Broadway By The Bay

Thirty Years At The Coconut Grove Playhouse



Carol Cohan

Broadway By The Bay, Thirty Years At The Coconut Grove Playhouse is an informative and entertaining look at one of America's most significant theaters. Located in Coconut Grove, Miami's original settlement, the Playhouse has played a role in the careers of such notables as Tennessee Williams, Liza Minnelli, Ann Miller, and Alan Alda. Readers will experience an insider's view of the art of making live theater. Thirty original photographs illustrate an eclectic past featuring such stars as Gypsy Rose Lee and Henry Fonda. This book contains the first listing ever compiled of the more than 300 productions staged at the Coconut Grove Playhouse from 1956 to 1986. Also included are the names of playwrights, directors, and both local and lead actors. A must for theater-goers, **Broadway By The Bay** is for anyone who enjoys history, glamour, and just plain humor.

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Photographs By
Ray Fisher

The Pickering Press

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For Aaron Feder,
who died too soon

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Prologue
by Helen Muir

The Coconut Grove Playhouse has experienced many lives and to mark its thirtieth anniversary The Pickering Press is offering a salute in the form of this book by Carol Cohan.

It presents a colorful cast of characters from both on-stage and off-stage. It reminds Miami in general of its theatrical history.

The actual history began much earlier since the structure itself is twice as old. You might say the theater experienced its first smash hit while still under construction. It came in the form of the September 18, 1926, killer hurricane. Despite this catastrophe the Grove Theater opened as a motion picture house on January 3, 1927.

But there is no doubt whatever, that in terms of establishing a nationally known legitimate theater, it was George Stanley Engle who put the Coconut Grove Playhouse on the map in 1956. He spent more than a million dollars accomplishing it.

He said that the shuttered movie house was "going to waste" and that it bothered him and added: "I just want to do something nice for the Grove."

He said in fact he wanted to "bring Broadway to Coconut Grove."

Research turns up an odd piece of business. "Bringing something nice to Coconut Grove" were the exact words uttered earlier by the pair who built the theater in the first place.

Irving J. Thomas and Fin L. Pierce were making money hand over fist during the Boom with quick real estate turnovers. They had no way of knowing that the Bust, a forerunner of the great depression of 1929, lay ahead.

After the Bust there were words of consolation offered by a New York engineer called to assess the damage to the theater.

"Twenty-five years from now when some of the boomtime theaters are being used for warehouses this will still be a theater."

He was right.

And sixty years later, now a State theater supported by tax dollars and encouraged by corporate assistance and a strong Friends organization, it is still in business.

As one who has been involved in this Playhouse, one way or another over half a century, I, too, salute the old girl.

1

TURN back the calendar to the early 1950s, when the word Miami meant Miami Beach. Just half an hour away, across the bay, Coconut Grove lay quiet. Though it had long attracted notables like William Jennings Bryan, Tennessee Williams, and Robert Frost, Coconut Grove remained much like the bay-side village its pioneers had built in the 1880s. While the rest of Miami grew, this tiny village, nestled in a jungle thick with banyans and vines, surrendered to the sultry air and slept.

In the early 1950s local artists found cheap space in the old and faded stucco buildings which lined the narrow streets. At Bert's market shiny glass cases held the finest meat in town. The tea room served home-cooked food and key lime pie. There was a school, a post office, a hardware store, and an old movie palace. But there were no trendy boutiques, no traffic, and no tourists.

Then George Engle arrived.

Engle had always been a doer, even as a teenager in Berea, Kentucky. One Saturday in 1918 when Engle was working as a clerk in his father's general store, the town ne'er-do-well drove up in his brand new Buick. Wearing a driver's cap, gloves, and goggles, he sauntered into the store and ordered Cokes for everyone.

"What are you doing to be so prosperous?" Engle asked him.

When the visitor replied that he was in the oil business, Engle decided to change his own line of work. Ten days later he climbed on a horse and headed for Lexington, Kentucky. There, in the center of the South's coal and oil region, he

invested $200 in land leases. Two years later, he had saved enough money to buy a car, and before he was twenty-one, he had made his first million. By his mid-forties, Engle had lost everything and become a multi-millionaire for the second time. Though he held oil wells throughout the mid-section of the United States, he had fallen in love with Coconut Grove, and he moved in.

Engle did everything on a grand scale. As soon as his first son was born, he changed the sign on his oil trucks to "George S. Engle and Son." As soon as he settled in Coconut Grove, he began to change the village, and it has never been the same.

Much to the outrage of neighbors, he ordered and paid for the removal of a traffic island which had stood in the main intersection for generations. Then, on the most prominent corner of the village, where fields had been, he erected the Engle Building, two stories of gray brick grotesquely out of place in Coconut Grove.

Engle redeemed himself, however, when he opened the Florida Pharmacy in that building.

You could buy almost anything in that drug store. Funny gifts, music boxes, crystal, perfumes. Engle had five-dollar items and five-thousand-dollar items.

"On Christmas eve, the store was so mobbed with shoppers, you'd think you were in Neiman Marcus," one old Groveite remembered.

On opening day, Engle gave free ice cream to everyone. Every day, he served good food and charged moderate prices. In a village where such a place had never existed, the Florida Pharmacy soon attracted a large following of regulars. Artists gathered for breakfast every morning. Shopkeepers came for lunch. Kids dropped in for ice cream. It seemed that everyone went to the Florida Pharmacy, and though the store has been gone for years, old time residents are still talking about it.

One spring day in 1955, while Engle was having lunch in his drug store, he excused himself from the table. Ten minutes later he was back.

"I just bought the old movie house," he announced to his companions.

This building, which was to become the Coconut Grove

Playhouse, had been built in 1926 by two real estate entrepreneurs, Irving J. Thomas and Fin L. Pierce. The contractor was Albert Peacock, the oldest grandchild of Charles and Isabelle Peacock, pioneers of the village in the 1880s. The movie theater was a Spanish rococo palace, fabulous for its time. It even boasted a primitive attempt at air conditioning, which created more noise than cool air. Nevertheless, it was hailed a marvelous innovation, and "The Grove," as the movie house came to be called, won acclaim as the second movie theater on the east coast of Florida to be so luxuriously appointed.

In its earliest days, The Grove was an important addition to the Paramount chain. When it was rebuilt in 1927, after a hurricane had destroyed its rear wall, movie star Nancy Carroll attended the gala reopening. D.W. Griffith's *Sorrows of Satan* was shown, Arnold Johnson and his twelve-piece orchestra performed, and organist Celia Santon played the largest Wurlitzer in the country. The organ at The Grove held this distinction until Radio City Music Hall was built in 1932.

By the 1930s, however, the fare had declined to second run movies and serials like the *Green Hornet*. During occasional amateur shows, local children played halting renditions of "Für Elise" on the piano or tap danced. Once a year a Filipino yo yo expert thrilled the audience with "rock the baby" and "round the world." When the show was over, he was outside selling his wares.

In 1940, Kate Smith broadcast her national radio show from The Grove. During World War II, the building was used for Air Force classes, and it also held legitimate theater briefly before Engle's time. In the summer of 1953 Sid Casell, a Miami podiatrist who had been producing and directing semi-professional theater at the Coral Gables Country Club, produced a season at The Grove.

Casell, who rented the theater for $400 a month, produced *Private Lives*, *Born Yesterday*, *The Moon is Blue*, and *Affairs of State*. He paid for his productions with ticket sales, and by the end of the summer he was solvent enough for a fall season.

Casell opened in October with *Mister Roberts*, starring Broadway actor Marty Greer as Ensign Pulver. Herb Rau, then a columnist and critic for *The Miami News*, hailed the production "Gobs of fun." *A Streetcar Named Desire*, which came later in the season, won higher praise.

"Expertly done," said Rau. "Betty Barksdale is superb as Stella."

During that season an average of 750 patrons attended each performance. Casell gave up his podiatry practice to devote full time to producing and directing his shows. Although today Casell feels he was successful, he closed after only one season.

"We just couldn't continue in that theater," Casell recalled. "We had no carpeting. It was nothing to hear the land crabs come clunking down the cement aisles and scratching under the seats when they'd come in from the bay during mating season. The acoustics were terrible. The only ventilation we had was that ridiculous cooling system. When you turned the fans on, you heard nothing. The acoustics were bad enough without them."

So in May 1954 the theater was shuttered for the second time. It remained closed until George Engle bought it a year later and poured more than $1 million into renovations.

George Engle wanted the best. He hired the internationally renowned architect, Alfred Browning Parker, whose work had won him the admiration and friendship of Frank Lloyd Wright. Parker enlisted the assistance of interior designer Martha Parker, then his wife, and several local artists. Together they created what actor Tom Ewell, who starred in the opening production, later called "undoubtedly the finest theater in America today."

"New Yorkers," Ewell continued, "would give their eye teeth for such a place."

With no budgetary constraints, Alfred Browning Parker allowed his genius free reign. He reduced the size of the cavernous movie auditorium to a manageable 800 seats, all on one floor. He hired Bolt, Beranek and Newman, acoustics experts from MIT, to design an ideal system. And he installed the ultimate in plush, comfortable seats. Outside, a gold and white striped canopy covered the entrance and continued over the sidewalk to a parking garage located half way down the block.

"You felt the theater as you approached it from a block away," artist Jack Amoroso recalled.

Over the main door a stained glass window by Amoroso brought the daylight into the lobby, where Phil Brinkman's huge color portraits of the stars hung. In the center stood an

enormous fountain and fish pool. The pool, tiled in aqua, contained spotlights directed at a mirrored dome in the ceiling. The pool lights sparkled on the mirrors above, and when the other lights in the lobby were out, the fountain glowed.

In keeping with Engle's vision of an elegant evening at the theater, Parker included a cocktail lounge on the west side of the lobby and a restaurant on the east side. On the second floor, where the administrative offices were located, he added a two-chair barber shop for the actors and staff. On the third floor, he designed luxurious apartments for the visiting players.

Throughout the building, Parker used the finest materials, always lavish, sometimes opulent. The apartments upstairs had Thai silk draperies, 14-carat gold plated shower knobs, and rhinestone-studded toilet seats. The lobby and auditorium held custom designed red Karistan carpeting woven with a scattered star motif. The restaurant was paneled with matched woods flown in from Honduras. The bar was made of thick mahogany. The tables were set with custom designed linens and china.

Parker's attention to detail extended to the kitchen and public rest rooms. He tiled the kitchen for easy cleaning and air conditioned the garbage room. In the ladies' lounge, vanities held fine perfumes, combs and brushes, powder puffs, and pink linen towels. In the men's room, fresh flowers disguised the urinals.

By the time Parker and his associates finished, they had created a national sensation. Walter Winchell proclaimed the Coconut Grove Playhouse "the leading show place in Dixie." Beyond being elegant, it was unique. Nowhere else could actors live, rehearse, perform, and dine all under one roof. As Marjorie Ewell said during her husband's run in the theater's first production, "These apartments suit us better than the finest hotels. Living in the theater building actually adds four or five hours to our day."

As the six-month renovation neared completion, George Engle asked his good friend, producer Ed Goodnow, to help organize the theater. In turn, Goodnow elicited the help of his godson, George Campbell, then a publicist with an active practice in Boston. The three men went to Manhattan to cast the first plays. They took a double suite at the Pierre and ran an

ad in *Variety* hoping to establish a permanent company of actors and directors.

"When the ad in *Variety* came out, the switchboard went nuts," Campbell remembered. "They were lined up around the block of the Pierre Hotel like it was a Salvation Army post."

Yet Goodnow, Engle, and Campbell had no clear idea of what play they would produce or who would be its star. They ultimately made their choices based on personal acquaintances and coincidence. Goodnow was a close friend of Michael Myerberg, who had the rights to *Waiting For Godot*, by Samuel Beckett. Myerberg was looking for a regional theater to try out *Godot* before taking it to Broadway and was willing to sell Engle the American rights. Engle knew Tom Ewell, and Ewell, who had a reputation as a comedian, wanted to do something different. Ewell convinced Bert Lahr to appear opposite him. Alan Schneider agreed to direct. And the first show was set.

