted tickets to American Sign Language-interpreted performances of The Floating Light Bulb, The Real Thing and Faustus in Hell. In addition, deaf patrons can take advantage of a ten percent discount on single tickets to these performances. The final interpreted performance this season is Faustus in Hell on Saturday, May 9 at 8 p.m.

With Pacific Telesis underwriting, A.C.T. was also able to engage Audree Norton, an associate professor at Ohlone College and a stage and television actress, to direct the company’s deaf-community outreach project.

“One of our major priorities is to make the arts accessible to those who don’t normally have access,” says Sue Dieckman, executive director of the Pacific Telesis Foundation. “We were interested in A.C.T.’s desire to reach out to its community, and this grant presented the opportunity for a perfect partnership in that effort.”

A.C.T. offers its sincere thanks to the Foundation for making possible this unique program. For further information, call 415-771-0338 (TDD) or 415-673-6440 (voice).
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**WHO’S WHO AT A.C.T.**

**HOPE ALEXANDER-WILLIS** joins the company to play the role of Arkadin in The Seagull. A San Francisco native, she started her career in 1964 as a member of the Actor’s Workshop. She has appeared previously at A.C.T. as Dottie in Jumpers, Anita in Peer Gynt, Lucy Brown in Threepenny Opera and Miss Alice in Tiny Alice, among others, in addition to starring opposite Sir Michael Redgrave under Edward Hastings’ direction in the national tour of Shakespeare’s People. She has worked at the Actor’s Theatre of Louisville, The Playmaker’s Repertory Company, where she played Josie in Moon for the Misbegotten, and the Berkshire Repertory theatre where she appeared most recently as Maxine in Night of the Iguana, Lena in Missilance, Rosalind in Gregory Boyd’s As You Like It and Medea in Khakhi Medea, which won her a Bay Area Theatre Critics’ Circle award in 1986. She has also had numerous guest star roles on network television and starred in the feature film The Pack. And most proudly, Ms. Alexander-Willis is the mother and friend of 52-year-old Thoin Willa.

**JOY CARLIN** a director, trainer and actress with the A.C.T. company for many years, appeared in numerous productions, including the roles of Miss Prism in The Importance of Being Earnest, Kitty Duval in The Time of Your Life, Bananas in The House of Blue Leaves, Asa in Peer Gynt, Aunt Sally in All the Way Home, Birdie in The Little Foxes and Odile in Opera Comique. She has been Resident Director and the Acting Artistic Director of the Berkeley Repertory Theatre where she directed Awake and Sing!, Too True To Be Good, Beyond Therapy and The Diary of Anne Frank, in addition to performing such roles as Lady Walworth in The Way of the World, Amanda in The Glass Menagerie, Gladys in A Lesson From Aloe, Mme. Raneevskaya in The Cherry Orchard, Emily Dickinson in The Belle of Amherst and Margaret Fuller in
the premiere of Carole Braverman's *The Magnificent Ghost*. She has also appeared as Pope Joan in the Eureka Theatre's production of *The Girls* at the Marinere Memorial Theatre. Her directing credits include *The House of Bernarda Alba*, *The Lady's Not For Burning* and *The Doctor's Dilemma* at A.C.T. In addition to productions at the Berkeley Stage Company, Seattle's A Contemporary Theatre, the Oregon Shakespearean Festival and the San Jose Repertory Company. She is a member of the board of trustees of the Berkeley Jewish Theatre where she recently directed *Cold Storage*.

**NANCY CARLIN** returns to A.C.T. for her second season. She performed most recently with the Oregon Shakespearean Festival, where she played Ariel in *The Tempest*, Lavinia in *Titus Andronicus* and Celia in *As You Like It*. A graduate of A.C.T.'s Advanced Training Program, she joined the company in 1984 to play Hippolyta in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Frida Foidal in *John Gabriel Borkman*. Other Bay Area credits include the Jailer's Daughter in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* and Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Berkeley Repertory Theatre. She has also worked at the Summer Repertory Theatre in Santa Rosa and the Pacific Conservatory of the Performing Arts in Santa Maria where she played Myrtle Mae in *Harvey*. Miss Carlin received her B.A. in Comparative Literature from Brown University.

**PETER DONAT** joined A.C.T. in 1988. He was born in Nova Scotia, attended the Yale Drama School, toured extensively and recently completed his 7th season with Canada's Stratford Shakespeare Festival, playing the Mayor in

Ronald Eyre's production of *The Government Inspector*. In New York, he has performed both off-and on Broadway, where he received the Theatre World Award for Best Featured Actor of 1987, and with Ellis Rabb's legendary APA Repertory Company. At A.C.T., he has appeared in many productions, including *The Merchant of Venice*, *Hadrian VII*, *A Doll's House*, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *Equus*, *Man and Superman*, *The Little Foxes*, *Uncle Vanya*, *The Sleeping Prince*, *The School for Wives*, *Machet*, *Our Town*, and, last season, in *Oymp Anouche* and *The Lady's Not For Burning*. Mr. Donat starred in the NBC-TV series, *Framingo Road*. His film credits include *The Hindenburg*, *The China Syndrome*, *A Different Story*, *Godfather II* and *The Bay Boy*, opposite Liv Ullmann.

**CHARLES S. DUTTON** joins A.C.T. to appear in Ma Rainey's *Black Bottom* as Levee, a role he created at the Yale Repertory Theatre in 1984. He was next to play Levee in the subsequent Broadway production, winning a Drama Desk Award, a Theatre World Award and a Tony Award nomination for his performance. A 1983 graduate of the Yale School of Drama, he also created the role of Herald Loomis in Yale Rep's production of August Wilson's third play *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, and won rave reviews from the New York Times for his portrayal of Othello, also at Yale. Other world premieres in which he appeared are Eugene Ionesco's *Man with Bags* and Derek Walcott's *Best No

**KIMBERLEY LAMARQUE** joins the company this season as a third-year student in the Advanced Training Program. Her work so far at A.C.T. includes the roles of Natasia in *Three Sisters*, Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth*, Bianca in *The Taming of the Shrew* and Sheila in *A Day in the Death of Egg* among others. She has also appeared locally at A.C.T. in the *Pastime Cycle*, as Maxine in Spell #7 at the Lorraine Hansberry Theatre and as Calpurnia in Edward Hastings' production of *To Kill a Mockingbird* at the Academy of Media and Theatre Arts. Her other credits include New York City productions at the Mass Transit Street Theatre, South Bronx Community Action Theatre and several productions at Columbia University, from which she graduated with a B.A. in Theatre. She has also done feature film and commercial work. Miss Lamarque also appears in *The Seagull and Fautas* in *Hell*.

**TOMMY GREEN** joins the company this year to appear in *Sunday in the Park With George*, *A Christmas Carol* and *Fautas in Hell*. A third-year student in the Advanced Training Program, his studio performances include the roles of Angelo in *Measure for Measure*, Friar Lawrence in *Romeo and Juliet*, Seton in *Holiday* and Jude Emerson in *Lyre*.* Breve*. While a member of the Texas-based Park Boulevard Players, he appeared in *Blind Coma*, *Godspell*, *On丘* *Mattress* and *The Misfits*. Mr. Gremm holds B.F.A. in acting from the University of Texas/Austin.

**ABDUL SALAM EL RAZZAC** joins A.C.T. to appear as Toleda in Ma Rainey's *Black Bottom*. He is an alumnus of Karamu Theatre in Cleveland, Ohio, and a founding company member of Penumbra Theatre in St. Paul, Minnesota. In addition to his work in the Twin Cities media as a producer and moderator for Hararand and Radio Theatre for Black People, he was the artistic director for Re Phoenix Media, the Inner City Youth League, *Porter's Theatre* and Mutinta, Minnesota's first black professional performance ensemble. He has directed for Theatre 400, the St. Paul Performing Arts Center, Maestrestage Playhouse and the Pilbury Cultural Arts Center, where he did *A Murder is Announced* and *The Boys*. A sometime musician and dancer and also a camera operator and producer for St. Paul Cable Access, Mr. El Razzaq's other stage credits include performances at Foot of the Mountain, Theatre in the Round, History Theatre of St. Paul and *Godfather II*, as well as ten seasons as an actor and director at Penumbra. He has also appeared in the earlier August Wilson drama *Black Hart* and *The Sacred Hills* as Solomon and Jarrey as Turno.

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Chicken. His Off-Broadway credits include The Great White Hope, Miss Julie, Pantomime, The Lower Depths, Baal and The Blacks. He is currently working with Tri-Star Pictures on a screenplay of his life story and an autobiography due out late this year. A lover of Shakespeare, Mr. Dutton performs a one-man show on the life of Ira Aldridge, the 19th-century black Shakespearean actor.

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TIMOTHY GREER joins the company this year to appear in Sunday in the Park With George, A Christmas Carol and Faustus in Hell. A third-year student in the Advanced Training Program, his studio performances include the roles of Angelo in Measure for Measure, Frat Lawrence in Romeo and Juliet, Seton in Holiday and Jude Emerson in Lydia Breeze. While a member of the Texas-based Park Boulevard Players, he appeared in Black Comedy, Godspell, Once Upon a Mattress and The Misanthrope. Mr. Greer holds B.F.A. in acting from the University of Texas/Austin.

KIMBERLY LAMARQUE joins the company this season as a third-year student in the Advanced Training Program. Her studio work at A.C.T. includes the roles of Natasha in Three Sisters, Lady Macbeth in Macbeth, Bianca in The Taming of the Shrew and Shelia in A Day in the Death of Joe Egg. Among others. She has appeared locally at A.C.T. in The Passion Cycle, as Maxine in Spill #7 at the Lorraine Hansberry Theatre and as Calpurnia in Edward Hastings's production of To Kill a Mockingbird at the Academy of Media and Theatre Arts. Her other credits include New York City productions at the Mass Transit Street Theatre, South Bronx Community Action Theatre and several productions at Columbia University, from which she graduated with a B.A. in Theatre Arts. She has also done feature film and commercial work. Miss Lamarque also appears in The Seagull and Faustus in Hell.
with the bedazzling San Francisco Mime Troupe, touring with award-winning productions of The Minstrel Show and D'Amant Militaire while appearing in local shows and eventually serving as a writer for the collective. He continued his political involvement as an original member of the Diggers, and was central in the creation of the CITTA Neighborhood Arts Program, spawning Make-A-Circus and Talespinners. Moving to lightweight stage roles, he appeared in productions of The Little Foxes, The Water Engine and Are You Now or Have You Ever Been?, among others. In addition to his work in television and film, most notably the role of Inspector Falcon in the Emmy-winning PBS special The People vs. Dan White, Mr. Minault has directed for the stage and recently appeared in Burial Child at the Magic Theatre, and Les Blancs at the Lorraine Hansberry Theatre. He is currently starring as the private eye in Steve Dobbs' daytime serial Cool Heat of the City.

NICK LA TOUR joins the company to appear as Collier in Ma Rainey's Black Bottom. His only previous San Francisco appearance was as a singer with Richie Cole and his band at a Great American Music Hall Christmas concert in 1986. In New York, he appeared on Broadway in Neil Simon's God's Favorite and at Lincoln Center in Swing Blues. His other credits include The Blacks at St. Mark's Playhouse, Hell and Heaven's Agreement with the Negro Ensemble Company, The Old Glory at Theatre De Lys, Ceremony In Dark Old Men with New York Street Theatre and Prisons, and the European tour of Langston Hughes' Jaco. Last year, he was featured in the premiere production of Shout Up a Morning at the La Jolla Playhouse and the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C. His film credits include The Out-Of-Sentai, Pursuit of Happiness and Shaft's Big Score. His many television series appearances include The Jeffersons, Good Times, What's Happening, Roots, As the World Turns, Quincy, Hill Street Blues, Highway to Heavens and the upcoming Houston Knights. He has also appeared in a Banka commercial with Lena Horne and a 1983 Clío Award-winning MCI Telephone commercial. Mr. La Tour studied at the American Community Theatre in New York City and at Mexico City College, Mexico City.

ROBIN GOODEN NORDLUND is a third year student in the Advanced Training Program. She joins the company this year to appear in A Christmas Carol, The Seagull and Faustus In Hell. Last summer she performed at the Berkeley Shakespeare Festival as Phoebe in As You Like It, Virgilia in Coriolanus and Ariel in The Tempest. Further Shakespearean experience came with her appearances as the Valley Shakespeare Festival as Helena in A Midsummer Night's Dream and Silvia in Two Gentlemen of Verona. While a student at A.C.T., she appeared in Twelfth Night, King Lear, Hamlet, Tartuffe and Three Sisters. She has also worked at the Bowery Theatre and Lambs Theatre in California, and the Gaslight Dinner Theatre and Theatre Tulsa in Oklahoma. Miss Nordl holds a Bachelor of Music Education from the University of Tulsa.

WILLIAM PATTERSON is now in his 28th season with A.C.T., having joined the company in 1967 to play James Tyrone in Long Day's Journey into Night. A graduate of Brown University, Mr. Paterson served in the army for four years before starting his professional acting career in a summer stock company. He appeared for at least part of every season for twenty years at the Cleveland Play House, taking time out for live television, films and four national tours with his own one-man show which he has performed in 32 states of the Union and at the U.S. Embassy in London. His major roles for A.C.T. include You Can't Take It With You, Jum- pers, The Matchmaker (U.S.R. tour), The Cir- cle, All the Way Home (Japan tour), Burial Child, Haunted Landings, The Gin Game, Dial "M" For Murder and Painting Churches. Last season he appeared in Opera Comique, the 35th anniversary of A Christmas Carol, a role he originated. You Never Can Tell and The Lady's Not For Burning. He presently serves as a member of the San Francisco Arts Commission and is a newly-elected member of the Board of Trustees of A.C.T.

KEN RUTA was an original member of the company that opened at the Geary Theatre in 1967 and appeared with A.C.T. for six consecutive seasons thereafter. He returned in 1982 to direct Lost after starring in the Tony Award-winning Broadway production The Elephant Man in 1980. He was also an original member of the company Sir Tyrone Guthrie chose for the theatre he founded in Minnesota, acting in 1982, a reader's theatre project that he wrote and directed took first place in a national university forensics competition. He has been a national finalist in dramatic interpretation in nationwide competition, and in 1985 he received California's first place in overall speaking and interpretive skills, winning the title of "Top Overall Speaker." He is currently a speech and debate coach at San Francisco State and other campuses.

STEPHEN ROCKWELL joins the company this year as a third year student in the Advanced Training Program. For the past two years he has appeared in several A.C.T. studio productions, including The Three Sisters as Chebutykin, King Lear as Edgar, Tartuffe as Orgon, Ah, Wilmington! as Nat Miller and Ic Egg as Freddie. Last summer at the Valley Shakespeare Festival he performed the role of Gratianio in The Merchant of Venice and the Duke in Don Quixote. A graduate of Vassar Col- lege with an A.B. in Drama, he has also worked for the Peterborough Players in New Hampshire, the Quasi Theatre in New York City, and at Playwright's Horizons, where he served as an assistant stage manager under director James Lapine in the first production of March of the Faithless. Mr. Rockwell also appears in The Seagull and Faustus in Hell this season.

LARRY P. RADDEN is a new member of the A.C.T. company. He has been seen by Bay Area audiences in productions at San Francisco State University and the East Bay Center of Performing Arts. A Theatre Arts and Speech Communications graduate of San Francisco State, Mr. Radden is also a debate and forensics expert
NICK LA TOUR joins the company to appear as Cotlier in McRaney's Black Bottom. His only previous San Francisco appearance was as a singer with Richie Cole and his band at a Great American Music Hall Christmas concert in 1986 in New York, he appeared on Broadway in Neil Simon's God's Favorite and at Lincoln Center in Wavy Blues. His other credits include The Black at St. Mark's Playhouse, Hell and Heaven's Agreement with the Negro Ensemble Company, The Old Glory at Theatre De Lys, Company in Dark Old Men with New York Street Theatre and Prisons, and the European tour of Langston Hughes' Jerico. Last year, he was featured in the premiere production of Shout Up a Morning at the La Jolla Playhouse and the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C. His film credits include The Out Of-Towners, Pursuit of Happiness and Shaft's Big Score. His many television series appearances include The Jeffersons, Good Times, What's Happening, Roots, As the World Turns, Quincy, Hill Street Blues, Highway to Heavens and the upcoming Houston Knights. He has also appeared in a Sanka commercial with Lena Horne and a 1983 Clio Award-winning MCI Telephone commercial. Mr. La Tour studied at the American Community Theater in New York City and at Mexico City College, Mexico City.

with the hedging San Francisco Mime Troupe, touring with award-winning productions of The Minstrel Show and L'Amant Militaire while appearing in local shows and eventually serving as a writer for the collective. He continued his political involvement as an original member of the Diggers, and was central in the creation of the CETA Neighborhood Arts Program, spawning Make-A-Circus and Talespinners. Moving to legitimate stage roles, he appeared in productions of The Little Foxes, The Water Engine and Are You Now or Have You Ever Been?, among others. In addition to his work in television and film, most notably the role of Inspector Falzone in the Emmy Award-winning PBS special The People vs. Dan White, Mr. Minault has directed for the stage and recently appeared in Burial Child at the Finn Theatre and Les Blancs at the Lorraine Hansberry Theatre. He is currently starring as the private eye in Steve DeBret's daytime serial Cool Heat of the City.

ROBIN GOODRIN NORDLI is a third year student in the Advanced Training Program. She joins the company this year to appear in A Christmas Carol, The Seagull and Tautus in Hell. Last summer she performed at the Berkeley Shakespeare Festival as Phoebe in As You Like It, Virginia in Cymbeline and Ariel in The Tempest. Further Shakespearean experience came with her appearances at the Valley Shakespeare Festival as Helena in A Midsummer Night's Dream and Sylvia in Two Gentlemen of Verona. While a student at A.C.T., she appeared in Twelfth Night, King Lear, Hay Fever, Tartuffe and Three Sisters. She has also worked at the Bowery Theatre and Lamb's Theatre in California, and the Gaslight Dinner Theatre and Theatre Tulsa in Oklahoma. Miss Nordli holds a Bachelor of Music Education from the University of Tulsa.

KENT MINAULT joins the company for the first time to appear as Irvin in McRaney's Black Bottom. A graduate of the University of Rochester, he began his acting career in 1965 and in 1982, a reader's theatre project that he wrote and directed took first place in a national university forensics competition. He has been a national finalist in dramatic interpretation in nationwide competition, and in 1985 he received California's first place in overall speaking and interpretive skills, winning the title of "Top Overall Speaker". He is currently a speech and debate coach at San Francisco State and other campuses.

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LARRY P. RADDEN is a new member of the A.C.T. company. He has been seen by Bay Area audiences in productions at San Francisco State University and the East Bay Center of Performing Arts. A Theatre Arts and Speech Communications graduate of San Francisco State, Mr. Radden is also a debate and forensics expert and in 1987 appeared with A.C.T. for six consecutive seasons thereafter. He returned in 1982 to direct Lost after starring in the Emmy Award-winning Broadway production The Elephant Man in 1980. He was also an original member of the company Steven Guthrie chose for the theatre he founded in Minnesota, acting
appeared most recently in the Magic Theatre production Aunt Dan and Lemon as Father/Freddie/Jasper. He appeared previously with the Magic as Carl Jung in The Couch, Lev in Fire at Lance Park, Zeus in Europa and Mison Roshi in The Man Who Killed Buddha. He was also seen in recent productions at the Eureka Theatre as Mr. Peachum in Threepenny Opera and as Dan Grady and O'Malley in Caedonia. A veteran actor who has appeared on both coasts and abroad, Mr. Shearer has worked locally with the San Jose Repertory Company, the Berkeley Shakespeare Festival and the Berkeley Stage Company. He won a Bay Area Theatre Critics' Circle award for his performance as the Song and Dance Man in Tomfoolery.

LANNY STEPHENS is a new company member and a second-year student in the Advanced Training Program. While at A.C.T., she performed in studio productions as Olga in Three Sisters, Dorine in Tartuffe, General in King Lear and Marta Boll in The Physicists. She has appeared most recently as Sister in Paul Steiner's Looking in the Dark for, directed by Robert Woodruff at the Bay Area Playwrights Festival last summer. A graduate of the University of Texas/Austin with a B.A. in Drama, Miss Stephens has also appeared at the Golden Spike Repertory Theatre, the University of Texas Summer Repertory Theatre and in several university mainstage productions.

HOWARD SWAIN came to San Francisco in 1976 from the University of Idaho. Following a tour with the New Shakespeare Company he worked with the Magic Theatre, Eureka Theatre, One Act Theatre, San Francisco Repertory Company and Overton Theatre. In 1982 he joined the Berkeley Shakespeare Festival and has also performed for the Berkeley Jewish Theatre, San Jose Repertory Company and the Berkeley Repertory Theatre where he appeared as Crow in The Thirteenth Crime, receiving a Bay Area Critics' Circle Award for best performance in a musical. He joins the company following Oregon Shakespearean Festival productions of As You Like It, Three-Penny Opera and The Tempest as Caliban. Mr. Swain's other credits include roles in Partners in Crime and Hill St. Blues on network television, as well as the upcoming film Cherry 2000. He is happy to be back in San Francisco and is especially honored to be working with A.C.T.