At first glance, *Godot* seemed the perfect choice. The play, which premiered in Paris in 1952, won critical acclaim and played 400 performances in that city. In the intervening years, it played in twenty different countries and languages, and was seen by more than a million people. At the time of the American premiere, ten German companies were producing the play.

However, reviews suggested the play was strangely unconventional. Noted critic Kenneth Tynan, who praised the work for "pricking the nervous system," complained, "It has no plot, no climax, no denouement; no beginning, no middle, no end." Another critic bluntly labeled *Godot* a "dramatic vacuum."

In defense, George Campbell argued that he, Engle, and Goodnow knew what they were buying. They were familiar with the reviews from abroad. They had read the script, and they had seen rehearsals. Nevertheless, in their pre-opening publicity, which promoted Bert Lahr of burlesque fame and Tom Ewell of *The Seven Year Itch*, they inappropriately advertised the play as the "laugh sensation of two continents." Engle mailed 500 invitations engraved in gold for seats that sold at $7.50 each, and the opening was a sell-out.

If Coconut Grove had been a sleeping village until then, it certainly woke up on January 3, 1956. Here, where security had been managed by a single patrolman on bicycle, three

policemen were directing traffic on one corner alone. Crowds gathered to gaze at the stars. Floodlights lit the sky.

One by one, the Cadillacs, Mercedes, and Rolls Royces pulled into the parking garage. Here, attendants not only parked the cars but washed and waxed them, and serviced their engines.

Joan Fontaine came. So did Joseph Cotten, Tennessee Williams, William Saroyan, Walter Winchell, John Astor, writer and historian Marjory Stoneman Douglas, aluminum tycoon Arthur Vining Davis.

Charlie Cinnamon, now public relations director for The Bufman Organization and then with the Empress Hotel on Miami Beach, characterized the assemblage as "bedecked, bejewelled, and begowned."

Totaled, their "bank accounts. . . could undoubtedly build palaces from here to Maine," he wrote in the hotel newsletter.

Socialites and stars in satin and ermine filled the restaurant beyond capacity. They ordered beluga caviar, fillet mignon or pheasant under glass, vintage wines and champagnes, and flaming desserts. Curtain was delayed for more than an hour. Finally, at ten o clock, the audience was settled. The lights went out, and the golden curtain went up on Bert Lahr and Tom Ewell.

2

WAITING for Godot was a disaster.

The problems began long before the play opened. When Tom Ewell and Bert Lahr arrived by train from New York, the press greeted them at the station and lavished more attention on Lahr than Ewell. Ewell became disgruntled, and discord developed.

Lahr made things worse. As director Alan Schneider recalled, "The closer we got to opening, the more Bert insisted on his 'top banana' prerogatives." He became angry at the notion that Ewell, too, was supposed to get laughs.

"Bert would just not look at Tommy or listen to him. He was never concerned with the scene or the situation; he just wanted Tommy to feed him the line so that he could get a laugh out of his response. If Tommy's line seemed to be getting the laugh, he would find a way of topping it," Schneider wrote in his book, entitled *Entrances: An American Director's Journey.*

Lahr disrupted rehearsals with medical complaints. He seemed unable to find his place on stage although it had been clearly marked. When another character had a particularly long speech, Lahr insisted on walking off stage so he wouldn't have to listen.

In addition, neither Ewell nor Lahr felt he understood the play. Ewell continued to study the character of Vladimir and Beckett's philosophies throughout rehearsals. Lahr worked on his part for months. Years later he acknowledged that, although he sensed Estragon was the most important part he had ever played, he felt he never fully understood it.

A few days before the opening, Schneider tried a run through. "A stumble through would have been more accurate," Schneider remembered.

Waiting for Godot is not a traditional comedy. It has some very funny moments, and few actors could create them as well as Bert Lahr and Tom Ewell. But overall, the comedy in Beckett's play is black. Furthermore, *Godot* does not possess the qualities of theater that the audience expected to see that night. The stage is set only with a bare tree trunk beneath a blue light. The action is limited largely to waiting for someone who never shows up, and there is no conventional plot. As Vladimir and Estragon wait, they pass their time philosophizing, babbling, playing games, and encountering two passers by.

The audience at the Playhouse, who had come to see two famous comedians in "the laugh sensation of two continents," was stunned. At first, they laughed. Lahr's exaggerated attempt to pull off his shoe brought a laugh. So did Ewell's realization that his fly was open. But soon the strange structure and slow movement of the play silenced the laughter.

Then the audience became restless. They coughed. They talked. They got up to leave. During the first act, a third walked out. More than half left at intermission. By the end of the play, the audience had dwindled to a handful. One man, sure that he smelled smoke as he left the theater, inspired his wife to remark, "They're probably burning the script." And the next morning, the reviews were atrocious.

Walter Winchell called the play indecent and immoral, a great bore, "the most baffling play of all time."

Paul Bruun wrote in the *Miami Beach Sun* , "There isn't the slightest quality about this play to recommend it to my readers."

Herb Rau, in *The Miami News*, complained of a "mish mash of dialogue," while Helen Wells, in *The Miami Herald* reported simply that *Godot* "mystified first nighters."

"Maybe Godot could tell us what it is all about," said the Cincinnati, Ohio *Billboard* , "but he never shows up."

Once the reviews were printed, most people in line at the box office were demanding a refund. An ad in the papers inviting the public to come and make up their own minds attracted a few patrons, mostly from the University of Miami. During

the second week of the run, the audiences were more enthusiastic though small. By mid-January the New York publication *Show Business* announced that Myerberg had delayed the Broadway opening; he would keep Bert Lahr as Estragon but recast all other parts before rescheduling.

George Engle was battered with criticism when he presented *Godot*.. Many complained that it was no choice for an opening and wrong for the Miami audience. Miami audiences, they argued, were unsophisticated and would accept only light drama or musical comedy. To succeed, a play like *Godot* needed a more worldly arena, like New York.

Godot did just as poorly in New York. Initial reviews there were much the same as they had been in Miami. Ticket sales were just as bad until an ad ran in *The New York Times* calling for intellectuals who dared to meet the challenge. Even then, not all the audiences were enthusiastic.

A *New York Post* reporter overheard a disgruntled woman dragging her husband from the theater.

The husband insisted, "I tell you, honey, it's profoundly significant. It's Death they're waiting for, I tell you,"

"I don't care. Let them wait. If I stay much longer, I'll be his first victim tonight."

Whether or not they liked it, *Godot* created an impassioned response from most of the people who saw it – in Miami as well as New York. The morning after the Miami opening, Joan Nielson wrote, "Never heard so many self-appointed drama critics stir up so much conversation about a single production ever launched in this area." As Beatrice Washburn wrote for the Herald Book Page, they may not have been sure whether they had witnessed a "great metaphysical triumph" or mere "tripe," but they knew they were seeing culture with a capital C, and those who couldn't figure it out were ashamed to admit it.

As for Engle, Goodnow and Campbell, the three men who put the show together, they never thought about the significance of *Waiting for Godot*. Neither did they worry about whether the Miami audience would understand it. They did think about how that show, at that time, with those stars would attract national attention; and that's exactly what they got. Opening night was one of the most glamorous events in Miami's history. Life Magazine was there; the wire services

were there; and the next morning, the Coconut Grove Playhouse was splashed across newspapers throughout the nation. In the weeks and months that followed, the comings and goings at the Playhouse were reported in newspapers as prominent as *The New York Times* and as obscure as the Toledo, Ohio *Blade*. Even Louella Parsons, Hollywood gossip columnist, reported which stars were headed for Coconut Grove.

The long range impact is more significant. Those first audiences probably did not realize it, but they were discovering theater of the absurd. These same audiences grew familiar with the works of this genre, the works of Pinter, Ionesco, Albee, and others. Fourteen years later, when Players Theater revived *Godot*, it was enthusiastically received by audiences and critics alike. By then, they were ready to appreciate Godot as one of the most important works of the century. As Herald critic Frances Swaebly wrote, Becket had become to contemporary theater what Ibsen was a hundred years earlier, "The innovator, the playwright who found the theatrical form that reflected his age."

3

FOR his second show, George Engle presented Tallulah Bankhead in Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

Tallulah. The very name conjures up images of flowing hair, sultry blue eyes, husky voice. Tallulah was energy and grace. Tallulah was whiskey, cigarettes and sex. She was unpredictable and irrepressible.

One morning during rehearsal for *Streetcar*, she called George Campbell into her bathroom. When he walked in, she was naked. She had a cigarette dangling from her mouth, and she was bending over the sink washing her hair in cleaning fluid. Another time Tallulah invited interviewers into the bathroom while she sat on the toilet. Once, she called Campbell at 2 a.m. and complained she was cold.

"This was February," Campbell recalled, "and I had just been given some beautiful English wool blankets for my birthday. I had to take them off my bed and take them over there and give them to her. I never got my blankets back. Several years later she called me up from the Ritz hotel in London and said, 'I'm sitting here with your virgin wool blankets over me.'"

Tallulah was irascible. Though she had agreed to see Miss America after *Streetcar* one night, she kept the beauty queen waiting for over half an hour. Then, as her guest was introduced, Tallulah flung her arm across the dressing table sending all her make-up crashing to the floor.

"Why don't they give me one (bleep) moment of peace," she thundered.

Yet Tallulah was generous and kind. Her loyalty to those

she cared for was unfaltering, and her commitment to liberal principles unyielding.

At age fifty-three, when Tallulah came to Coconut Grove, she was synonymous with bawdy comedy. Many people forgot that she was also a serious actress with an admirable list of professional credits beginning with *Squash Farm* in 1918. Her great triumph was Lillian Hellman's *The Little Foxes* in 1939. And as Herb Rau wrote in *The Miami News*, "She is so talented as an actress that, in her long career, she has kept many a mediocre play going long beyond its deserved life span."

For years, Tennesse Williams wanted Tallulah to play Blanche. *The Fort Lauderdale News* reported that Williams had envisioned Tallulah for his original Blanche, which was played by Jessica Tandy in 1947. Reportedly, Wiliams, then unknown, hitchhiked to Tallulah's Connecticut home to plead with her to take the part. Tallulah refused to see Williams and never read the play until Ed Goodnow approached her on behalf of the Playhouse.

By this time, Tallulah was ready to remind the world of her abilities as a serious actress, and she saw *Streetcar* as her opportunity. But her task was formidable.

She had to struggle just to look the part. Blanche, as Williams described her, was "daintily dressed... with fluffy bodice...looking as if she were arriving at a summer tea.... There is something about her that suggests a moth." Volatile, outspoken Tallulah suggested anything but the wispy delicacy of a moth. As Walter Kerr stated in his review of this production when it reached New York, Tallulah is "obviously without illusions of the sort called for throughout the play; she is shrewd and sharp and no one to tangle with."

Perhaps under very assertive direction and clever costuming, Tallulah could have resembled a fragile Blanche on the road to physical and emotional destruction. But on opening night, it was Tallulah the audience saw, not Blanche. When she walked on stage, the audience whistled and howled. When she spoke a serious line about always limiting herself to one drink, the audience convulsed in laughter.

Before the end of the performance, Tennessee Williams had fled the theater. Clutching his head, he wailed, "She's ruining my play," and comforted himself with a drink of his own.

Later, Tennessee Williams denied "to his sober recollection" having claimed she had ruined the play. In an article he wrote for *The New York Times*, he did acknowledge criticising her severely for what he called "the worst performance he ever saw." The morning after the opening, Williams and director Herbert Machiz confronted Tallulah in her bedroom, where she agreed she had been horrible. That morning, Williams and Tallulah "talked quietly and gently together in a totally truthful vein.

"She kept listening and nodding, which may have been an unprecedented behavior in her career. The director and I gave her notes. I went back that night, and every note she was given was taken and brilliantly followed in performance. . . . I think she knew, all at once, that her legend, the audience which her legend had drawn about her, presented an obstacle which her deepest instinct as an artist demanded that she conquer, and for those next three weeks she set about this conquest with a dedication that was one of those things that make faith in the human potential, the human spirit, seem far from sentimental."

By the time Tallulah opened in New York, she had improved the part so much that Williams wrote, "I would like, 'just for the record,' to add my personal acknowledgment, praise and thanksgiving for what I think is . . . [a] most heroic accomplishment in acting."

Although reviews of the New York production were mixed, critics unanimously praised Tallulah for her concentration and restraint. William Hawkins wrote in the *World Telegram*, "She plucked triumph out of a miasma of disaster." Walter Kerr observed, "There are three or four times in the second act when [the role of Blanche] is played with the tenacity and the jungle honesty of a tigress. As Miss Bankhead stares at an absurdly youthful newspaper boy, just stares at him and repeats 'young, young, young' in a despairing rhythm, the exact abandon of a lost soul is sounded. . . And the animal scream with which she drives a disillusioned lover into the noisy night is hair-raising in the way that it ought to be hair-raising."

Most of the performances at the Playhouse that first season were as memorable as Tallulah's. Old timers are still

awed by Bea Lillie, who sang her finale while twirling a rope of pearls around her body as though it were a hula hoop. Time after time, she began the song as the pearls twirled around her shoulders. As the song went on, the pearls stepped down her body inch by inch. Every time, just as she sang her last refrain, the pearls whirled around her ankles and dropped to the floor. Then Lillie stepped out of the necklace and took her bows.

During the first season, Imogene Coca played in *Happy Birthday*. Judith Anderson appeared in *Black Chiffon*. Linda Darnell did *Tea and Sympathy*. In each of his plays, George Engle and his advisors cast the major parts with well-known actors. They imported the stars as well as the directors from Hollywood and New York. The smaller parts they filled with locals. *The Solid Gold Cadillac*, which starred Billie Burke, featured local news anchors Ralph Renick and Jackie Pierce, and writer/historian Marjory Stoneman Douglas. *King of Hearts*, starring Donald Cook, featured the eight-year-old son of architect Alfred Browning Parker and his dog.

Casting this way added a lot of local color. It also guaranteed some surprises.

"We never knew what the dog would do. They couldn't rehearse her. Every night, they just had to watch the dog and improvise around her." Parker recalled.

"Opening night, they led the dog to the stage on a leash, then let her go. She walked out and stood mid-stage as a hush fell over the audience. She walked all the way to the front of the stage and started smelling the audience from one side to the other. Then she started to back up. She backed up and backed up. When she hit the sofa, she just sat down so that her tail and hind legs were on the sofa and her front legs were in her lap. The house just went wild."

The house also became excited when Marjory Stoneman Douglas came on in *Solid Gold Cadillac*. Douglas had a one line part at the very end of the play, when she walked on stage and asked, "May I ask a question?"

Douglas, ninety-six years old, laughed as she remembered her brief career in the theater.

"My idiot friends had taken over the front row of the theater. When I burst upon the stage with my immortal line, they

burst into shrieks of laughter and applause that quite drowned out Miss Burke. She wasn't too happy about that, and her manager said to me, 'Can't you come in with your arm over your face or something so they don't recognize you?' But I said, 'You can't help that. They'll know me anyway.'

"I didn't think we'd have this problem after the first night, but I guess it kept up, so that I don't think Miss Burke was too pleased with me. One night toward the end of the run, I remember standing in the wings before my cue and thinking, 'Isn't she a great gal. What a trouper.' She had married Flo Ziegfeld, and he died with a lot of debts. She was too old, really, to be trouping still, but she continued to work so that she could pay his debts. So there I was standing in the wings thinking, 'What a great old gal she is,' and suddenly I realized there they were staring into the wings, and I had missed my cue. They were waiting until I had produced my line so that Miss Burke could say her last lines and they could bring the curtain down. When Miss Burke came off, she said coldly, 'You must ask them to put you on a little earlier.'

Of all the excitement that first season, none was greater than the two-week appearance of Victor Borge. Borge, then at the peak of his career, had been selling out the Shubert Theater in New York for three years with his one-man show entitled *Comedy in Music.* So phenomenal was his success that he became the first entertainer to receive the Shubert Foundation Award after his initial season. A letter accompanying the gold medal said, "It is the first time in over fifty years since we have been operating theaters and managing stars of every magnitude that any one person has accomplished such an outstanding feat to entertain an audience for an entire season in one of our theaters."

Borge had already played more than 950 performances on Broadway when George Engle accomplished the impossible. He went to New York, talked to Borge, and convinced him to take a leave of absence from Broadway to do two-weeks in Coconut Grove. At the time, Borge was the highest paid entertainer in the world. To woo him, Engle agreed to bring down his wife, his four children, stage manager, general manager, valet, and two grand pianos. In addition to paying all expenses for his entourage and putting them up in a villa on Key Biscayne, Engle paid Borge with two oil wells.

George Campbell, who left the Playhouse to join Borge's staff and stayed with Borge for fifteen years, said, "Those two oil leases turned out to be worth so much money that the engagement paid Borge more than any performer had ever been paid before."

Victor Borge was worth every penny. His two-week run at the Playhouse was sold out before the first night. To increase capacity, the management set up temporary seats in the orchestra pit and placed 150 more around Borge's piano on stage. He played to over 1,000 people at the Playhouse every night. An estimated 10,000 patrons had to be turned away, and the show was booked for a return engagement the following year.

A natural comic and virtuoso pianist who had made his concert debut at the age of ten, Borge began his performance as most serious concert pianist do. He strode to center stage and took a slow, deep bow. When he stood up, however, he opened his mouth and let go a huge puff of smoke. Then, for two solid hours, he joined snatches of serious music with jokes and hilarious buffoonery. He combined Beethoven, "Pop Goes the Weasel," witty asides, and a teeth-baring smile that satirized Liberace. In the most unpredictable way, he could halt mid-phrase to tell a story or slide recklessly off the piano stool. He played his audience as skillfully as he played the piano.

Estelle Culmer wrote, "If he gets a laugh, he follows with more of the same; if a gag flops, he gracefully slips into the next routine."

It's no wonder that, in a double play on Borge's Danish heritage and Shakespeare's Hamlet, Borge had acquired the label "the Unmelancholy Dane." After the final curtain, the audience staggered out of the auditorium weak from laughter.

The Coconut Grove engagement was as special to Borge as it was to his audiences. Coconut Grove was his first engagement outside New York. Despite his record breaking performances on Broadway, he arrived in Miami uncertain that he could be as successful elsewhere.

"He was delighted to see that he could pack them in and load the stage up. When tickets became hard to get in Miami, he knew that he could sell out any theater in the United States," Campbell said. It was the Coconut Grove experience

which convinced Borge to undertake an international tour.

While Borge was the ultimate showman on stage, off stage he sought privacy. He dedicated a wishing well in the Playhouse lobby to benefit Variety Children's Hospital. But while local celebrities and friends of the Engles celebrated Borge's success at a lavish after-theater party, Borge was conspicuously absent. He had wandered back into the darkened auditorium. Sitting at the piano on stage, now lit by one bare bulb, he played seriously for the first time all evening. No jokes. No funny faces. Just velvet music from the hands of a master who had been practicing for forty-four years.

When Borge left Miami, he left the playhouse with an unusual legacy: chickens. Borge owned a farm, named Vibo, in Southbury, Connecticut. Although he originally bought the farm as a weekend and vacation retreat, he began raising rock-cornish game hens. By the time he appeared at the Playhouse, he and his wife were raising, freezing, packing, and shipping some 8,000 hens a week all over the country. Before Borge left Miami, he had added the Playhouse restaurant to his list of steady customers. Vibo Rock Cornish Game Hen with Danish Ham soon became a regular and popular item on the restaurant menu.

The first season of the Coconut Grove Playhouse ended in May 1956. In less than five months, the Playhouse had become a significant theatrical institution. In 1956 Vincent Price played *Dial M for Murder* at the Roosevelt Theater on Miami Beach. Tennessee Williams chose Studio M in Coral Gables to premiere *Sweet Bird of Youth.* But it was the Coconut Grove Playhouse that had won national renown.

Trade publications like *Variety* and *Billboard* promoted the Playhouse so heavily that, no matter where George Campbell went with Victor Borge the following summer, every critic and newspaper reporter he encountered recognized the Coconut Grove Playhouse by name.

It had sold more than 105,000 tickets and attracted to its audience a steady flow of celebrities including Gloria de Haven, Marlon Brando, and Gypsy Rose Lee. The restaurant had won a reputation for fine food and elegant service. In the lounge, Charles Latore and his orchestra proved a popular diversion during intermission. They also attracted an enthusiastic following for after-theater dancing.

Going to the Playhouse was an important event. Those who went took their jewels from the vault, their furs out of cold storage, and provided endless material for the "Woman's Page."

Society writer Frances Laslie capitalized on Bea Lillie's opening to write, "A striking woman (whose name we never learned) had on an evening suit the likes of which we'd never seen before. . . . Studded with diamonds, the jacket was cuffed and collared with white fox and the sheath skirt gleamed with the stones."

In evening gowns and tuxedos, the crowds descended upon the village. One had only to stand among them to feel what the press had been claiming for months: the Coconut Grove Playhouse had become the most prominent theater outside of New York.

4

GEORGE Engle remained producer at the Coconut Grove Playhouse for four seasons. During that time, he brought some notable productions and personalities to his theater: Bert Lahr returned in *Burlesque*, Chico Marx starred in *The Fifth Season*, Ed Begley did *Inherit the Wind*, Katherine Cornell appeared in *Dear Liar*. Miriam Hopkins, Jean Stapleton, Judith Anderson, Farley Granger, Maureen Stapleton, Joseph Wiseman, Shirl Conway, Barbara Baxley, Frank Lovejoy, Nancy Walker, Hume Cronyn, and Jessica Tandy also appeared.

Throughout his tenure, Engle attended to every detail of the Playhouse with a fanatic's eye for perfection. He welcomed his stars with baskets of fruit, flowers, and bottles of champagne. Whether he chose to entertain them at the Playhouse or at his elegant home, George and Dorothy Engle's parties set the standard.

Graciously, he welcomed patrons to the Playhouse restaurant. On opening nights, those fortunate enough to obtain reservations were ushered to tables decorated to reflect the show's theme. On their tables they found matches monogrammed with their initials. Once seated, they sipped wines considered rare even by New York's most elite sommeliers. They tasted delicacies prepared by a master French chef whose family restaurant was listed in the prestigeous *Guide Gastronique de France*. As many as four waiters in formal dress lavished attention on each table. The food was so exquisite and the service so impeccable that one guest lamented, "I was ashamed to order beer."

By meal's end, the bill for four in the late 1950s could be as high as $160. Payment was usually cash. When the waiter brought change, in addition to new bills, he brought coins washed clean by someone hired for that task.

As much as George Engle enjoyed the glamour he created, he frequently toyed with new ideas. He dreamed of building a grand opera house across the street and bringing the world's greatest opera stars to Coconut Grove. Connected by a foot bridge high above the Grove's main street, these two buildings would form a cultural complex. Though this dream never materialized, others did. In 1958, at the prompting of Jack Amoroso, Engle opened an art gallery on the second floor of the Playhouse building.

Art director Amoroso was eager to create a first-rate, non-commercial gallery in the theater. He saw it as a way to bring internationally renowned works of art into the community. It could also be a showcase for the works of local artists as well as a valuable public relations tool for the theater. To achieve these goals, Amoroso transformed a former rehearsal space into an inviting main gallery and several smaller satellites. To ensure choice works from any museum in the country, Amoroso established a distinguished board of directors: Allan McNab, the art director at the Chicago Institute; Nathan Saltonstall, the founder and director of the Institute of Contemporary Arts in Boston; William T. Kamper, founder of the Art Institute in Kansas City; and Alfred Baton, of the Surf Club.

Five hundred guests attended the grand opening and were treated to art on loan from the Norton Gallery in Palm Beach: Two Friends, a sculpture by Jose de Creelt; Jacob Epstein's bust of Albert Einstein; Gaston Lachaise's sculpture of John Martin; Picasso's Head of a Woman. On the walls hung masterpieces by Milton Avery, Marc Chagall, Raul Dufy, Paul Klee, Henri Matisse, Jean Miro, Max Weber, Georgia O'Keeffe, and Georges Rouault. In the satellite rooms, Amoroso displayed the works of prominent local artists Frank Dorsay and Eugene Massin, as well as some of his own paintings. Subsequent shows highlighted works from every major period beginning with the Renaissance.