SYDNEY WALKER is a forty-year veteran of stage, film and television, having performed in some 236 productions since 1946. The Philadelphia native trained with Jasper Deeter at the Hedgerow Theatre in Moylan, Pennsylvania, and from 1963 to 1969 was a leading actor with the APA Repertory Company in New York City under the direction of Ellis Rabb. He also appeared for three seasons with the Lincoln Center Repertory Company under Jules Irving. In 1974, Mr. Walker joined A.C.T. and has since performed in forty-eight productions including The Matchmaker (U.S.S.R. tour), Peer Gynt, The Circle, The National Health, A Christmas Carol, The Chalk Garden, Lost Angels Fall, The School for Wives and Translations. He has appeared on television in such serials as The Guiding Light and The Secret Storm, acted in the film Love Story, and performed the voice of Papa Ewok in the television movie, The Ewok Adventure. Mr. Walker was narrator for the KQED-TV series New York Master Chef and teaches Auditioning in A.C.T.'s Conservatory.

VERNON WASHINGTON has worked in show business as a writer, director, producer and actor for over 40 years. His most recent appearance on the stage was in Trilogy Blue at the Los Angeles Actors Theatre in 1978, which followed featured roles in both the national tour and Broadway run of the Harlem musical revue Bubbling Brown Sugar. In recent years, he has appeared on televised episodes of Hill St. Blues, Fame, Falcon Crest, Roots and in the recurring role of Lenox on The Jeffersons. He has also performed in the films Friday the 13th, The Last Starfighter and The Hustler. Beginning in the Army's special services division as a writer of morale boosting skits and musicals during WWII, Mr. Washington followed his tour of duty with actor training at the Wolter School of Speech and Drama and small roles Off-Broadway until he was cast as a series regular on The Naked City. While in New York he appeared on stage in A Raise in the Sun, Of Mice and Men, The Duchess and The Colonel. The Founder of New York's West End Repertory Theatre, Mr. Washington is also Assistant Professor of Drama at Staten Island Community College.

ANN WELDON returns to play the role of Ma Rainey on the Geary stage, where she was seen in more than a dozen A.C.T. repertory productions during the company's early years in San Francisco.
LANNY STEPHENS is a new company member and a third year student in the Advanced Training Program. While at A.C.T., she performed in studio productions as Olga in Three Sisters, Doctor in Tartuffe, German in King Lear, and Marta Boll in The Physicists. She has appeared most recently as Sister in Paul Bernstein's Looking in the Dark for, directed by Roger Weidruflf at the Bay Area Playwrights Festival last summer. A graduate of the University of Texas/Austin with a B.A. in Drama, Miss Stephens has also appeared at the Golden Spire Repertory Theatre, the University of Texas Summer Repertory Theatre and in several university mainstage productions.

HOWARD SWAIN came to San Francisco in 1975 from the University of Idaho. Following a tour with the New Shakespeare Company, he worked with the Magic Theatre, Eureka Theatre, One Act Theatre, San Francisco Repertory Company and Overtone Theatre. In 1982 he joined the Berkeley Shakespeare Festival and has also performed for the Berkeley Jewish Theatre, San Jose Repertory Company and the Berkeley Repertory Theatre where he appeared as Crow in The Thirteenth Citrus, receiving a Bay Area Critics' Circle Award for best performance in a musical. He joins the company following Oregon Shakespearean Festival productions of As You Like It, Three Penny Opera and The Tempest as Caliban. Mr. Swain's other credits include roles in Partners in Crime and Hill St. Blues on network television, as well as the upcoming film Cherry 2000. He is happy to be back in San Francisco and is especially honored to be working with A.C.T.

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Francisco. Among them were Dorine in Tartuffe, chairmaid in Antony and Cleopatra, Nicky in The Merchant of Venice, Polly Carver in Under Milkwood, and Serafina in The Rose Tattoo. Under the late Gower Champion's direction, she was featured as Serrita in A Fisa in Her Ear at the Geary and later on Broadway during A.C.T.'s national tour. Equally accomplished as a singer, she has been widely praised by critics for her distinctive song stylings in clubs and cabarets across the country. Her feature film appearances include The Lonely Guy, I'm Dancing as Fast as I Can, Serial, The Big Bus, Youngblood and Shampoo. Television audiences have seen her in such movies, specials and mini-series as Roots, Woman Called Moses, Sidney Short, The Comedy Factory and The Incredible Hulk. Among her guest appearances on TV series are roles on Hunter, Nine to Five, The Bob and2 Carol Show, After Maysy and George Burns' Comedy Week. A native of Oklahoma, Ann Velton has been a Californian since the age of nine, when her family moved to Bakersfield. She is also a member of her father who directed his church choir. Her sister, Maxine Velton is also a singer who appears in clubs throughout the country.

KEVIN HAN YEE makes his first appearance at A.C.T. as Medvedenko in The Seagull. He may be remembered by filmgoers for his role as Paul Pang in A Crow's Nest, the first American feature film shot in the People's Republic of China. But people who like to laugh see him regularly as a founding member of the award-winning improvisational group The National Theater of the Deranged. As a stage actor, he performed the role of Reynolds in last season's 807 Crockett at the San Jose Repertory Company and originated the part of Victor in Ken Pi, which was presented at the 8th Bay Area Playwrights Festival. Mr. Yee is a member of the American Theater Company and has performed in their production of F.O.B. as Dale, which also toured, Paper Angels as Lew and Golden Lanterns as Tommy Lee. In addition, he appeared in Intacte-Intakte II and understudied both roles in The Dance and the Railroad. Most recently, he hosted the Bruce Lee Special on KVU. His other television credits include KQED's Chinese New Year — Year of the Ox Telecast, KRON's Buster and Me and local commercials.

MAUD WINCHESTER recently performed in Wallace Shaw's controversial Aunt Dan and Lemon, playing the role of Lemon in the opening production of the Magic Theatre's twentieth season. Her other plays with the Magic include Genius, directed by Albert Akakurasco, for which she won Drama-Louge and Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Awards, Sisler Joseph and ACT'80.

Slate's. On the East Coast, she has worked Off-off and Off-Broadway, most recently with Women's Interart and the Harvard-Radcliffe Summer Theatre. In the Cannes Award-winning feature film Dirty, she played the character of Doris Robinson. Ms. Winchester has trained as both the Summer Training Congress and the Young Conservatory at A.C.T.

EDWARD HASTINGS (Artistic Director), a graduate of Yale College and the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art and a founding member of A.C.T., whose productions of Charley's Aunt and Our Town were seen during the company's first two San Francisco seasons, has staged many shows for A.C.T. since 1965, including The Time of Your Life, The House of Blue Leaves, All the Way Home and Fifth of July. In 1972, he founded the A.C.T. Plays-in-Progress program, devoted to the development and production of new writing. During the summer of 1985, Mr. Hastings served as a resident director at the Eugene O'Neill Playwrights Conference in Connecticut and taught acting in 1984 at the Shanghai Drama Institute as part of the Theatre Bridge Program between A.C.T. and the Shanghai Theatre. Off-Broadway, he co-produced The Unseen Happiness of Seven and directed the national company of The Glass Menagerie. He staged the American production of Shakespeare's People starring Sir Michael Redgrave, directed the Australian premiere of The Nod at Baltimore, and restaged his A.C.T. production of Sam Shepard's Buried Child in New-British Columbia, and directed The Tempest at the Oregon Shakespearean Festival and 807 Crockett for San Jose Repertory Company.

JOHN SULLIVAN (Managing Director) joins A.C.T. as part of the new team that will lead the company into its third decade. With a background encompassing arts administration, fundraising, theatre production, directing, writing and extensive experience in the communications field, he is A.C.T.'s chief administrative and financial officer. Prior to his most recent position as senior advertising associate specializing in corporate communications at Winer Wagner & Associates, he served for two years as a deputy director of programs at the California Arts Council, overseeing the awarding of $34 million in grants to more than 800 artists and arts institutions. From 1979 through 1983, he headed John Sullivan Communications in Lander, WY. In the late 1970s, he spent three seasons at Los Angeles' Mark Taper Forum, where he produced and directed plays in the theatre's Forum Laboratory and directed on its main stage. His work in films includes educational projects, three special films for national Emmy Award broadcasts and national commercials. He was a member of the Advisory Board for last June's San Francisco New Vaudeville Festival and, in association with the Magic Theatre, produced The Detective, a collaboration between Joseph Chaikin and Vaudeville Nouveau, in 1985. Among his writings are The National Outdoor Leadership School's Wilderness Guide, published by Simon and Schuster in 1983, and numerous articles for major magazines and newspapers. He is married to Monica Buchwald Sullivan, an attorney. They have two children.

LAWRENCE HECHT (Conservatory Director) continues this year as head of A.C.T.'s Advanced Training Program. In addition to staging such A.C.T. productions as The Dolly, Troubadours and Night and Mother, he has also served as resident director and Director of Acting Training for the Pacific Conservatory of the Performing Arts in Santa Maria, Calif., where he was Lawrence Baraka and Bus Stop. This will be Mr. Hecht's 9th season with A.C.T. A graduate of the University of San Francisco and A.C.T.'s Advanced Training Program, Mr. Hecht has directed numerous productions for the Plays-in-Progress Series and is an instructor in the Advanced Training Program. He is also a member of the acting company and has performed in more than 25 productions with A.C.T. including The National Health, The Visit, Buried Child, Night and Day, The Three Sisters, Happy Landings, The Holdup and Sunday in the Park with George.

DENNIS POWERS (Communications Director) joined A.C.T. in 1969, after six years at the Oakland Tribune, where he was Book Review Editor and Associate Drama Editor, and a season at Stanford Repertory Theatre, where he was Associate Managing Director. After serving as A.C.T. Press Representative, he was made General Director William Ball's executive assistant and, later, Dramaturg and Artists and Repertory Director, collaborating with Ball on new translations or adaptations of such classic works as Oedipus Rex, Cynara de Bergerac, The Cherry Orchard and The Bourgeois Gentleman.
Francisco. Among them were Dorine in Tartuffe, Chairman in Antony and Cleopatra, Nerissa in The Merchant of Venice, Polly Garter in Under Milkwood, and Serafina in The Rose Tattoo. Under the late Gower Champion’s direction, she was featured as Serrita in A Flea in Her Ear at the Geary and later on Broadway during A.C.T.’s national tour. Equally accomplished as a singer; she has been widely praised by critics for her distinctive song stylings in clubs and cabarets across the country. Her feature film appearances include The Lonely Guy. I’m Dancing asfast as I Can, Serial, The Big Bus, Youngblood and Shampoo. Television audiences have seen her in such movies, specials and mini-series as Roots: A Woman Called Moses, Sidney Shore, The Comedy Factory and The Incredible Hulk. Among her guest appearances on TV series are roles on Hunter, Nine to Five, The Bob Newhart Show, After M.F.S.N. and George Burns’ Comedy Week. A native of Oklahoma, Ann Weldon has been a Californian since the age of nine, when her family moved to Bakersfield. She did her earliest singing under the guidance of her father who directed her church choir. Her sister Maxine Weldon is also a singer who appears in clubs throughout the country.