The gallery was designed to double as the Celebrity Room, where private parties and special events were held. Built with an elegant bar and a parquet dance floor, the room featured dinners of roast beef carved from a rolling cart and dancing to the music of a live orchestra. At 11:30 on Monday nights, the Celebrity Room became the setting for live television hosted by comedian Dean Murphy. Murphy, a nationally known inpersonator who had entertained presidents Roosevelt and Truman in the White House, interviewed the stars of the current show, artists whose works were on display in the gallery, and members of the audience.

`In another innovation, Engle produced a summer season at the Deauville Hotel on Miami Beach in 1959. To take advantage of the heavy tourist crowd filling the hotels that season and the availability of the Casanova Room, he booked five shows, including Diana Barrymore in Tennessee William's *Garden District* and the pre-Broadway run of *Hilary*, starring Joan Fontaine. Engle expected the intimacy of the room, the excellent sound system, and effective lighting to contribute to an ideal setting for his theater. But piano music from the adjacent lounge disrupted performances, and competing entertainment in other areas of the hotel competed with the plays. Engle quickly realized the experiment was a failure.

The following fall, he opened the Playhouse to the Miami Theater Group, Inc., an organization dedicated to stimulating interest in theater. Under their auspices, a cast comprised of prominent Miami women put on *The Women*. The play by Claire Booth was produced by Dorothy Engle and directed by Owen Phillips.

By March 1960 Engle had had enough. In addition to the million dollars he originally spent on the Playhouse, he committed more than $400,000 during the ensuing years. He paid his stars up to $30,000 a week and often put them up in Miami for a week or more of vacation following their runs. He approved sets that cost as much as homes. He turned the cocktail lounge on the east side of the theater lobby into a second restaurant. He gave Jack Amoroso $75,000 to launch the art gallery and Celebrity Room. He had, in short, dedicated a substantial portion of his wealth and ambition to a cultural center for his community.

For four years he negotiated contracts with his stars and dealt with personnel issues among his administrative staff. He opened his own mail and hand wrote replies. He picked up litter from the theater floor and plucked yellow leaves off the potted plants in the lobby.

"To do show business, you've got to be right here," said Engle, as he sat in his Playhouse office. In contrast to producing theater, the oil business seemed increasingly attractive.

"I can sit in my office and drill oil wells anywhere in the world," he acknowledged. Tired of chasing details, he named Owen Phillips producer of the Playhouse.

Owen Phillips had been directing plays and serving as managing director of the Playhouse since the fall of 1958. A veteran of the Barter Theater in Virginia, he was credited with launching the careers of Frank Lovejoy, Ernest Borgnine, Elizabeth Wilson, and Fritz Weaver. By the time he arrived at the Coconut Grove Playhouse, he had won the coveted Ford Foundation award for the Preservation of the Arts, and he had run Studio M in Coral Gables.

With this background, he put on some wonderful theater in Coconut Grove. In the midst of an unsuccessful two-week run of *Damn Yankees*, he replaced his original star with Gretchen Wyler, who had starred in the Broadway production of the musical.

She arrived less than twenty-four hours after Phillips called her. Taking just five hours a night for sleep, she rehearsed for four days and saved the production from death by slow motion. By injecting spirit into her own performance, she had energized the entire cast, and they were elated.

"Magnificent," said one. "What a lift," said another. A third noted that during the show, anyone who wasn't on stage was crowding the wings for a glimpse of Wyler's magic.

It's no wonder Phillips was as enthusiastic about booking stars as his predecessor. He observed that the Miami audience is "star conscious," and he believed that stars "work harder. They are stars because they deserve to be." He was thinking specifically of Gretchen Wyler and Gypsy Rose Lee.

In the summer of 1960 Gypsy Rose Lee drove to Coconut Grove from New York to play Auntie Mame. She was expected to appear in a beige and violet Rolls Royce outfitted with a

kitchen and sleeping compartment. Instead she arrived in a pale blue Volkswagon piled to overflowing with 500 pounds of luggage, a tape recorder, a stereo, an electric frying pan, two Chinese Crested dogs, and a Siamese cat that had delivered kittens en route. She also brought her legend.

Nearly six-feet tall, Gypsy Rose Lee was, as critic Jack Anderson said, "as improbable in life as Mame is in literature." She was a burlesque queen, a lady, and an intellectual. When she played Minsky's, New York's most famous burlesque house, she tantalized her audience with humor and class. In one routine, she held her costume together with straight pins. As she removed them, she dropped them one by one into the mouth of a tuba. She twirled garters and gloves, but always wrapped herself in the curtain before she revealed too much.

Gypsy Rose Lee lived in a twenty-six-room, seven-bath New York brownstone filled with antiques and artifacts. She traveled with the intellectual and social elite. She wrote two murder mysteries; a play, which Mike Todd produced; and her memoirs. These formed the basis of the musical *Gypsy*. As a performer, she crossed the boundary of burlesque and succeeded in legitimate theater.

When she played Mame, critic Pat Murphy compared her to "an aerial bomb that skyrockets into a profusion of sparklers, then shatters the senses with one loud burst." Helen Muir, writing for *The Miami News*, called her a captivating Mame. The audiences loved her, and extra matinees were added to accommodate the standing-room-only crowds.

Gypsy Rose Lee was thoroughly professional, but never haughty. She said, "Everyone has an image they make up for themselves -- the bus driver, the policeman, the politicians." She acknowledged, "Anytime you get up on stage, it's an art, even if it's only the art of keeping people from throwing things at you." Yet she refused to call herself an actress or entertainer because that seemed presumptuous.

"I can call myself a 'performer' without blushing or presuming," she said.

When she worked, she dedicated herself to unfaltering concentration, which she compared to a vacuum. "It's like you're suspended in a transparent ball. You can see out, but

you can't hear so well because you're closed off. How dare anyone talk to you when you're in your vacuum!"

During one performance, an overly enthusiastic viewer seated in a front row dared to do just that. Mame, in an elaborate riding outfit and boots too big for her feet, had just discovered that riding a horse required skill she did not have. Bowlegged and bent, she staggered across the stage.

"Hey, Gypsy, baby! Way to go, Gypsy," the enthusiastic man hooted.

As he whistled and clapped, the audience burst into ill-timed laughter.

Barely able to sustain her concentration, Gypsy managed to finish the scene, but when she returned to the wings, she exploded:

"Get that idiot out of here!"

Mid-act, the play stopped, the house lights went up, and an usher dragged the fan, slightly reeling, from the theater.

Once the show was over, she took off the blinders of concentration as dramatically as she had put them on. After each performance of *Auntie Mame*, she emerged from behind the curtain to chat with the audience. In a fleeting allusion to her burlesque days, she peeled off her shawl, her earrings, and her wig.

"This is the most applause I've ever received with all my clothes on," she quipped.

Jumping into the audience to kiss an admirer on his bald head, as she often had done in her strip-teasing days, she added, "It's men like him who made my career."

Like the spirit of this informal moment, Gypsy Rose Lee was flamboyant but sociable, open and gracious. She felt comfortable chatting with her admirers at the Playhouse bar. She often took members of the cast out for lunch or dinner. One day, she invited the actors, crew, and staff to a Chinese Christmas banquet in August.

On a torn manila envelope she scribbled: "Foo Man Choo and Choo Chin Chao invite you to a Chinese Christmas dinner Sunday night in the lobby. We know it isn't Christmas, but we figure we needed it now, so let's go ahead and do it." She signed the invitation "Gypsy" and tacked it to the call board back stage.

The following Sunday night, she had caterers set up tables around the fish pond in the lobby, and she hosted sixty people to a spectacular evening of food, song, and dance.

5

"ACTORS have the reputation for temperament, but actors are much less neurotic than we writers," Tennessee Williams said in July 1960, when he attended the Playhouse production of *A Loss of Roses*, written by his good friend William Inge.

"Some of the best actors I know have a high degree of hysteria. But writers are the most tied up, tortured people in the arts — writers in general and, of course, me specifically. Oh, I'm real neurotic."

Williams was quite candid about his own torment, which probably had roots in his childhood. When Williams was very young, his father, an angry and violent man, worked as a traveling salesman. The three Williams children were often left to the sole care of their domineering mother, the straight-laced daughter of an Episcopal minister.

After Williams survived diphtheria at age five, his mother smothered him with protection. By the time he reached adolescence, he had withdrawn into a world of story writing, and at sixteen sold his first story to *Weird Tales* for thirty-five dollars. Violent in feeling, it told of Egyptian queen Nitocris, who invited her enemies to a banquet in a subterranean hall and, when festivities were at their peak, opened the sluice gates to drown them all.

In the ensuing years, he endured a stifling job as a shoe clerk sustaining himself with his writing. He completed college and established a life in the theater. He also battled depression, suffered a nervous breakdown, and became increasingly hypochondriacal. He openly acknowledged his

homosexuality, and he tried to escape his tortures with drugs and alcohol.

Many of Williams characters resembled his family. For example, his father was the model for Big Daddy in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof.* He captured his mother in Amanda, the unyielding mother in *The Glass Menagerie.* He modeled Laura, in that same play, on his sister, Rose, whom he saw as sweet and fragile. Williams' characters, with their anguish and their aspirations, constitute some of the most important and influential creations of twentieth century drama.

As Frank Rich wrote in *The New York Times* when Williams died in 1983, "Williams produced a body of work that did and still does give our theater one of its few claims to greatness.

"The daring theatrical innovations and psychological liberation that mark Mr. Williams' breakthrough plays . . . [have] exerted an enormous influence on the generation of writers that followed him. Hardly a month goes by without the production of a new American play that is written in the patented Williams style sometimes referred to, for lack of a better term, as 'poetic realism.' Echoes of his voice can be heard in the works of Edward Albee and Lanford Wilson, to name just his two most prominent successors."

From 1945,when Williams finished *The Glass Menagerie,* until ten years later, when *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* premiered, Williams was at his best. This was the decade of *A Streetcar Named Desire, The Rose Tattoo, Orpheus Descending, Summer and Smoke,* and *Sweet Bird of Youth.* Then Williams fell into a slump. His dependency on drugs and alcohol intensified, and in an attempt to halt his own destruction, he went into psychoanalysis.

By 1958 however, he had quit.

"Once I thought psychiatry was the answer, spent my whole time and a great deal of money on the treatment couch. But somehow it's not for me," William said.

"It's true you grow to know yourself better but perhaps that is a doubtful privilege. Psychiatry represents the scientific approach. It is anti-romantic, anti-emotional."

He emerged from analysis mellow and reflective.

"If we don't learn to get along with our fellow human beings, start thinking about people rather than rockets and

missiles, we are doomed. The high divorce rate, the juvenile delinquency problem, the monstrous death in highway statistics, all show we have distorted life on this globe beyond all recognition."

Believing that humankind's only hope was learning to live together, Williams returned to play writing. In *Period of Adjustment*, he explored the interpersonal relationships in marriage. He felt his new direction was exciting, and he chose the Coconut Grove Playhouse for his pre-Broadway trial. As the December 1958 world premiere approached, the nation once again locked to Coconut Grove.

Period of Adjustment was a departure from previous Williams fare. The play, which focused on two marriages in crisis, was intentionally comic, though serious in its message. Unlike his other plays, it was about people and experiences the audience could identify with easily. Both its language and plot were unusually mild.

If Williams' post-analysis writing had changed, much of his behavior had not. He always enjoyed expounding on the intricacies of his characters and coaching actors as they prepared their parts. Yet he was terrified of failure and rejection by the critics. He compulsively wrote and rewrote his scripts. He tried them, then reworked them. All these classic Williams traits emerged, as problems developed before *Period of Adjustment* opened.

Difficulties began with the script. The leading players, Barbara Baxley, James Daly, Robert Webber, and Rosemary Murphy, complained that lines weren't natural, that elements of dialogue didn't feel comfortable.

Williams, always insecure about his work, became increasingly frustrated. He began bringing alcohol to rehearsal and once became so distracted that, while holding a drink in his hand, delivered a tirade against drinking during rehearsal. In desperation, he asked the cast what they thought the characters should be saying. As the actors improvised on stage and Williams commented from a seat in the auditorium, they revised unacceptable scenes together.

To compound the problems, Williams had decided to co-direct this production with Owen Phillips. Arguments between them flared regularly during rehearsals. In the end,

Williams conceded, "I can't direct my way out of a paper bag." He let Phililps take over after their smoldering contentions erupted a few days before the opening.

The explosion centered upon a scene, later cut, which featured Owen Phillips' cute but untrained dog, Buffy. Onstage, Buffy barked incessantly. Infuriated by the barking animal, Williams ranted, "That is the most stupid dog I have ever seen," and left the theater.

Owen Phillips, insulted and angry, stomped upstairs to his office. Rehearsal screeched to a halt.

The actors, feeling the press of time, refused to wait while Phillips and Williams nursed their injured pride. Barbara Baxley turned to Burton Parker, who was filling in as stage manager at the time.

"If we're going to open in three days, we've got to keep going. You'll have to pitch in as director."

Though Parker was hesitant, James Daly encouraged him. "Just follow the script, and if anything doesn't look right, let us know and we'll try and work it out."

After these problems, it's no surprise that *Period of Adjustment* opened to mixed reviews. The improvisational rewriting worked well; the Florida critics almost unanimously hailed the crisp repartee. Herb Kelly, writing in *The Miami News* also lauded Williams' believable bedroom scenes, which Kelly called "uncanny" in light of William's inexperience in the marriage bed. Yet, the critics complained that, overall, the dialogue lacked effective pacing and that the first act dragged for an unbearable hour and fifteen minutes.

Indomitable, Williams went back to work on the script. It took two years before he was willing to risk the wrath of the New York critics. He reunited the original cast and prepared for a November 1960 debut at the Helen Hayes Theater. By the morning after, it became clear that *Period of Adjustment* was not as good as some of Williams' other plays.

"On the surface, [the characters] are convincing. . . . But you do not sustain your interest in them or their concerns," wrote Howard Taubman in *The New York Times*.

After a short run on Broadway, *Period of Adjustment* faded into obscurity. Williams fared better with *The Night of the Iguana*, his second play to premier at the Playhouse during Owen Phillips' tenure.

From the outset, Williams liked *Iguana*, which, he felt, poignantly conveyed his beliefs and values.

"Eventually I may like it best of all my plays. It is more poetic, more tender. It is not as violent -- but it is not comedy," Williams told Helen Muir before the Miami opening.

At first the critics were less enthusiastic. They complained that, somehow, the play lacked unity, though they didn't agree how. Helen Muir, writing for *The Miami News*, recommended scrapping the third act. George Bourke, in the *Herald*, insisted that only the third act bore "the mark of true Tennessee Williams sensitivity and skill." Despite the first reviews, critics, audience, and actors alike sensed that *Iguana* could be great.

"It's the most important thing I've done in my acting career," said Patrick O'Neal, who played the weak and neurotic Shannon in the Miami as well as the Broadway productions.

Owen Phillips predicted the play would mark a "new high point" in Williams' career.

Williams, who had relied heavily on violence and brutal sexuality in his earlier plays, had softened his touch. In *Iguana* he included only a few violent actions, and he removed blatant sexuality from the spotlight. While he sprinkled his dialogue with obscenities, the language seemed appropriate. Critics said that Williams had achieved a profound subtlety worth polishing.

So, in Williams' characteristic style, he revamped the script, which he had begun more than a year before. Williams had first written Iguana in 1959 as a one-act play for the Spoleto Festival in Italy. The following winter, he expanded it into three acts. After the Miami premier, he overhauled it completely again and continued to rework it through tryouts in Rochester, Detroit and Chicago. By the time the play reached Broadway, Williams had improved the structure and dialogue.

"A muted, autumnal poetry murmurs through the lines," Howard Taubman wrote following the New York opening.

"Although it takes its time in getting to the heart of the theme, '*The Night of the Iguana*' achieves a vibrant eloquence in declaring its respect for those who have to fight for their bit of decency."

The Night of the Iguana won the Drama Critics award for best play in 1960, and indeed it was Tennessee Williams' last great work. Though Phillips' era included many fine productions and sparkling performances, Tennessee Williams stands pre-eminent.

6

PAJAMA Tops seemed destined for Coconut Grove.

Ruth Foreman almost brought it to the Playhouse during George Engle's time. In 1957 Engle approached Foreman, who was then producing innovative work at Studio M, the 168-seat theater in Coral Gables.

"Dorothy and I enjoy coming here," Engle told her, "but if you want to make money, you've got to do something commercial. Now, if you'll do something for the tired businessman, I'll bring you into the Grove."

That night, Ruth Foreman received a call from Mawby Green, a New Mexico playwright who had written *Pajama Tops* with Ed Feilbert.

"Ruth, how would you like to make some money?" asked Green. He offered her his play and predicted she could make it a commercial success.

Foreman thought *Pajama Tops* was perfect for the Playhouse. Based on the French farce *Moumou*, by Jean De Le Traz, it was risqué theater for the 1950s. True to the French formula, the story featured a lecherous husband, his conniving wife, and Babette Latouche, the voluptuous object of the husband's philandering. For variety, *Pajama Tops* added a rose-waving gay poet who became aggressively seductive whenever a woman entered his bedroom. The otherwise predictable plot, built on contrived encounters and confrontations, was a weak excuse for confusing identities, slapping bottoms, and parading buxom Babette around the stage. It had no obscene language and no nudity. Yet, audiences in those days found it tantalizing and provocative.

A few years earlier, the play had toured successfully with Diana Barrymore as star, and Foreman saw potential in the script.

"It could make a good French farce if it were played without taking anyone seriously. It had to be light and frothy like whipped cream, just kind of bouncy like champagne," Foreman remembered.

Ruth Foreman put together a cast featuring a gorgeous burlesque queen. Foreman rehearsed them, and she put on a private show for the Engles and some friends one Saturday night.

Afterwards, Engle kissed Foreman on the cheek and said, "Now you're cooking with gas. You come in Monday morning, and we'll draw up a contract."

The next afternoon, however, Mawby Green called from New Mexico.

"Ruth," he said, "I don't know what you thought about *Pajama Tops*, but I have to withdraw it."

Stan Seiden, soon-to-be partner of Zev Bufman, had just bought the first class rights, which guaranteed exclusive license to produce the play anywhere in the United States and Canada. Together, Seiden and Bufman planned a *Pajama Tops* blitz.

For the role of Babette Latouche, they cast June Wilkinson, who admitted cashing in on her natural endowment.

"Everyone needs a gimmick to make them famous in show business," said Wilkinson, who compared her gimmick to Jimmy Durante's nose.

British by birth, Wilkinson began her stage career as a child doing Little Red Riding Hood in pantomime. In the ensuring years, she danced ballet and performed in repertory musicals. By the time she was sixteen she had her own dramatic series on the BBC. When she was seventeen, she brought her 44-22-35" body to the United States to promote a plastics company on Chicago television. In the process, she hoped, she would be discovered. She wasn't.

"How does one get ahead in this country?" Wilkinson asked a dinner companion.

"Why," he answered, "you've go to get your pictures in magazines, Look or Life , or. . . ."

She chose *Playboy*. She got up from the table, went to the phone, and dialed the editorial office, which is located in Chicago. Hugh Hefner, publisher of *Playboy*, answered the phone. After hearing Wilkinson describe herself, he invited her over that night.

"He took one look and summoned the photographers," Wilkinson said.

Before morning, the photgraphers had taken their shots, and Wilkinson had made $500. By the time she was twenty-two, she had posed for nearly 500 x-rated photographs and appeared in *Playboy* a record six times.

The publicity did exactly what she had hoped.

"I am the only girl made famous by *Playboy* magazine. "You just can't buy back issues of the ones I was featured in," said the beauty who, by this time, had acquired the nickname June-Is-Busting-Out-All-Over.

Subsequently, she appeared in several stock productions, including *Fanny* with Walter Slezak and as the Scandinavian temptress in *Marriage-Go-Round*. She also made four movies. But, critics agreed, her talent was not her greatest gift.

Nevertheless, for Stan Seiden and Zev Bufman, she was perfect. With June Wilkinson in the female lead and John Agar in the male lead, they began promoting the play in Los Angeles.

"With *Pajama Tops*," Zev Bufman claimed, "we invented the two-for-one ticket,. and we two-ferred America."

Bufman went on to describe the marketing method he devised.

"We had ordered a hand-picked, select, terrific mailing list in an attempt to find a new way to merchandise the play. It didn't come. We had a deadline, and we were running late," he recounted, so he turned to the Yellow Pages.

He instructed his staff to address envelopes to businesses and organizations throughout Los Angeles. Into each envelope they put thirty tickets. They also enclosed a letter explaining that each of these tickets could be redeemed at the box office for two seats at half price. Bufman knew he could save postage by mailing no more than thirty tickets in each envelope. Nevertheless, the scheme cost a fortune. To save a little money, he eliminated categories he knew would not respond, like funeral parlors and synagogues.

"I mailed to car dealers, CPAs, barber shops, real estate offices. We covered LA. You could not go anywhere without seeing a stack of these tickets," Bufman said.

This gimmick created such word-of-mouth publicity that ticket sales took off, and *Pajama Tops* played Los Angeles for a record-breaking five years.

Next, Bufman and Seiden took the play to Seattle in time for the 1962 World's Fair. In Seattle, they repeated the two-fer marketing scheme which had been successful in Los Angeles. In the beginning, they used printed labels and sent their two-fers by bulk mail. Later, they had the envelopes addressed by hand and they mailed them first class. They bought the services of volunteers from local charitable organizations by offering to make a $1,000 donation for every 10,000 letters the volunteers prepared for mailing. These "letters from mama," so called because they resembled personal mail, sold twice as many tickets as their bulk-mail predecessors. *Pajama Tops* played in Seattle for ten weeks, an unprecedented run in that city.

One night during the Seattle run, a man named Caplan begged Zev Bufman to bring the show to Miami Beach. He claimed he had a wonderful theater there, perfect for *Pajama Tops*. Out of the question, Bufman replied; the tour was fully booked. The show was due at the Nixon Theater in Pittsburgh in two weeks.

Several days later, however, a backstage fire forced the Nixon Theater to close for three months. Suddenly, Bufman found himself with a show, a cast under contract, but no theater. Frantically, he hunted for a theater that could take an immediate booking. He searched his memory for the name of the man from Miami Beach. He remembered Caplan, but no first name and no spelling. Desperate, he called Miami Beach information, only to discover that Caplan was also spelled Caplin, Kaplan and Kaplin. Together they totalled more than 500 listings. Somehow, he got the telephone number of the Roosevelt Theater.

"May I speak to Mr. Caplan?" Bufman asked.

"Which one?" At the Roosevelt Theater, there were nine.

"Who is the heavy set guy who has a mustache and smokes a cigar and who saw *Pajama Tops* in Seattle?" Bufman asked.

Sonny Caplan came to the phone. Before long, he put his brother Martin Caplan on. Martin and Zev Bufman negotiated a deal in six hours and confirmed it by telegram. Bufman had a theater, and he left for Miami Beach.

When he arrived at the Roosevelt Theater, he was aghast. The Roosevelt was a movie house. The stage was tiny. The lighting was terrible. There was no back stage, and there were no dressing rooms. Caplan's theater would not do, but Caplan had another idea.

"Get into the car," he said. They drove for what seemed an eternity.

"I had no idea where we were," Bufman recalled. "I was afraid he would ditch me in a canal, and I tried to memorize street signs along the way in case I had to try and escape."

Caplan's plan, however, was not murder. He took Bufman to the Coconut Grove Playhouse, which had been uninhabited and closed since early that year.

"I fell in love with that theater," Bufman said.

Caplan agreed to lease it for the run of *Pajama Tops*

A gala premiere was set for October 9, 1962. For publicity John Agar, the male lead, offered to kiss the first twelve women who arrived at the theater. Both Agar and Wilkinson promised to pose for amateur photographers after each performance. June Wilkinson agreed to spend an evening with the man who best stated "why I want to win a date with June Wilkinson" in twenty-five words or less.