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EDWARD HASTINGS (Artistic Director), a graduate of Yale College and the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art and a founding member of A.C.T. whose productions of Charley’s Aunt and OurTown were seen during the company’s first two San Francisco seasons, has staged many shows for A.C.T. since 1965, including TheTimeofOurLife, TheHouseoftheBlueLeaves, AlltheWayHomeandFifthofJuly. In 1972, he founded the A.C.T. Play-in-Progress Program devoted to the development and production of new writing. During the summer of 1985, Mr. Hastings served as a resident director at the Eugene O’Neill Playwrights’ Conference in Connecticut and taught acting in 1984 at the Shanghai Drama Institute as part of the Theatre Bridge Program between A.C.T. and the Shanghai Theatre. Off-Broadway, he co-produced The Saintliness of Margery Kempe and Epitaph for George Dillon and directed the national company of the Broadway musical Allegro. He has staged the American production of Shakespeare’s The Tempest for the Oregon Shakespearean Festival and 007: Crosfire for San Jose Repertory Company.

JOHN SULLIVAN (Managing Director) joins A.C.T. as part of the new team that will lead the company into its third decade. With a background encompassing arts administration, fundraising, theatre production, directing, writing and extensive experience in the communications field, he is A.C.T.’s chief administrative and financial officer. Prior to his most recent position as senior advertising associate specializing in corporate communications at Warner/Wagner and Associates, he served for two years as a deputy director of programs at the California Arts Council, overseeing the awarding of $14 million in grants to more than 600 arts and cultural institutions. From 1979 through 1983, he headed John Sullivan Communications in Lander, WY. In the late 1970s, he spent two years as a director at Los Angeles’ Mark Taper Forum, where he produced and directed plays in the theatre’s Forum Laboratory and directed on its main stage. His work in films includes educational projects, three special films for national Emmy Award broadcasts and commercial features. He was a member of the Advisory Board for last June’s San Francisco New Vaudeville Festival and, in association with the Magic Theatre, produced TheDetective, a collaboration between Joseph Chalkin and Vaudeville Nouveau, in 1985. Among his writings are The National Outdoor Leadership School’s Wilderness Guide, published by Simon and Schuster in 1983, and numerous articles for major magazines and newspapers. He is married to Monica Buchwald Sullivan, an attorney. They have two children.

LAWRENCE HECHT (Conservatory Director) continues this year as head of A.C.T.’s Advanced Training Program. In addition to staging such A.C.T. productions as The Dolly, Translators and Night, Mother, he has also served as resident director and Director of Training for the Pacific Conservatory of the Performing Arts in Santa Maria, California, where his directing credits include Harvey, My Fair Lady and Bus Stop. This will be Mr. Hecht’s 15th season with A.C.T. A graduate of the University of San Francisco and A.C.T.’s Advanced Training Program, Mr. Hecht has directed numerous productions for the Plays-in-Progress Series and is an instructor in the Advanced Training Program. He is also a member of the acting company and has performed in more than 25 productions with A.C.T., including The National Health, The Visit, Burial Child, Night and Day, The Three Sisters, Happy Landings, The Holdup and Sunday in the Park With George.

DENNIS POWERS (Communications Director) joined A.C.T. in 1967, after six years at the Oakland Tribune, where he was Book Review Editor and Associate Drama Editor, and a season at Stanford Repertory Theatre, where he was Associate Managing Director. After serving as A.C.T. Press Representative, he became General Director William Ball’s executive assistant and, later, Dramaturg and Arts and Repertory Director, collaborating with Ball on new translations and adaptations of such classic works as Oedipus Rex, Cyno de Bergaco, The Cherry Orchard and The Bourgeois Gentleman.

ACT 11
Wendy K. Williamson, as Director of Communications, has been presented annually by A.C.T. since 1976. As Director of Communications, he provides writing and editorial supervision for several departments as well as working with Director of Visual Communications, Edward Hastings, on season planning, production selection, and casting. His 1975 dramatization of Dreigl was presented at the Pacific Conservatory of the Performing Arts and subsequently produced by some thirty theatres and schools. In 1985, he and Williamson wrote Christmas Memories, which had its world premiere at the Denver Center Theater Company. Both Cambio and A Christmas Carol have been produced for television, Mr. Powers is a member of the 1987 National Endowment for the Arts Theatre Panel and the Dramatists Guild.

CLAUDE PUDZI (Director) directs his first production of Twelfth Night at the Mark Taper Forum and new productions of La Toruntia and Rigoletto for the Central City Opera Association in Central City, Colorado.

JESSE HOLLIS (Scenery) joined A.C.T. for the first time last fall to design scenery for The Magician's Kit and Opera Comique. Prior to his work at A.C.T. he provided scenery for the production of The Magician's Kit seen at the Oregon Shakespearean Festival, where he also designed Crimes of the Heart, Death of a Salesman, The Mystery of Macbeth, Measure for Measure, Mr. Hollis has also designed sets for Stephen Palou's The Postman Always Rings Twice at the Fort Worth opera. In recent seasons, he has designed Cold Stone, Dreamhouse and A Midsummer Night's Dream at the Sacramento Theatre Company, including Master Harold... and the Boys and Zeffirelli during the 1985-86 season. Locally, Mr. Hollis' credits include nine productions for the Berkeley Repertory Theatre, designs for The Lamplighters, including last fall's Countess Mariza and the original production of Sam Shepard's True West at the Magic Theatre. He has created scenery for the San Francisco Ballet, San Francisco Opera and Men in Black and the Civic Arts Repertory of Walnut Creek, Contra Costa Music Theater, West Bay Opera of Palo Alto, Opera Piccola of San Francisco and the Berkeley Shakespearean Festival.

ROBERT FLETCHER (Costumes) was one of the four founding directors of the famous Brattle Theatre Company in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Their first season started in the fall of 1947, making this year their fortieth anniversary in professional theatre, film and television. He has been involved in the planning and production of the productions of the Pigmog, Machen and Something's Afoot, which went on to Broadway. A graduate of Chicago's Art Institute of Technology, Mr. Seeger is currently involved in the planning and production of the productions of The Country Wife, Othello and The Inconsistent. Mr. Seeger's other credits include associate producer for the Broadway show at one time. He has designed either sets or costumes for fourteen shows on Broadway, such as How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying, Little Me, The Bubble, The Early Riser and The Little Shop of Horrors. She was the recipient of a Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Award for her work on Opera Comique.

Fever and The Un tránhished Truth; 'night, Mother at the Mark Taper Forum and new productions of La Toruntia and Rigoletto for the Central City Opera Association in Central City, Colorado.

FRITHA NUUDSEN (Costumes) continues a long association with A.C.T. After earning a B.A. in costume design from California State University at Hayward, she worked at A.C.T. as a scene painter on Hay Fever, The Visit and was Assistant Shop Supervisor for All, Wilder, The Winter's Tale, and The Circle. In addition to three seasons with A.C.T., she has also served at the Art Center in Prewitt's A.C.T. Conservatory of the Performing Arts in Santa Maria, Seattle Repertory Theatre and the Oregon Shakespearean Festival. Most recently, she served as Coordinator/Designer at San Francisco Opera's Summer Opera Season, working on The Medium and La Voix Humaine, and last season she designed costumes for the A.C.T. repertory productions Opera Comique, You Never Can Tell and Private Lives, as well as designs for the San Francisco Ballet. She was the recipient of a Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Award for her work on Opera Comique.

DEREK DUARTE (Lighting) returns to A.C.T. for his second season as resident lighting designer after designing seven productions last season, including Opera Comique and Passion Play. Most recently he designed lighting for The Normal Heart at Berkeley Repertory Theatre. His work has been seen at Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, San Jose Rep, Berkeley ACT12

ACT13
With Laird Williamson, he adapted A Christmas Carol for the stage, and the production has been presented annually by A.C.T. since 1976. As Director of Communications, he provides written and editorial supervision to the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, the Performing Arts, and the San Francisco Symphony. He served as a member of the 1987 National Endowment for the Arts Theatre Panel and the Dramatis Guild.

CLAUDE PURDY (Director) directs his first production on the Geary stage with Ma Rainey's Black Bottom. Continuing an association that began in 1980 when he appeared in Once Upon a Time, a production directed by Garry Marshall, Purdy has directed San Francisco Ballet's production of Swan Lake in San Francisco, New York, and London. Under the guidance of Director Alan Jay Lerner, Purdy has directed the San Francisco Ballet's production of Sleeping Beauty and the San Francisco Opera's production of La Traviata and Rigoletto for the Central City Opera Association in Central City, Colorado.

JEROME KILTY (Director) is proud to be returning to A.C.T. after a hiatus of seventeen years. A native San Franciscan, Mr. Kilty has had a prodigious international career directing major works of the world's great artists at home and abroad, on Broadway and Off. Equally importantly, he has been associated with nearly all the major regional theatres in the United States as a director and producer often as both. The last eighteen months, for example, he directed and played Don Armado in Love's Labour's Lost with the American Repertory Theatre, directed and played the leading role of Werner von Furst in the Missouri Repertory Company and directed and played two leading roles in Andria and The Lion with the Hartford Stage Company. He played the Doctor in The Three Sisters and Ernest in Bedroom Farce for the Hartman Theatre Company. Ross Mangan in Heartbreak House for the Yale Repertory Theatre and performed the leading role in Ronald Har- wood's new play Trinity Road for Lucille Lor- tel. Mr. Kilty is especially glad to be renewing a long association with the works of Anton Chekhov. Apart from having directed or acted leading roles in all the major plays, it was here at A.C.T. that he first presented the playwright, Long Live Life, received its world premiere with Ken Ruta as Anton. His play, Dear Lie, which has been seen often on the Geary stage, was chosen as the main event of the San Francisco Book Festival to celebrate Stanislavsky's centenary in 1963. On that occasion the Moscow Art Theatre performed the play before all the writers of the Soviet Union and Mr. Kilty was made a honorary member of that great institution where the seagull, emblazoned on its house banner, symbolizes the glory of all Russian theatre.