All entries but one came from men. The winner was a woman. Her maiden name was Luck and she was married to Tom Sawyer. She wrote:

"Tom's birthday. Thirty years. Married ten years. Be my present to him for ten years of faithful service. I'll never be this generous again."

On the appointed evening, a chauffeured limousine transported Tom Sawyer and June Wilkinson to dinner at the elegant Cafe Jardin Suisse, then to the Playboy Club, and finally to Pumpernicks delicatessen for breakfast.

With good publicity and promises of titillating fare, June Wilkinson and her frothy farce were as successful in Miami as in Seattle and Los Angeles. The house was packed for the opening. Friday and Saturday night performances the first week

sold out early, and a second Saturday night show, scheduled to begin at 10:30, sold out as soon as it was announced. *Pajama Tops*, with a top ticket price of $3.50, earned $18,500 the first week. After four weeks sales were still going strong, and the run was extended.

As the eight-week Miami run drew to a close, Bufman and Seiden put together a second cast starring Christine Jorgensen to reopen in Los Angeles. From Miami, the eastern company went to Pittsburgh, Jamaica, Cincinnati, Dayton, Columbus, Denver, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, Baltimore, Toronto, Chicago, Kansas City, St. Louis, and Detroit.

In each city, the response was the same. Although reviews were atrocious, newspapers everywhere emphasized the gimmicks. Rarely did they miss the opportunity for a cliché or double entendre alluding to June Wilkinson's body.

"44-22-35 Is Measure of Farce and Acting" said one headline. "She Got Exposure, All Right," proclaimed another. "Miss Wilkinson Bares Facts On Posing For Nude Photos," announced a third, while a fourth broadcast, "Playboy's No. 1 Girl Measures Up. . . She Barely Made It."

Despite the reviews, the crowds pushed the show all the way to Broadway, where pre-opening box office sales averaged $5,000 a day. It was booked into the Winter Garden theater for the last opening of the 1962-63 season.

Bufman and Seiden knew that, of all reviewers, critics in New York would be the most severe. So they bluntly asked them to stay away. *Pajama Tops* is for audiences, not critics, Bufman and Seiden proclaimed, and they refused the critics complimentary tickets. They also set the opening to coincide with the first night of *King Lear* at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival in Connecticut.

But the critics could not be diverted. They bought their own tickets and, predictably, tore the production apart. Robert Coleman, writing for the *New York Mirror*, called *Pajama Tops* the "champ of bad plays." *Women's Wear Daily* was harsher still: "*Pajama Tops* . . . [is] easily the cheapest, most amateurish, dullest piece of trash that has been put on a local stage in the last ten years. It will set the cause of dirty jokes back a half a decade at least."

The New York critics may not have liked what they saw, but they followed a pattern set by thousands of viewers in other cities across the continent. They came because they were curious.

7

ON the hot September day when Martin Caplan introduced Zev Bufman to the Coconut Grove Playhouse, the theater had been shut for months. It was stuffy and smelled of mildew. Yet Bufman wanted this theater. Before *Pajama Tops* finished its run, Bufman had leased the Playhouse for a full season.

At the time, Bufman and his partner Seiden operated six theaters in Los Angeles, one in San Francisco and another in Seattle. On the Pacific coast they were producing *A Taste of Honey, Under the Yum Yum Tree* and *Write Me a Murder.* They were also preparing a university tour of *The World of Carl Sandburg* with Herbert Marshall and Barbara Stanwyck.

But nowhere did they have a beautiful theater like the Coconut Grove Playhouse. That first day, Zev Bufman sat on the bare stage and stared into the empty auditorium. As George Engle had before him, he envisioned men and women in velvets and brocades spending an elegant evening at the theater. He saw them dining in one of the theater's restaurants, then strolling across the lobby in time for curtain, and sipping champagne during intermission.

He also contemplated capitalizing on the theater's South Florida location to acquire rights to Broadway hits. He knew how theater rights were held and released. He knew, for example, that once a producer held the rights for a New York play, no one else could produce that play in any location or under any circumstances that might be competitive. A road company might obtain rights to the play, but it would be restricted from producing the show so close to Manhattan as to attract

potential New York audiences. Similarly, once a road company obtained rights to a traveling production, additional access to those rights would be restricted.

Those who held play rights enjoyed the freedom to sell them to the highest bidder. Usually, price depended on the income anticipated from the production. This income was based on the estimated number of seats in the theater, the individual ticket price, and the estimated number of performances.

Bufman was aware of all these practices. He also saw that Coconut Grove was tucked so deeply into the southeastern corner of the country that it posed no competition either for touring companies or Broadway. At the same time, the size of the Playhouse and the absence of other professional theater in Miami could only strengthen Bufman's bargaining position.

"I was a gut player," Bufman said. "I played everything on instinct. I was reckless. I took chances. I was at an age where I felt if I get in trouble I'll come out of it."

The partners decided that Bufman would head up the Florida operation. Seiden would stay on the West coast, and the two would communicate daily by teletype. With these plans in place, Bufman set off for New York to negotiate for current Broadway hits.

"I went to managers and producers and asked for special releases on their rights," Bufman explained. "I was not known in New York at that time. I had done one show on Broadway in 1960 and another in 1961, but they were flops. By 1962 I was just a novice who had failed. But I explained that I had a theater that was a replica of a Broadway house, with a large stage and seating capacity. I put money on the table. I offered managers and producers an extra percentage if they granted me a special release. I tried to convince them that if they made an exception to their usual practices and let me grow, my theater could become a wonderful place to try new plays. That approach appealed to some of the managements that had hits that year."

Though Bufman wanted to begin his season with a Broadway hit, he was forced to wait until mid-February for Paddy Chayefsky's *The Tenth Man.*

The Tenth Man had run three seasons in New York before touring rights were released. Arthur Cantor, producer of the Broadway show, directed the road company to brilliant success in California and brought his production intact to Coconut Grove for the southern premiere.

The Tenth Man combined ancient Jewish beliefs in demons with theories of contemporary psychology. The conflicts between religious and psychological themes attracted Jewish and non-Jewish audiences alike. Since playwright Chayefsky had recently won an Academy Award for *Marty* starring Ernest Borgnine, interest in *The Tenth Man* was particularly keen, and more than a dozen groups booked theater parties weeks before the opening.

Once it opened, *The Tenth Man* became a volcano of controversy in the Jewish community. Some rabbis delivered sermons in praise of the play. Others condemned it. A local television station arranged a panel discussion with a rabbi and three actors from the production. And when Bufman and Seiden invited forty rabbis and Jewish educators to debate the play after one performance, they argued for hours.

Although *The Tenth Man* had been booked for two weeks, it was extended to four and finally closed only because *A Thousand Clowns*, still playing to sell-out audiences on Broadway, had to open two days later. Enough people had bought tickets for opening night to fill temporary seats in the orchestra pit and crowd the standing room area.

When *A Thousand Clowns* opened at the Playhouse, Bufman reopened the art gallery for an exhibit of clown paintings. This event set a precedent that gathered momentum with ensuing productions. When *Irma la Douce*, the musical about the prostitute on the Left Bank of Paris, came to the Playhouse in 1963 Charlie Cinnamon and gallery director Ethel A. Blake decided to turn Coconut Grove into the Left Bank of Paris.

Never before had the theme of a show extended beyond the doors of the Playhouse. Never before had an art show taken to the streets of Coconut Grove. That October, the village resembled Montmartre. More than 150 artists exhibited their works in sidewalk booths that stretched down Main Highway. Painters worked on portraits. A ceramist threw pots on a port-

able wheel. Jewelers and sculptors displayed their creations. Flower vendors sold bouquets. French actress Genevieve, the star of *Irma la Douce*, judged a poodle competition in the alley next to the theater. Exotic birds chirped in cages. Strolling accordionists played "La Vie en Rose" and other French tunes.

The whole village joined the Gallic spirit. The Chamber of Commerce posted a sign announcing "Coconut Grove Goes Left Bank." Bert's gourmet market stocked brioche, marrons, and tripe. Beauty parlors posted photographs of Paris hair styles, and clothing stores dressed their manikins in French fashions. Ushers and doormen at the Playhouse dressed as French police. Even the spectators dressed in French costumes. They were chic. They were bohemian. Men wore beards and berets. Women put on bright stockings and matching short, tight skirts slit daringly up the side.

For two weeks, Coconut Grove was a festival. The visitors had fun, the artists made money, and by the time the artists packed up their booths and went home, they had decided to do the fair again.

Within a few months, the Coconut Grove Association was formed to manage what has become an annual event. The second Coconut Grove arts festival was held in April 1964. By 1986 the show had grown to 300 participants, who had been selected from 1,500 applicants throughout the United States and Canada. Their booths lined the main streets, the side streets, and the road along the bay. From the south end of the village to several blocks north of the commercial center, exhibits were everywhere. Leather goods, blown glass, stained glass, photography, ceramics, sculpture, woodwork, weaving, patchwork, paintings, and prints. More than a million spectators, bargain hunters, and serious collectors jammed the street during the three day festival. What had begun as a gimmick grew into one of the most prestigeous juried art shows in the nation.

Zev Bufman produced plays at the Coconut Grove Playhouse for eight years, longer than any other producer. Those years were punctuated by comedy, success, and frustration — like the miserable July night Walter Pidgeon arrived to play in *Lord Pengo*.

His plane from California had been delayed three hours. When he finally landed at midnight, he was disgruntled at the airline and disgusted with the torrential rains which threatened his plans for sailing.

Pidgeon was hard to satisfy that night. He arrived at his apartment in the Playhouse and had a tantrum. He looked at Zev Bufman and pointed wordlessly to the king size bed.

Bufman was dumbfounded. The mattress was firm, the bed attractively made up. He couldn't figure out the problem.

Then Pidgeon grabbed the mattress and flipped it over in disgust.

"I can't sleep on this," he said. "I sleep only on a very soft mattress. I want to go back to California."

"You can't go back," Bufman said gently. "It's 1:00 in the morning and there are no planes. Besides you have a contract."

Pidgeon was adamant, and Bufman was making little progress.

"Let's have a cup of tea and talk this over quietly," Bufman suggested.

Pidgeon didn't want tea. He didn't want a different apartment. He didn't want a hotel room. He didn't want Bufman's home a few blocks away. He refused to listen to reason, and he refused to be cajoled. Yet an hour later, when Bufman's staff found a softer mattress and moved it into Pidgeon's apartment, he was suddenly content.

"This is lovely. What time shall we begin rehearsal tomorrow morning?" Finally Pidgeon loosened his tie and kicked off his shoes.

The next morning he was cooperative and apologetic. He insisted that Bufman and his wife be his guests for dinner. He was gracious to the press. On opening night, he sparkled on stage. But he never liked his dressing room, and he never did another play in what was then referred to as a stock theater.

Through the years, there were technical problems. During *Gypsy*, Gisele MacKenzie's body mike, which she needed to amplify her voice, magnified the rustling of her taffeta dress.

To make matters worse, the microphone picked up short wave radio signals from the police and a local taxi cab com-

pany. On opening night, instead of "Everything's Coming up Roses," the audience heard the dispatcher for Yellow Cabs.

Sally Rand also suffered from technical difficulties during the dress rehearsal for *The Anatomy of Burlesque* in 1967. Rand, over sixty years old, had won fame as a nude fan dancer at the Chicago World's Fair thirty years earlier. Even in 1967 her stark white body covered only with ostrich plumes was striking in dark blue light, but she needed the blue light. When the blue gel became dislodged from her spotlight and revealed her body in bright light, she was mortified. She halted rehearsal to scold the lighting technician.

"Young man, at this point in my life, I need all the help I can get."

The technician wired the gel to the frame of the spotlight, and the problem did not recur.

Like startling moments on stage, the near misses stand out. One Tuesday night in 1964 audiences waited and waited for the curtain to rise on Liza Minnelli and Elliott Gould in *The Fantasticks*. Gould had gone to New York for the weekend and had not returned. A quick phone call to the airport revealed the plane had just arrived. Another phone call, and a wild police escort rushed Gould to the theater.

The audience was rewarded for their patience by a dazzling performance. George Abbott, renowned playwright, producer, and director, was so taken with Minnelli in *The Fantasticks* that, although she was new to the professional stage, he cast her in his Broadway production of *Flora, the Red Menace*. In *Flora*, Minnelli won a Tony, and her career took off.

The Playhouse was also important to Ann Miller. Her dynamic performance in *Mame* in 1969 ensured her stage comeback. On the closing night of her run, she told her audience, "Because of you I'm going to Broadway." She revitalized *Mame* on Broadway and went on to star in *Sugar Babies*.

Above all, the great performances stand out. In 1966 George C. Scott and Colleen Dewhurst starred in *Lion in Winter*. Enjoying a brief reconciliation between a separation and a subsequent divorce, the couple electrified their performance with gripping passion.

And in 1968 Ethel Merman was at her best in *Call Me Madam*. First, though, she unnerved many people. Dissatis-

fied with the imprecision of the orchestra musicians, she took over their rehearsal, which had been scheduled to last four hours. Merman forced repetition after repetition for twelve hours. At six the next morning, she finally gave the musicians a two-hour break, and then demanded two more hours of work.

During stage rehearsals, she was equally demanding of her supporting cast. Yet she went through her own part mechanically. Those who watched rehearsals worried she would be terrible. On opening night, however, she was Ethel Merman: powerful, dynamic, and exciting.

There were many superb productions: *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* with Jose Ferrer, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolf* with Shelley Winters, *Stop the World, I Want To Get Off* with Kenneth Nelson and Lesley Stewart, *The Roar of the Greasepaint the Smell of the Crowd*, also with Kenneth Nelson as well as Christopher Hewett and Jill Choder, *A Delicate Balance* with Jessica Tandy and Hume Cronyn, *After the Fall*, with Jose Ferrer and Karen Black.

During his eight years in Coconut Grove, Zev Bufman severed his partnership with Stan Seiden. In 1965 he bought the Playhouse from George Engle and had a 300-seat balcony installed. He also expanded his professional activity. He put together successful Broadway productions and touring packages. He produced cabarets and dinner theaters. He opened additional offices in New York and Hollywood, and he signed a contract to do three feature films. By 1970 Zev Bufman had effectively used the Playhouse to catalyze his career, and it was time for him to move on.

One day in 1970 comedian Eddie Bracken ran into Bufman in an elevator in New York. "Hey, Zev, you want to sell the Coconut Grove Playhouse?" Bracken asked.

From that seemingly spontaneous question, negotiations began. In October 1970 Zev Bufman sold the Coconut Grove Playhouse to Eddie Bracken and his partner, Gerald Arthur.

8

EDDIE Bracken made his professional stage debut at age eleven. From then on, his career climbed steadily, and by the 1940s he had been cast in popular and important films including *Hail the Conquering Hero, A Slight Case of Larceny, The Seven Year Itch, Teahouse of the August Moon, The Tender Trap, Mr. Roberts* and *Hello Dolly.* When he negotiated to buy the theater in Coconut Grove, he was acting in *Plaza Suite* at the Paper Mill Playhouse. Eddie Bracken was a comedian, not a businessman.

At first, his management of the Coconut Grove Playhouse appeared sound. When he opened with *Butterflies are Free*, *Herald* critic Fran Swaebly observed, "While you can hardly judge a whole season from one offering, so far things are secure in Bracken's hands." Although the rest of the season was relatively weak, Bracken achieved success again with *Three Goats in a Blanket.*

Three Goats was a box office hit. More importantly, the play gave Bracken the opportunity to rekindle Mickey Rooney's career. He hired the comedian even though Rooney had earned a reputation for poor discipline and repeated flops.

During rehearsals, Rooney justified his unflattering reputation. He upstaged the other actors and disrupted rehearsals with comic antics. The director quit. The cast, threatening to follow, were sullen and refused to rehearse.

On the morning before the first preview, Bracken realized he had a crisis and called a cast meeting without Rooney present.

"I hired you because you are pros, but you are acting like amateurs," Bracken told the group.

That accusation jolted the cast into airing their complaints, and they planned a strategy for dealing with Rooney.

"Fight back," Bracken advised. "I know it's unconventional, but ignore your blocking. Respond instinctively to what Rooney does on stage. Improvise as you go along."

When the curtain went up that night, Rooney was stunned. Everyone was moving unpredictably. Rooney, calling upon his best professional instincts, watched the others and moved to compliment them.

Because of Rooney's reputation, initial ticket sales were weak. Gradually, however, the word spread: the production was far from perfect, but Rooney was great. Sales picked up, and by the end of the run, *Three Goats in a Blanket* was the biggest box office success of the season. For Mickey Rooney, this success led to Broadway and a role in *Sugar Babies* opposite Ann Miller.

As the 1971 spring season ended, Bracken enticed the community to subscribe for the following year. He offered an unusually high 15% discount; champagne parties; and a free cultural series including guest speakers, panel discussions, and concerts. Before September, the community had sent Bracken checks totaling more than $150,000, but the season never took place. The Playhouse was bankrupt.

In an attempt to save the Playhouse, Miami mayor David Kennedy convened a committee of bankers to whom the Playhouse owed money. This committee and numerous concerned individuals attempted several unconventional schemes to prevent the inevitable. Despite enormous effort, the Playhouse went into receivership.

Throughout that fall and into the winter, the newspapers reported facts, rumors, progress, delays. The Playhouse will be auctioned. The auction is called off. The salvation scheme fell apart. A receiver is named. Potential buyers came forth. One looks good. Two look good. A buyer seems secure. The Playhouse will open in December. No, January. Maybe March.

Arthur Cantor and Robert Fishko, the two men who finally bought the Playhouse with financial backing from a

Toronto broadcasting company, were nationally known producers who had worked at the Playhouse before. Cantor had directed *A Thousand Clowns* during Zev Bufman's first season. Fishko had brought *A Delicate Balance* and *George M* to the Playhouse a few years later. Although they saw the same advantages to the theater's South Florida location that Zev Bufman had identified ten years earlier, they approached the venture cautiously.

"There were at least twelve times that we simply walked away," said Cantor. "Every time we looked under the carpet, we found another lien. We spent several weeks after we finally took over just removing the sheriff's notices from all over the building."

The curtain was in shreds; the air conditioning and the elevator were not working. Telephone and lights were disconnected, and the insurance was about to expire. Worse, they worried that the failed 1971-72 season had ruined the theater's credibility.

Immediately Cantor and Fishko made a gesture of good will to restore the community's faith. Although the carpeting was tattered and the air smelled musty, they invited the University of Miami to stage *Fiddler on the Roof* at the Playhouse as a benefit for the University's scholarship fund. During the first weekend in June, the theater came alive for the first time in nine months.

During the next ten weeks, Fishko and Cantor spent more than $150,000 on new air conditioning, a sound system, upholstery, carpeting, paint, and varnish. They hung new draperies and awnings. They redecorated the two restaurants and the bar. They resurfaced the parking lot, fenced it for security, and installed better lighting.

Fishko and Cantor obliterated their debts and promised to honor subscriptions from the 1971-72 season. Though they had no legal obligation to do so, they undertook what they phrased an "ethical responsibility." They announced a one-third credit on subscriptions each year for three years.

By the end of November sixty-five percent of subscription holders had renewed and the first show was set. The celebrated Robert Horton would play the *Man of La Mancha*.

"There's a spirit of expectation and optimism these days," Bill von Maurer observed as the December 5 opening drew close.

On December 1, Horton quit.

Bob Fishko, who was responsible for day-to-day operations at the Playhouse, lost no time securing a replacement. He knew that Howard Keel had done the role successfully before, and he knew someone who knew Keel. Luckily that someone was home. Luckily that someone helped Fishko find Keel. And luckily, Keel said yes.

Bob Fishko contacted Howard Keel on the ninth hole of a California golf course on Saturday morning, December 2. Keel flew to Miami that day. By Sunday he was involved in marathon rehearsals. He had Horton's costume quickly altered so it wouldn't fall off, and he opened to rave reviews on Tuesday.

Man of La Mancha was a perfect opener for the new era. It was popular, and it was exciting. More important, it was symbolic. Don Quixote, who dreamed the impossible dream, spoke poignantly to those who anxiously watched the Playhouse begin anew.

In the following years, Fishko presented many other marvelous musicals. Among them was *Don't Bother Me, I Can't Cope*, which ran ten weeks in the summer of 1974. *Cope* was the first of several black experience musicals conceived and directed by Vinnette Carroll. It was a hand-clapping, soul-swelling celebration of the black experience that ran on Broadway for more than 1,000 performances and garnered four awards including an Obie. In Coconut Grove, *Cope* made its audience soar as it had in New York, but in this southern village, the glory of the music was, in some ways, just a footnote. More profound was the human victory which this production represented off the stage.

When the Coconut Grove Playhouse opened in 1956, it was a southern white institution. For blacks in Miami, the Playhouse was out of reach. Black actor John Archie, who grew up in Miami and nurtured his interest in theater in a Miami high school, never even knew the Playhouse existed until he was in college. Another black actor, Clarence Thomas, knew about the Playhouse and objected to its exclusionist policy. In 1960

Thomas, who was teaching speech and drama in the Dade County schools, confronted Owen Phillips, then producer at the Playhouse. To Thomas' surprise, Phillips was sympathetic and agreed to reverse the theater's policy of segregation more than four years before the Civil Rights Decision of 1964 mandated the desegregation of public places.

Yet blacks continued to stay away. Even when Joyce Bryant headed a brilliant black cast in *Porgie and Bess* in 1965, the audience was almost exclusively white. It was Vinnette Carroll's work that brought the black audiences out in force.

When Bob Fishko arranged for the national touring company of *Cope* to come to the Playhouse, he promised the cast a minimum three-week engagement. After the first week, however, he gave the cast their termination notices.

"It looks like we've exhausted our liberal white audience," actress Corky Dozier remembered Fishko saying.

Unwilling to close the show, the cast set out to corral the audience. Dozier, who had a master's degree in communications, realized that the Playhouse's advertising was not reaching the black community, and that even if it had, Miami's lukewarm attitude toward integration would have kept many blacks away.

To acquaint the black community with theater, she took the cast into black neighborhoods all over Miami. They performed in schools, on the street, and in black churches. When some church-goers objected to the musical as sinful, she brought in black university professors to discuss spiritual dance.

She secured free advertising space from *The Miami Times*, *The Miami Herald*, and its *Neighbors* supplements. She got radio stations and television stations which attracted a black audience to donate promotional time. She sold blocks of seats to wealthy black business people and distributed free tickets to school children and adults too poor to pay admission. She even chartered buses.

Whites came, too. Blacks as well as whites returned two, three, even four times. They got to know the music and joined in the singing.

"The joyous message of humanity which came from the show reached beyond it," said Dozier, who later joined the Playhouse staff as director of new audiences and who also founded the Coconut Grove Children's Theater.

"Some white people in Miami had parties for the cast and invited blacks to their homes for the first time in their lives. At a time when there was so much unrest in other areas, *Cope*, more than any other single vehicle, delivered a universal message of understanding."

Bob Fishko attracted black audiences again with *Purlie* and *Bubblin' Brown Sugar*. Vinnette Carroll also came back with her subsequent hit *When Hell Freezes over I'll Skate*, in 1983. Vinnette Carroll, who had once been ordered out of the Playhouse lobby, chose this theater for the world premiere of her musical about black America and with *Skate* broke all previous Playhouse records.

Throughout Bob Fishko's five years at the Playhouse, he pursued a commitment to compelling, challenging, and distressing works. He presented *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *Moonchildren*, *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds*, and *That Championship Season*. But *Equus* was the best.

Theatergoers eagerly awaited the arrival of *Equus* on Broadway after raves for the London production appeared in *The New York Times*. Once the Broadway production opened, its meaning, shocking violence, and blatant portrayal of sex provoked heated dinner party debate. Everyone, it seemed, was talking about *Equus*. Then, in mid-December 1974 a Harvard psychiatrist published an article in *The New York Times* denouncing the play as invalid psychiatry and inept theater. Three weeks later, the Times printed an exchange of letters attacking and defending this article. In the throes of this exchange, *Equus* became even more popular and controversial.