ROBERT FLETCHER (Costumes) was one of the four founding directors of the famous Brattle Theatre Company in Cambridge, Mas- sachusetts. Their first season started in the fall of 1947, making this year his fortieth anniver- sary in professional theatre, film and television. He has served either as actor, director, producer or costume designer in every area of entertainment from grand opera to night clubs, sometimes combining two or three. He has also served as fashion designer at home and abroad. He has designed either sets or costumes or both for over twenty shows on Broadway, such as How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying, Lit- tle Me, Wallying Harry, Hadrian VII, Missaillance and James Earl Jones' Othello. The last Broad- way show for which he provided the designs for and costumes was Doubles in 1985, which is now touring, as is the road version of Singin' in the Rain, for which he designed costumes alone. In addition to his work in theatre, he has designed stage sets for the New York City Opera, the New York City Ballet and the New York Pro Musica Antigua. He received Tony nominations for the sets and costumes for Hadrian VII and for producing in the New York City Opera's production of the musical version of Nobel Coward's Blithe Spirit. An Emmy award-winner as well as a veteran of film — his film credits include all our Star Trek movies from Paramount and The Last Starfighter from Lorimar — Mr. Fletcher's designs for A.C.T. include The Taming of the Shrew, Cynara de Bergamo, I Am a Camera, The Matchmaker, The Real Thing and The Seagull.

RICHARD SEGER (Scenery) recently designed A.C.T.'s Sunday in the Park with George. Among his A.C.T. credits are The Three Sisters, The Hollow, Hotel Paradiso, The Little Flowers, The Chalk Garden, Much Ado About Nothing, The Trojan War Will Not Take Place, Buried Child, The Girl of the Golden West, The Winter's Tale, 5th of July, The Visit, The Bourgeois Gentilhomme, Car among the Pigeons, Machbeth and Something's Afoot, which went on to Broadway. A graduate of Chicago's School of the Art Institute, Mr. Seger also directed his play for the Broadway premiere of Butterflies Are Free and several Off-Broadway productions. Mr. Seger's other credits include the Old Globe Theatre's productions of The Country Wife, Othello, Kissimmee, The Importance of Being Earnest, Kiss Me Kate and Pygmalion, the Ahmanson Theatre's productions of Hay Fever and The Unmarried Truth; 'night, Mother, the Ahmanson Theatre's production of La Traviata and Rigoletto for the Central City Opera Association in Central City, Colorado.

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EUGENE BARCONE (Stage Manager) is a charter member of A.C.T. After receiving his Bachelor of Arts degree in music, he directed the famous Red Diamond Chorus in Europe with the Army. Mr. Barcone has directed for the Plays-in-Progress program and worked on the televised adaptations of Cynoforms de Bergnez, The Tenbing of the Shore and A Christmas Carol. Recently he celebrated his 40th production with A.C.T.

KAREN VAN ZANDT (Stage Manager), now in her eighth season at A.C.T., has stage managed company productions of A Christmas Carol, The Sleeping Prince, Mourning Becomes Electra, and numerous others. She has also worked at the Marines Memorial Theatre as production stage manager of Top Girls by Caryl Churchill and Greater Tuna at the Alcazar and Mason St. theatres.

DUNCAN W. GRAHAM (Stage Manager) is very happy to return to A.C.T. for his second season as an assistant stage manager. Prior to A.C.T. he stage managed for San Jose Repertory Company, Sunnyvale Summer Repertory and the California Theatre Center, where he was production stage manager and resident lighting designer for three seasons. Mr. Graham has degrees in Political Science and Theatre Arts from the University of Santa Clara.

ALICE ELLIOTT SMITH (Stage Manager) began her career at A.C.T. as a stage management intern. Now in her eighth season, she has been the company's master schedule production coordinator of Plays-in-Progress, director of stage readings, associate director of the Ongoing Tour, Director of Woody Allen's Director of the Water with Sam Leman and Vivian Blaine. Mr. Haire joined the American Conservatory Theatre in 1971 as Production Stage Manager and in this capacity has managed over one hundred productions as well as taking the company on tour to many places in the United States and including Honolulu, Hawaii, Billings, Montana; Central City, Colorado and Santa Fe, New Mexico. He also managed the A.C.T. tours to Japan and the Soviet Union.
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ALICE ELLIOTT SMITH (Stage Manager) began her career at A.C.T. as a stage management intern. Now in her eighth season, she has been the company's production coordinator of Plays-in-Progress, director of staged readings, associate director of the Troubadour program, and stage manager for the Waterworld with Sam Levene and Vivian Blaine. Mr. Haire joined the American Conservatory Theatre in 1971 as Production Stage Manager and in this capacity has managed over one hundred productions as well as directing the company on tour to many places in the United States, including Honolulu, Hawaii; Billings, Montana; Central City, Colorado; and Santa Fe, New Mexico. He also managed the A.C.T. tours to Japan and the Soviet Union.

When, in the mid seventies, the late Dan Seltzer, a very fine actor who was then head of the McCarter Theatre at Princeton, asked me to write a new English version of The Seagull, I asked him why. There already existed many translations, and I don't know Russian. As I discovered in reading them, unfortunately, many translations of The Seagull are dated — even the excellent one by Stark Young. And some sound too Brit- ish to American ears, while others, although devoted to the letter of the text, are hard for actors to speak because the phrasing is awkward.

A good translation of a play always needs to dance a fine line between flowing contemporary language and historically specific meaning. Maybe, as the English language changes enough every quarter-century or so, there could usefully be a good new translation of everything we want to keep fresh. Anyway, what is certain is that the audience should never be aware of a translation in the theater — awareness of the text should disappear.

In working on The Seagull, I found myself always working aloud (often outdoors) with an assistant who was usually an actor taking dictation and reading back. I would look at a translation of the text from the Russian, and at a French translation, and then, closing my eyes, I would speak a phrase of text, as if allowing myself to "channel" for Chekhov into English (to use current parlance). What I had said was then read back to me, and I would edit — always aloud, bit by bit, polishing.

Notes on A New English Version of "The Seagull"
by Jean-Claude van Itallie
summed up in a single phrase. As they move in the play, the characters are multilayered, funny and sad at once, not merely at separate moments. Chekhov's plays are comedies in the deepest, most human, everyday way: the comedy of love and understanding.

As a playwright, I wanted very much to learn how to write like that. The nineteen-sixties, for those of us young and in the theatre in Greenwich Village, especially at Joe Chaikin's Open Theater and Ellen Stewart's Cafe La Mama, was a time of reinvention, of giving new theatrical form to our dreams, politics and tabus. And our work felt to us to be in marked contrast to most theatre effort on Broadway. But in the seventies, needing to explore a playwright's more traditional heritage, I was grateful to be working on The Seagull.

And significantly, The Seagull opens with a really not so bad avant-garde play-within-a-play written by an idealistic young Trepylov. His successful actress mother Arkadina, and Trigorin, her lover, a famous, more traditional writer himself, find Trepylov's "little" play unavailable and abstract. Trepylov, on the other hand, finds their popular theatre pandering. However, Chekhov himself, after all, was both writers: Trepylov and Trigorin. In Chekhov's own plays, he seems to have experienced no dichotomy between avant-garde and traditional forms. Perhaps ultimately he felt, as I do, like Trepylov who, later in the play, having gained more experience as a writer, says: "I think more and more it's not a question of old or new forms — what matters is to write without thinking of any forms, and allowing whatever you write to come straight from the heart."

In addition to his translations of Chekhov's major dramatic works, Jean-Claude van Italie is the author of such plays as Ammie Hrannah, The Serpent, Mystery Play, The Fable and I'm Really Here. His latest play, The Traveler, is having its world premiere engagement this spring at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles.
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In addition to his translations of Chekhov's major dramatic works, Jean-Claude van Itallie is the author of such plays as America Hurrah, The Serpent, Mystery Play, The Bible and I'm Really Here. His latest play, The Thunder in its world premiere engagement this spring at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles.
All About “The Seagull”

by Dennis Powers

 attribute, Kitty turned to a source that many will find unexpected — Joseph L. Mankiewicz’s Oscar-winning 1950 film, All About Eve. “It’s a direct descendent of The Seagull,” says Kitty, “if not a steal. In fact, The Seagull could almost be called All About Nina.”

Like the Mankiewicz film, which is people with writers, actors, directors and producers, and unfolds in a theatrical milieu, Chekhov’s 1895 comedy has a pair of actresses as two of its principal characters. Kitty sees a number of striking parallels between the fading Russian stage star Arkadina, played in this production by Hope-Alexander Willis, and the film’s Margo Channing, memorably embodied by Bette Davis, and between the young Nina, portrayed here by A.C.T. newcomer Maud Winchester, and the ruthless ambitious Eve Harrington, played by Anne Baxter in the movie.

“The plays resonate in terms of their settings; they echo their own periods. It’s the director who has to bring to a play the contemporary point of view, channeling the work through his artistic experience and finding an artistic context that is immediately accessible to a contemporary audience.”

In addition to having directed all of Chekhov’s major plays — including Uncle Vanya, Three Sisters, The Cherry Orchard and Ivanov — and acted in most of them, Kitty is also the author of Long Live Life, the biographical drama about Chekhov that had its world premiere at A.C.T. in 1968 with Ken Ruta in the role of the great Russian playwright. A.C.T. audiences will also recall Kitty as the author, director and occasional leading man of Dear Liar, the internationally successful play in which Bernard Shaw and his favorite actress, Mrs. Patrick Campbell, comprise the entire cast of characters.

Kitty likens the fact that the conflicts between generations in The Seagull are underscored by the contrasting acting styles of the older and younger players: “Maud has a very different acting style from Hope. It’s totally modern,” he points out. “And Howard Swain, who plays the young writer Treplyov, has a more contemporary style than either Peter Donat, as the older writer Trigorin, or Ken Ruta, who plays Dr. Dorn.”

He chose Jean-Claude van Italie’s English version of The Seagull after reading at least a dozen others: “It’s wonderful. His rhythms are the best and the truest. Chekhov wrote in short declamatory sentences and van Italie captures that style perfectly. His version has the spirit of Chekhov, yet the English is completely natural. We didn’t have to change a thing.”

Ken Ruta portrayed Anton Chekhov and DeAnn Marie played the beloved Olga in Jerome Kitty’s Long Live Life! seen at A.C.T. in 1968.

The director believes that because Chekhov often seems to hide certain details or facets of his characters, many people tend to stage his works as if they were Impressionist painters. “But Chekhov isn’t the least bit Impressionistic,” Kitty emphasizes. “His plays are like complicated mosaics built from tiny bits of stone and colored glass. Except for Shakespeare, I think Chekhov, from the director’s point of view, is the most deeply satisfying playwright to work on.”

A C T 1 9
All About
"The Seagull"
by Dennis Powers

I don't think there's any point in doing Chekhov today unless you try to rethink it for contemporary audiences," says Jerome Kilty, director of A.C.T.'s new production of The Seagull. "The plays resonate in terms of their settings; they echo their own periods. It's the director who has to bring to a play the contemporary point of view, channeling the work through his artistic experience and finding an artistic context that is immediately accessible to a contemporary audience."

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Vanya, Three Sisters, The Cherry Orchard and Ivanov — and acted in most of them, Kilty is also the author of Long Live Life!, the biographical drama about Chekhov that had its world premiere at A.C.T. in 1966 with Ken Ruta in the role of the great Russian playwright. A.C.T. audiences will also recall Kilty as the author, director and occasional leading man of Dear Liar, the internationally successful play in which Bernard Shaw and his favorite actress, Mrs. Patrick Campbell, comprise the entire cast of characters.

In search of The Seagull's contemporary attributes, Kilty turned to a source that many will find unexpected — Joseph 1, Mankiewicz's Oscar-winning 1959 film, All About Eve. "It's a direct descendent of The Seagull," says Kilty; "if not a steal. In fact, The Seagull could almost be called All About Nina."

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"Like All About Eve, The Seagull is about the artistic urge, which cannot be stifled if it's genuine. And about ambition, drive, egotism, vanity — all the things that are part of that urge. To me they're as obvious in The Seagull as they are in All About Eve. It's a very hard-edged play in the sense that the characters don't veil their attitudes toward each other. It's set in a decadent society at the end of an era, when people could no longer keep up the social attitudes and graces that they had inherited. With one exception, the play is also about people who face up to the fact that they're second-raters. The exception, of course, is Nina. She'll climb over everybody to become a great star, and she'll make it — until another Nina comes along to supplant her, of course."

Kilty likes the fact that the conflicts between generations in The Seagull are underscored by the contrasting acting styles of the older and younger players: "Maud has a very different acting style from Hope. It's totally modern," he points out. "And Howard Swain, who plays the young writer Trepyov, has a more contemporary style than either Peter Donat, as the older writer Trigorin, or Ken Ruta, who plays Dr. Dorn."

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An Anton Chekhov Chronology

1860 Born 17 January one of six children of a grocer and grandson of a former serf in Taganrog, southern Russia where he spends his first nineteen years. He later describes himself: "A serf's son, a one-time shop-boy, choirboy, grammar school pupil and student, brought up to worship rank, to kiss priest's hands, to defer to other people; who said thank you for every bite of food, who was often beaten; who had no galoshes to wear ... who fought, tormented animals, liked to eat with rich relatives; and who behaved hypocritically towards God and man for no reason at all but purely out of consciousness of his own insignificance."

1879 Begins to study medicine and obtains his degree five years later. Begins contributing humorous pieces to magazines under the pseudonym "Antoshka Chekhonin" to earn money for the support of his family.

1887 Writes Ivanov, his first play, which is well received in Moscow and St. Petersburg productions.

1889 The Heart Demon opens at a small theatre in Moscow and closes after three performances.

1890 Travels 6,500 miles across Siberia to the island of Sakhalin, a Russian penal settlement, where he undertakes a census of the island's population, interviewing 160 people a day.

1892 Purchases a countryside house and moves with his family to the village of Melikhovo, fifty miles south of Moscow. During his six years there he acts as district medical administrator, caring for the medical needs of the village's peasants, successfully organizes the village against an expected cholera epidemic and helps to finance and build three schools.

1896 The Seagull opens in St. Petersburg to jeers and catcalls and survives only five performances. He leaves the theatre after the third act and vows that even if he lives seven hundred years he will never write another play.

1898 Due to worsening tubercular condition he moves to Crimean resort of Yalta. The newly formed Moscow Art Theatre successfully revives The Seagull and he sees Olga Knipper for the first time playing the role of Arkadina.

1899 Uncle Vanya is produced by the Moscow Art Theatre.

1901 Three Sisters with Olga Knipper as Masha, premieres to luke-warm response at the Moscow Art Theatre. He marries Olga in a secret ceremony in Moscow.

1904 On his 44th birthday The Cherry Orchard is premiered at the Moscow Art Theatre with Olga Knipper as Ranevskaya. He travels with Olga to the German spa of Badenweiler. On 2 July, following two heart attacks his doctor administers camphor injections and oxygen inhalations and prescribes a glass of champagne. Smiling at Olga he says in German, "I am dying," and adds, "I haven't drunk champagne for ages." He dines the fluted glass and calmly turns on to his left side. Within the hour he is dead.

CONTRIBUTORS

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An Anton Chekhov Chronology

1860 Born 17 January one of six children of a grocer and grandmar of a former serf in Taganrog, southern Russia where he spends his first nineteen years. He later describes himself: “A Jew’s son, a one-time shop-boy, choirboy; grammer school pupil and student, brought up to worship rank, to kiss priest’s hands, to doer to other people; who said thank you for every bite of food, who was often beaten; who had no galoshes to wear... who fought, tormented animals, liked to eat with rich relatives; and who behaved, hypocritically towards God and man for no reason at all but purely out of consciousness of his own insignificance.”

1879 Begins to study medicine and obtains his degree five years later. Begins contributing humorous pieces to magazines under the pseudonym “Antonska Chekhotse” to earn money for the support of his family.

1887 Writes Ivan, his first play, which is well received in Moscow and St. Petersburg productions.

1890 The Wood Demon opens at a small theatre in Moscow and closes after three performances.

1890 Travels 6,500 miles across Siberia to the island of Sakhalin, a Russian penal settlement, where he undertakes a census of the island’s population, interviewing 160 people a day.

1892 Purchases a country house and moves with his family to the village of Melikhovo, fifty miles south of Moscow. During his six years there he acts as district medical administrator, caring for the medical needs of the village’s peasants, successfully organizes the village against an expected cholera epidemic and helps to finance and build three schools.

1896 The Seagull opens in St. Petersburg to jeers and catcalls and survives only five performances. He leaves the theatre after the third act and vows that even if he lives seven hundred years he will never write another play.

1898 Due to worsening tuberculosis condition he moves to Crimean resort of Yalta. The newly formed Moscow Art Theatre successfully revives The Seagull and he sees Olga Knipper for the first time playing the role of Arkadina.

1899 Uncle Vanya is produced by the Moscow Art Theatre.

1901 Three Sisters with Olga Knipper as Masha, premieres to lukewarm response at the Moscow Art Theatre. He marries Olga in a secret ceremony in Moscow.

1904 On his 44th birthday The Cherry Orchard is premiered at the Moscow Art Theatre with Olga Knipper as Ranevskaya. He travels with Olga to the German spa of Badenweiler. On 2 July, following two heart attacks his doctor administers camphor injections and oxygen inhalations and prescribes a glass of champagne. Smiling at Olga he says in German, “I am dying,” and adds, “I haven’t drunk champagne for ages.” He drains the fluted glass and calmly turns on to his left side. Within the hour he is dead.

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Gol. And wrestling with that moment where she had to scream. She had to speak. And knowing that she couldn't really speak and would make an ugly sound. She didn't want to, even though that's exactly the point of that moment. The privacy of that, and giving her the courage. And the day that it happened in rehearsal was... I mean, it was effective in the theatre, but there was nothing like that first time.

"The other kind of risk," Davidson continues, "might be a piece like Catonsville" — Daniel Berrigan's The Trial of the Catonsville Nine, which, under Davidson's direction, had its world premiere in 1971.

"Catonsville was a play that I felt had to be done because it raised a lot of questions about what was going on in this country, what was going on in Vietnam. And what is the individual citizen's responsibility to act — even if it means breaking a law."

In his 20 years at the Taper, Davidson feels that one of his greatest satisfactions was the experience of working on The Trial of the Catonsville Nine: "Coming to understand something about the Catholic left and the nature of commitment. What it means to serve and to be involved in the work of your society. And what led those nine people to risk personal safety and comfort — to be willing to be jailed for what they believed in. It was profoundly affecting for me."

What was also affecting for Davidson was the nature of his audience: "The building had around it — I don't want to use the word 'surround,' because it wasn't a surround — stationed at various places around the building there were FBI agents. How did we know they were FBI agents? Well, they had little earplugs in their ears. They were sure that Dan Berrigan was going to show up — or they couldn't take the chance that he wouldn't show up — at the theatre. There was a moment right as the houselights went down when I put on a tape of Berrigan speaking to the audience. He said: 'Hello this is Dan Berrigan speaking to you — Father Dan Berrigan speaking to you from the underground.' And those bodies leaped forward in their seats and
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---

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moved down the aisles..."

In perhaps a similar vein — when the risks of the theatre seemed particularly immediate — Davidson recalls:

"Some of the great moments are in post-performance discussions. There was a moment when we did a play called Snugge, about Brazil and the underground movement — much like the Tupamaros of Uruguay. And a man said he would come and talk to the audience about repression in Brazil at that time, in the military government. He came in a ski mask, because he couldn't reveal himself."

In spite of the offers he has received from other theatres, Davidson has nonetheless chosen to remain loyal to the Taper: "My loyalty is — maybe partly this is my Taurus stubbornness — that I refuse to give up on something that I think is incomplete. It's not that I haven't been tempted, and it's not that I don't think seriously about it now. But I worry that maybe other people don't share my passion and determination to secure for this theatre a more secure place in the environment in which it lives. I worry about it. I mean, I worry a lot about it.

"I never used to worry about it. When we started in '67 and grew — it was a very tumultuous time in the society, the late '60s, early '70s. It was exhilarating because one did have the feeling: If you couldn't do everything, you sure as hell could try to do it. You felt that the art of the possible was the sense of the time. In many things, not just the theatre."

Davidson is "frustrated by concerns over funding and over the relationship of funds to growth. And an apprehension that we won't be able to grow anymore because of the economic needs of the country, and the community."

Although one of Davidson's main priorities is to form a classical rep company, here, he finds himself hindered by economic realities:

"I am under terrible pressure to give the whole thing up. Because of the money problems. It does cost more to do rep, but it's money well spent. One of the reasons why I'm driven so much to form this classical rep company is because it's in the classical plays that the great values of other times are preserved and communicated. I think seeing Hedda Gabler alongside The Real Thing is very important for the audience. And it's also important for the actors to try those roles."

"Another aspect of this business of combining work on classics with contemporary work — I think it helps the next generation of writers. Just think! If a writer — a potential writer — only knows and only sees television and film... And occasionally sees a play, and when they see a play they only see a contemporary play: How are they going to know where they came from? And that a well-structured play of Ibsen or the character
moved down the aisles . . ."

In perhaps a similar vein — when the risks of the theatre seemed particularly important — Davidson recalls: “Some of the great moments are in performance discussions. There was a moment when we did a play called Savages, about Brazil and the underground movement — much like the Tupamaros of Uruguay. And a man said he would come and talk to the audience about repression in Brazil at that time, in the military government. He came in a ski mask, because he couldn’t reveal himself.” . . .

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work of Chekhov — or the imagination and power and beauty of Shakespeare — is something to be understood and emulated, or interpreted in a new way or transformed . . ."

Ironically, Davidson realizes that the music world has a totally different problem:

"Basically, the concert hall is a home for the 19th century — and earlier music. And it’s very hard for the new to make inroads. But by God, you can hear your Beethoven and your Mozart! Well, in the theatre, it’s almost the opposite. The classical repertoire has to fight its way in. And also, when it’s done, it’s not always done well enough. Because the people who are doing it are not used to ‘playing those notes’ enough . . ."

In addition to the classics, Davidson points out once again the Taper’s commitment to presenting totally new works as well: "There has been a tendency, certainly in the formative years of our theatre, to be there first. There’s a farm of imagination, aggression, ambition — whatever it is. And I was not afraid to try things."

In conjunction with being innovative, Davidson has been particularly concerned with "how to develop an audience and how to treat an audience." His overriding principle has always been "not to talk down to them. If you underrate them — their intelligence, their ability to try new things — you also limit yourself, in a very self-defeating way."

Candidly, however, he goes on to observe: "That doesn’t mean that your audience might not be lower than somebody else’s audience — who is in closer tune with what they want."

As to being "in tune" with what audiences have wanted, Davidson has had some surprises along the way:

"I had great belief in and great hopes for a play that we did last year called The Beautiful Lady, which was about the Russian poets who wrote before the revolu-
tion and what happened to them. The audience didn’t get it. And I couldn’t figure out why. They didn’t get the poetry, they didn’t get the sense of the extraordinary imagination that these people used. They didn’t get the form of the play in which this was delivered. I thought it was going to be a knockout. And for me, it was, "Whereas another play, like Green Card . . ."
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"Whereas another play, like Green Card..."
plays of last year — they were similar in their complexity, and in their non-linear, non-conventional structure. Beautiful Lady, Romance Language, Green Card. And it bothered me that people didn’t see that connection: what these plays were doing, and what we were trying to do.”

Following this train of thought, David-son becomes aware of a very strange paradox:

“And as soon as we did ‘night, Mother, which is a play about suicide, it immedi-
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In part, Davidson feels that audiences

For the past twenty years the Mark Taper Foram has been like a rascal child — not always good, but delightfully unpredict-
able and never dull. From the opening, with the unforgettable wild The Devils to the poignant Ghetto two decades later, I would be lost without the Taper.

— Leo F. Buscaglia, Ph.D.

are heavily influenced by television: “By the attention span in television and the way things are spelled out. It can’t help but be an influence if you watch enough of it.”

As if addressing this challenge, he elaborates:

“What you like to have happen in the theatre is that people will check that at the door and open themselves up to . . . What I try to do when I direct a play, is: I feel like I’m clapping my hands at the beginning and saying: Okay, everybody, pay attention! Tonight — everything that’s blue is going to be green — and everything that’s green is going to be yellow, or — you need this pair of glasses to look at this show or — open your eyes extra wide — sit forward in your chair . . .

Reflecting, on the broader implications

of things, Davidson muses:

“You know, one of the hardest things in theatre today is that you don’t have a common society — a common set of experiences to unite us. We’re so disparate in our activities and our backgrounds and our opportunities. And what we think and feel — it’s very hard to find something we have in common. What will we do it? A sporting event will, because the rules are very clear. A rock concert can, usually, because the music is so familiar. Everyone — as soon as the number comes on, they know it from the records and they cheer it, so they’ve had that shared experience, you know? From many different sources. And then they come together and it’s — it’s like singing the national anthem: No one hesitates. Even though you may not be able to sing it because it’s difficult to sing . . .

As he continues, once again Davidson is reflecting not only about his audiences, but also about society in general:

“To Greek times, society was very clearly structured and organized and therefore, anything that was done — the heroes were known and the myths were known. So when you retold the story, you were telling it to a unified group of people . . .

“But when I look out at the audiences, it’s a miracle — I always think it’s a mira-
cle — that by the end of the evening, or maybe two minutes into the show, which is when you usually can tell — You’ve brought them together. And they’re now — all looking — I don’t mean they’re watching the same way, but they’re all looking, at least, in the same way.

“And then when you get, let’s say, in a comedy, that first solid laugh . . . Here Gordon Davidson brings his hands swiftly together, in a loud clap. From his expression, one can tell that he is seeing the audience: he has brought them together, in the dark, and for the moment they are all looking, at least, in the same way. . . .
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Today's "Grand Old" Opera

by William Weaver

An opera-lover’s daydreams follow familiar paths. In idle moments, he may amuse himself by creating imaginary casts for his favorite works (a Rigoletto with Ruffo, Callas and Schipa!), he can assign unwritten librettos to long-dead composers and even enable Verdi to carry out his long-cherished project of a King Lear. Or, more simply, the opera fan can put himself in his mental time-machine and pay a visit to any one of the various golden ages of the operatic past: the days of the Camera dei Bardi when opera was being invented in Florence, the Caruso seasons at the Met, the heroic early years of Bayreuth. If our opera-lover does much reading about some of those golden ages, however, he may put his time-machine into reverse and bring himself hurtling back to our own much-criticized but still operatically rich 1980s. Take Italy, for example — the Italy of Rossini, Donizetti, Bellini, and Verdi. Going back a century and a half and stepping out of his magic vehicle in Piazza della Scala in Milan or in front of the San Carlo in Naples, our fan would surely be in for a series of surprises, few of them pleasant. In the first place, he would need a lot more physical stamina than opera-going demands nowadays, because for most of the 19th-century in Italy opera-going really meant opera-and-ballet-going, and an evening at La Scala lasted...
a long time. Stendhal's "Life of Rossini, unreliable as biography but invaluable as social history, describes a typical evening in the Milanese opera house:

"On February 1st, 1818, the performance at La Scala began at seven in the evening; in summer it begins at a quarter to nine. On that February 1st, it included the first act of Rossini's La gazza ladra, which lasted from seven until eight fifteen; the ballet La restaure by Viganò... concluded the performance, which ended between midnight and one in the morning."

Assuming that today's visitor to the Scala of the early 1800s is a balletomane (and also an insomniac) and therefore enjoys a long mixed evening, he might still be shocked by the atmosphere inside the house during the performance. First at all, the theatre would be brightly lighted (dimming the house lights, a Wagnerian innovation, was brought to La Scala—against bitter opposition—by Toscanini).

Our visitor's ticket, on the other hand, would be cheap, three lire, is the equivalent of less than a dollar and a half today, and with this ticket he would be entitled to sit on one of the benches. Stendhal says they were comfortable—in the orchestra. But, as Stendhal also says, our friend would find some of his neighbors sleeping during the music. And even many of the wakeful ones would not be paying much attention to the performance. Why should they? A much more fascinating spectacle would be going on in the boxes. In the late spring of 1832, the young Berlioz was in Milan, and he went to hear Donizetti's brand new L'elisir d'amore at the Canobbiana, the rival theatre to La Scala:

"I found the house full of people who were talking in loud voices and turning their backs to the stage, the singers gesticulated nevertheless and shouted their lungs out; at least so I was led to believe, seeing an immense mouth open, her it was impossible, thanks to the audience's racket, to hear any sound but the bass drum's. In the boxes, people gambled, ate supper, etc., etc."

Actually, in the boxes, people did more than that. An old engraving, entitled The Audience of the Boxes, is reproduced in Carlo Gatti's history of La Scala; it shows one lady pretending to read a book while a gentleman is clearly flirting with her. An older gentleman (her husband?) is reading his newspaper nearby. Of the half-dozen people in the box, none is looking at the stage. Stendhal, whose interest in amoré equalled his passion for opera, explains:

"A woman in Italy is always in her box with five or six people; it is a salon where she receives and where her friends turn up as soon as they see her arrive with her lover..."

Contradicting Berlioz to some extent, Stendhal adds:

"The audience is silent on first nights; and on the following nights only when fire beautiful arias occur. Those who want to hear the whole opera take seats in the orchestra..."

If an opera was successful, the audience really did listen, but such successes were fairly rare. A Milanese critic, to underline the triumph of Bellini's La straniera at La Scala on February 14, 1828, wrote: "...after many performances of an opera, I have never seen such large audiences or remarked such silence at La Scala."

The silence, of course, lasted as long as an individual number—an aria, ensemble, or chorus—afer which came loud applause, shouts, and if the composer was present (as he was required to be, by contract, for the first three performances), he was called on to stage several times in the course of each act, after the favorite numbers. On especially happy occasions the opera was interrupted while he was given a crown of laurel leaves or
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some other symbolic testimonial. Naturally, the successful numbers were repeated; at times even a whole act might be sung twice.

So much for the audience and the atmosphere, but what about the actual musical performance? The great singers of the day were now-legendary figures like Crisi, Pasta, Rubini, Lamburini, Lablace; but obviously they were not always available, and at least two prominent musical travelers—Berlioz and Mendelssohn—complained bitterly about the level of singing in Italy in the 1830s. Donizetti, asking the poet Felice Romani to write the libretto for L'elisir d'amore, said (according to Romani's widow): "We have a German prima donna, a tenor who stammers, a buffo whose voice is like a goat's, a French bass who isn't worth much..." Still, the opera was a success, even if, as Berlioz says, the audience didn't listen to it.

Opinions on singers always vary widely, and no true lover of opera will take another's judgement as valid. But orchestras are another matter. And by all reports, Italian orchestras in the early part of the last century were, at best, erratic. Here is Berlioz, describing one of the leading Roman opera houses of the period:

"The orchestra...possesses, without exception, all the qualities which one ordinarily calls defects. At Teatro Valle the cellists number...one, and this one is a goldsmith by trade, luckier than a colleague, obligé to make his living by playing chairs. In Rome, the word Simphony, or Overture, is used only by an assignee, a certain note that the theatre orchestras make before the curtain goes up to which no one pays any attention:"

From Rome, Berlioz went to Naples and the Teatro San Carlo, whose reputation rivaled La Scala's. "For the first time since my arrival in Italy, I heard some music. The orchestra, compared to those I had observed before, seemed excellent to me. The wind instruments could safely be listened to...the violins are quite skilled, the cellos sing well, but are too few in number. The general system adopted in Italy of always having fewer cellos than double basses cannot be justified even by the sort of music Italian orchestras usually perform. I would also reproach the first violin for the supremely disagreeable noise his bow makes when he raps it a bit roughly on his desk; but I am assured that, without it, the music he leads would sometimes have difficulty in following the tempo."

Mendelssohn, who visited the S. Carlo at about the same time, so doubt had stricter, Teutonic standards; his complaints are more severe:

"The orchestra and chorus here are like those in our second-rate provincial towns, only more harsh and incorrect. The first violins, all through the opera, beats the four quarters of each bar on a tin candlestick, which is often more distinctly heard than the voices (it sounds somewhat like obliged castanets, only louder); and yet in spite of this the voices are never heard together. Every little instrumental solo is adorned with old-fashioned flourishes, and a bad tone pervades the whole performance, which is totally devoid of genius, fire, or spirit."

If the ear was often offended by the average Italian performance of that time, the eye at least could receive some satisfaction. Stendhal was especially enthusiastic about La Scala's scenery. "For each scene of the opera, for each scene of the ballet, at La Scala there is a new set, and the number of sets is always considerable, because the composer, for his success, counts on the pleasure the spectators will feel in seeing new and brilliant scenery. No scene is ever used for two productions (Note: This was not strictly the case; in one famous Instance, Verdi's Nabucco was first performed with patched-up sets from the warehouse); if the opera or the ballet fails, the scenery, which is often admirable and is seen only once, is nonetheless implacably dabbled over on the following day; for the same

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Opinions on singers always vary widely, and no true lover of opera will take another's judgment as valid. But orchestras are another matter. And by all reports, Italian orchestras in the early part of the last century were, at best, erratic. Here is Berlioz, describing one of the leading Roman opera houses of the period:

"The orchestra...possesses, without exception, all the qualities which one ordinarily calls defects. At the Teatro Valle the cellists number one, and this one is a goldsmith by trade, luckier than a colleague, obliged to make his living by canting chairs. In Rome, the word Sinfonia, or Overture, is used only to designate a certain note that the theatre orchestras make before the curtain goes up, to which no one pays any attention."

From Rome, Berlioz went to Naples and the Teatro San Carlo, whose reputation revealed La Scala's. "So by the time since my arrival in Italy, I heard some music. The orchestra, compared to those I had observed before, seemed excellent to me. The wind instruments could safely be listened to... the violins are quite skilled, the cellos sing well, but they are too few in number. The general system adopted in Italy of always having fewer cellos than double basses cannot be justified even by the sort of music Italian orchestras usually perform. I would also reproach the first violin for the supremely disagreeable noise his bow makes when he rapidates it a bit roughly on his desk; but I am assured that, without it, the musicians be heads would sometimes have difficulty in following the tempo."

Mendelssohn, who visited the San Carlo at about the same time, no doubt had seicenti, Teutonic standards; his complaints are more severe:

"The orchestra and chorus here are like those in our second-rate provincial towns, only more harsh and incorrect. The first violinist, all through the opera, beats the four quartets of each bar on a tin candlestick, which is often more distinctly heard than the voices (it sounds somewhat like dubbjati castanets, only louder), and yet in spite of this the voices are never together. Every little instrumental solo is adorned with old-fashioned flourishes, and a bad tone pervades the whole performance, which is totally devoid of geniality, fire, or spirit."

If the ear was often offended by the average Italian performance of that time, the eye at least could receive some satisfaction. Stendhal waxed especially enthusiastic about La Scala's scenery. "For each scene of the opera, for each scene of the ballet, at La Scala there is a new set, and the number of sets is always considerable; because the composer, for his success, counts on the pleasure the spectators will feel in seeing new and brilliant scenery. No scene is ever used for two productions."

(Note: This was not strictly the case; in one famous instance, Verdi's Nabucco was first performed with patched-up sets from the warehouse; if the opera or the ballet fails, the scenery, which is often admirable and is seen only once, is nonetheless implacably daubed over on the following day; for the same
canvas is used again and again..." At La Scala, in fact, those were the days of the great designer Alessandro Sanquirico, whose sets have remained classics of stage design.

One protagonist of today's opera world was notably absent from the Italian theatres of that time: the director. Singers, even if they stammered or had voices like a goat's, were virtually in command of the stage and would hardly seek or accept anyone's advice on their acting. The presence of a Visconti or a Zeffirelli was unthinkable. Such direction as there was was limited to theatrical effects, for the most part - full-in to the theatre's "poet" or librettist-in-residence (in Naples, for example, Salvatore Cammarano, librettist of Lucia and Trovatore, supervised productions for a while), with such assistance as the composer, if present, chose to offer.

In his time, Verdi managed to impose his will — and excellent theatrical sense — on his artists, but the word "director" in the modern sense, appears in Italian opera posters only at the very end of the 19th century.

So far, it may seem that the present-day opera-lover has the advantage over his counterpart of a hundred and fifty years ago; but in at least one respect the Milanese audience of those historic times might have envied: the repertory.

As a rule, the operatic year was divided into three seasons: Carnival-Lent (which opened in late December, generally on the day after Christmas); Spring (which opened sometime between late March and mid-April, depending on the date of Easter); and Autumn (opening between mid-August and early September): there might also be a brief Summer season in July. On the other hand, if the impresario's foibles were at a low ebb, seasons might be abbreviated or even canceled. In an average year between 15 and 25 different operas would be mounted. Two or three of these were world premieres, commissioned by the impresario. Most of the rest would be works unfamiliar to the local audience, written perhaps a year or two earlier for some other Italian theatre. "Revivals," in the 20th-century sense, were very rare, and even rarer were foreign operas.

Like a Broadway hit today, a successful opera was repeated until it had exhausted its appeal or until the season ended. In the Autumn season of 1833, for example, Donizetti's Il furioso all'isola di S. Domingo was extremely well-received, and in the course of that season it was given 36 times. A fiasco, however, might not even receive a second performance, again bringing today's Broadway stage to mind.

Still, there were operas that had mixed receptions on opening night and went on to win the public's favor; Bellini's Norma, criticized at its premiere, was nevertheless given for 34 evenings during its first season. And a work might be hailed from the stage in one city and yet be presented, with success, in another city the following season. Several of Verdi's now-forgotten operas, like Alzina, Il corsaro, Stiffelio, though not successful at their first performances, nevertheless went the rounds of the Italian cities during their early years of life, before vanishing from the repertory (until their recent revivals in Italy).

It's hard to believe that present-day subscribers to an opera season would complain much if the impresario didn't perform any new, contemporary works; their 19th-century Italian equivalents, if denied their world premieres, were up in arms. Of course, the musical fare wasn't all Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti and Verdi. The chronicles of La Scala in those years are full of names like Generali, Coccia, Panizza, Gnecco, Cordella. Descending from his time-machine in Milan, our visitor might just land on the opening night of a work by one of the great masters, but...
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AVCKBOURN continued from page 31
ent National stage for each. One of these productions is to be "the" new play of his own. "The National is like a big ocean liner after the rowing boat of Scarborough. I'm less horrified by it now than when I arrived. I used to sit in the foyer and eat sandwiches—anywhere but back here" (the director's corridor, where in small rooms individuals carve out their own empires within the massive entity).

"It was a selfish agreement really. I

AYCKBOURN continued from page 31

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Sisterly Feelings, Scarborough
knew the National could offer me certain facilities which I couldn't get in the West End. I could do plays with a bigger cast; plays slightly less conventional. There is a chance to do a thirteen-ander with a detached house on stage. The budgets are bigger and there is an awful lot of backup expertise here—wonderful wardrobe department—wonderful wig department. Nothing is too much trouble. Of course with everything on such a massive scale, forward planning is essential. There are no last minute changes of mind. At Scarborough I write a play and go straight
he might also turn up on, say, January 9, 1837, for the premiere (and sole performance) of Persiani's *Ines de Castro*, whose reception is laconically described in the official history of La Scala as "pessimo."

The Italian audience was merciless and it tyrannized the impresario, who depended — in those days before government subsidies or foundation grants — totally on box-office success. The impresario, in turn, tyrannized the composer, driving him to write at a dizzying pace to keep the public content. The composer was bullied also by the singers, since he had to write for the voices the impresario had engaged for a given season. (One of the chief reasons Verdi wrote his *Macbeth* is that there wasn't an adequate leading tenor in the Florence company in 1847, so he chose a role suited to a baritone prototype.) The singers demanded arias to show off their voices and conceal their defects, and when the composer wasn't looking, the artists would insert numbers by other composers into his operas.

Despite all these difficulties, masterpieces somehow got written, and gradually the composers themselves reformed the worst abuses of the time. Rossini, reacting against singers who over-decorated his arias with tirisi and cadenzas, wrote out the decorations he wanted. Bellini extracted higher fees from the impresarios and insisted on taking his time in composing his operas. Verdi, once he had established himself as Italy's leading composer, carried reforms further, refusing his operas to companies he considered inferior and, with his attention to production, paving the way for the directors of today.

Still, these composers had to grumble at the conditions under which they had to work; and perhaps, if they had seen the time-machine of that nostalgic 1980s operagoer parked in front of La Scala, they would have taken a seat in it, eager to accompany our traveler back to his malign 20th century.

**AYCKBOURN continued from page 34**

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into rehearsal with it. Here I finished the play last year. And I wrote in all the stage directions so I wouldn't forget them."

He is directing a company of 21 players — including Michael Gambon, Marcia Warren, Polly Adams and Simon Cadell. The first production, a classic British 1920s farce, Tom of Money, has already opened at the Lyttelton Theatre to excellent notices. At the Cottesloe Theatre, the company are mounting Arthur Miller's A View from the Bridge, with Michael Gam-

The Norman Conquests, Berlin

bon playing Eddie Carbone. As director Ayckbourn says, "As long as I can get Miller and Gambon together and don't get in the way then I've done my job. Write to Arthur Miller if you don't like it. Unless there is something glaringly awful about the production, which I hope there isn't. If you are working beside an actor and exploring View from the Bridge you are finding things out together. You are both trying to shine lights in dark tunnels. If you are directing your own play you've dug most of the tunnels yourself and you know where they all lead."

Alan Ayckbourn, as everyone is quick to point out, is unchanged by his phenomenal success. He rivals Shakespeare in the number of plays produced each year. Yet, when he sent his latest, A Small Family Business, due to open in May in the National's Olivier Theatre, to Peter Hall and because of Hall's commitments didn't get an immediate reply, he quickly sent it to Michael Gambon, who, exhausted from television filming, also failed to respond. Ayckbourn hastily sent a copy

Confusions, Zagreb to his mother. "Mothers always say 'very nice dear.'"

But although ambitious for success, his real pleasure comes from working, though he denies being a workaholic. "I have a wonderful ability to sit and do nothing at all." Besides taking actors out to dinner, his most enjoyable times are in the theatre. "There's a lot of laughter in rehearsals and a lot of serious work on the stage." He is fortunate in that he will probably never reach his goal: "To write and direct the ultimate play. It's always the next one."
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