Bob Fishko ached to produce *Equus* in Miami. He had seen the play in New York and was struck by its brilliance. Through a series of fortunate coincidences, Fishko acquired the first right to produce this play outside London or New York. *Equus* opened in Miami in April 1975, four weeks after

the play won five Tony Awards and while tickets to the Broadway production were almost impossible to secure.

The success of the Miami production exceeded all of Fishko's expectations. Retirees came from the Beach. Students came from the universities. Business people, professionals, and socialites came from suburbia. Everyone sat riveted as the anguish on stage intensified.

"No one coughed or cleared his throat," *The Miami Herald's* Bill Hutchinson remembered. "A lady who had spent the first act rearranging an impressive collection of cellophane in her purse rearranged herself into a posture of total absorption." Even the gentleman in the garish shirt, who spent much of the play enumerating the virtues of old-fashioned comedy, grew intent toward the end of the second act.

Equus ran eighteen weeks through the summer and into September. It surpassed financial records previously held by *Hair* and *Championship Season.* For many who saw it, *Equus* provided the most electrifying theater experience of their lives.

Though Bob Fishko's successes increased steadily for four years, the trend changed in 1976. The Baton Broadcasting Company withdrew its financial support. Furthermore, other professional theater had emerged in South Florida. The 3,000-seat Miami Beach Theater of Performing Arts, Parker Playhouse in Fort Lauderdale, and the Royal Poinciana Playhouse in Palm Beach now competed with the Coconut Grove Playhouse. Rights to popular, recent Broadway plays became more difficult to obtain, and Fishko decided to sell.

"I felt that the only kind of theater that could survive in this changing scene was non-profit, repertory theater," said Fishko, alluding to non-profit companies' ability to obtain play rights and theater services without competing with profit-oriented producers.

Fortunately, the Players Repertory Theater wanted to buy.

9

THE Players Repertory Theater began because Dan Duckworth was committed to serious theater. In 1968 Duckworth, a graduate of the drama department at the University of Miami, created a non-profit organization to build a resident regional theater company. With the funding he received, he opened the Gaslight Theater in a converted coffee house in Coconut Grove.

In the earliest days, enthusiastic amateurs, students, and quasi-professionals acted in and directed the plays. This was true community theater. The actors were not paid, and their performances were not always polished. Once, the drama teacher from Coral Gables High School directed a production of *Antigone* in which Sylvester Stalone, then a drama student at the University of Miami, played the role of Creon's son. Befitting the contemporary costuming of the production, the tall young man was splendidly outfitted in black tails, white shirt, and a scarlet sash stretching from his left shoulder to his right hip. As he walked on stage, he looked imposing, but then he began to speak.

"I am your son, father. . . . You make things clear for me," he tried to say. But "things" sounded like "dings," "father" sounded like "fadduh," and Stalone sounded more like Rocky from South Philadelphia than Haimon from Thebes.

Conditions at the Gaslight were as crude as some of their productions. When actors exited from one side of the small stage to make their next entrance from the other side, they had to leave the building. They ran out the back door, around the garbage dumpster, around the adjoining building, and in

through the front door. This detour caused difficulties with pacing and created terrible problems on rainy nights.

"We had to have all sorts of arrangements with towels and umbrellas so people could dash around in the muck and get back into the building for their next entrance," remembered veteran actor Hal Bergman.

During the day, Dan Duckworth and his wife Carol kept the books, vacuumed the floors, and cleaned the toilets. During performances at night, juke box music from the restaurant next door pounded against the wall. Nevertheless, Duckworth's company quickly established a loyal following. Professional actors and directors became involved, donating their time at first. When the bankroll increased, the nucleus of the group began receiving twenty-five, maybe thirty dollars a week. In 1970 the company was solid enough to move into a larger theater at the Museum of Science, and Dan Duckworth gave up his job as a stock broker to work full-time as producer.

The Museum of Science theater could accommodate an audience of three hundred, but conditions remained primitive. The stage was larger, but there was still no back stage. There were no separate rest rooms for the cast, so they were forced to use the public rest rooms in the lobby after the audience was settled in the auditorium.

Neither did the Museum of Science have dressing rooms. After a while, the company acquired a small trailer, where they took turns dressing and making up. Before then, they dressed in the concrete vault beside the air conditioning unit. The compressor, which came on intermittently, drowned out all conversation. Worse, it sucked up all papers, make-up, and bits of fabric in its path. As Don Stout dressed for *The Importance of Being Earnest*, his artificial beard was pulled off his face by this machine, nicknamed the Giant Suckasaurus.

In spite of these conditions, or maybe because of them, the Players Repertory Theater became an intimate family. Most of the members, who still held outside jobs, spent more time with each other than they did with anyone else.

"The theater was all consuming. It became our social life as well as our professional life," Hal Bergman said. "We partied together, and we took care of each other's kids. When

Don Stout's wife left him with eleven kids, he used to bring the littlest boys to rehearsal. Night after night the little kids would sit in the front row and fall asleep."

The intimate conditions attracted people who felt comfortable with one another, and the company grew. So did the quality of their productions and the commitment of their audience.

"At the Museum of Science, the audience felt as though they had been welcomed into a family's home for some entertainment. After the performances, the actors always mingled with the audience, and the audience grew to feel very much a part of the family," Metzger recalled.

Before the end of their first season at the Museum of Science, Players began negotiations to acquire Equity status. By July 1971 Dan Duckworth had his Equity card, and the group was on its way to becoming the second Equity company in Florida, one of only four in the southeastern United States.

Miami stood behind this group so solidly that in 1974 when they first flirted with fiscal disaster, even their competition rallied in support. Hank Diers, director of the University of Miami's Ring Theater, and Ruth Foreman appealed to their respective audiences for help. With generous donations from the community, Players limped along for three years. By January 1977 however, they were broke. They had fallen so far into debt that they were forced to cease operations in mid-season.

Tom Spencer, a Miami attorney who was then president of the Board, turned to the community for support. He called a press conference to plead the Player's cause. He spoke on radio and television. He spoke at civic meetings. He banged on doors and begged for money. Within a month, he raised the $50,000 the group needed to complete their season.

More significantly, his fund raising effort was a valuable preamble. As a result of the ensuing events, the Players Repertory Theater not only paid all their debts but, within seven months, amassed enough money to buy the $1 million Coconut Grove Playhouse and became the second theater in Florida's state theater system.

The financial difficulties that Players experienced in the winter of 1977 brought the company to the attention of the

state. Early in the spring, Howard Millman, managing director of the Asolo, Florida's official state theater in Sarasota, approached Spencer about becoming an arm of the state program.

"We think you've got a great track record. We're ready to expand, and we'd like to talk to you about becoming the second state theater in Florida," Millman told Spencer.

In addition, Millman implied that the affiliation included financial support from the state. Enticed by the prospect of money, Spencer invited Dick Fallon, founder of the state theater program and chairman of the Florida State Theater Board, and Howard Millman to convince the Players' Board that affiliating with the state was a good idea.

"Fallon was like Billy Graham talking about theater. He spoke as if theater were water itself and if we didn't drink this water that society would dry up," Spencer remembered. "When he finished, I wanted to be born again as a theater director."

Other members of the Players' Board were not so quickly converted. They feared that, in joining the state, they would lose their autonomy. However, two other events occurred at about the same time to persuade them: Players lost their lease at the Museum of Science, and they learned from critic Candice Russell that the Coconut Grove Playhouse was for sale.

Joining the state would give Players $90,000. Although they knew they could not use it to buy a theater, they felt that the promise of this money for operating expenses would enable them to raise enough money to buy the building. Thus the Board decided to join the state system and try to purchase the Playhouse. Purchase price: $934,000.

"It was absolutely crazy," Gerry Pulver said. "We had no money. We had no performance space. We didn't even have a producer at the time. I guess we figured, 'what did we have to lose?'"

They knew that the Playhouse and attendant property, a total of two and a half acres, was zoned to discourage tearing the theater down and erecting a building of another nature. The zoning, which reduced the desirability of the property, forced the Baton Broadcasting Company into a weak bargaining position. With this knowledge, Pulver and

Spencer each contributed $1,000 as a gesture of good faith and began negotiations.

Once negotiations to buy the Playhouse and join the state theater system were underway, Spencer and Pulver planned a fund-raising theater junket to Sarasota. They rented a bus, filled it with interested people, and set off for a weekend of theater. On the way back, Spencer and Pulver passed the hat. Although the people on that bus had gone to Sarasota with no strings attached, each couple donated $1,000 before the ride was over.

Next came the dinner parties. Twice a week from mid-July until the end of September the Pulvers and the Spencers had a dinner party for twenty-four different people. Twice a week for two and a half months, Sybil Pulver and Heather Spencer served chicken kiev. Twice a week the team repeated the party formula. After cocktails and dinner, Tom Spencer spun his fantasy of seeing Players at the Coconut Grove Playhouse. Then Gerry Pulver, chewing on his cigar, stood up and said, "Here's the deal."

"If you contribute a thousand dollars, you become a Founder of the Players State Theater at the Coconut Grove Playhouse. We'll give you champagne parties and engrave your name on a plaque of appreciation. Best of all, you can have any seat in the house, and it will be yours forever. By the time other people find out about these seats, each one will be worth $2,000, so you're going to make 100% return on your charitable contribution."

Before the guests could say yes or no, the show began. Hal Bergman performed two scenes from his one man show, *Clarence Darrow*.

"He was so unbelievable that these people got up from their chairs in the Pulvers' living room clapping and crying, 'Encore.' By the time the evening was over, they were begging to give us their thousand dollars," Spencer said.

By the end of September, Sybil Pulver and Heather Spencer closed their kitchen. Gerry Pulver hated chicken kiev. And the Players had raised $157,000, enough to make their down payment and secure a mortgage.

The Playhouse was theirs. But it was old and crumbling. Again, it needed structural and mechanical repairs as well as

redecorating. Once again, Tom Spencer turned to the community for help. This time, merchants donated carpeting, bricks, wood, nails and paint. Plumbers repaired the pipes. Electricians redesigned the electrical system and built a light board for the theater. Volunteers cleaned and painted the building. They laid new brick in the outside foyer. Lyle Baskin, set designer for the company, turned the lobby into a nineteenth century river boat using inexpensive set design techniques. Penny Praigg, costume designer, built a stained glass ficus tree and set it in the center of the lobby. Inside and out the playhouse was bright and beckoning. Yet the Players had spent only $1,500.

On December 30, 1977, the curtain rose once more in the Coconut Grove Playhouse. This time, the marquis outside read Players State Theater Presents.

10

IN 1965 Dick Fallon, dean of theater at Florida State University, convinced the state legislature to support the Asolo Theater in Sarasota as Florida's official theater. His primary goal was the creation of a professional theater where students could intern and Floridians could enjoy quality performances. When the Players Repertory Theater agreed to join the state theater system, they became Florida's east coast equivalent of Asolo.

Players received the support inherent in the state's commitment to its official theater. In return, Players agreed to submit their proposed budget and selection of plays to the state theater board for approval. Players also agreed to build educational programs consistent with the state's mandate and to hire an artistic director who met the approval of the state board.

That person was David Robert Kanter, who held a Ph.D. in theater as well as impressive acting and directing credits. Kanter had been managing director of the Meadowbrook Theater in Rochester, Michigan. In his six years there, he eliminated a $350,000 debt and doubled subscriptions. When Kanter left the Meadowbrook, the 600-seat theater was nearly filled with subscription holders alone.

"My ambition is to get [the Players State Theater at the Coconut Grove Playhouse] off the ground and to make it one of the most renowned in America," Kanter said after accepting the dual roles of artistic and managing director for the Players. He began with an impressive production of *Cyrano de Bergerac*. But he achieved his greatest successes with the plays he called "cage rattlers."

Like Bob Fishko before him, Bob Kanter was committed to shaking his audience out of complacency. During his first season, he presented *Streamers*, an anti-Vietnam play with male nudity and a horrific blood bath.

"I can't say I liked it, but I'll never forget it," one viewer said as he left the theater.

Kanter began his second season with *Ceremonies in Dark Old Men*, an interesting play about the black experience. People asked, "Why at the beginning of the season?" Kanter responded, "Why not."

In 1981 Kanter offered *Oedipus Rex* with an all black cast. Again, the audience asked why, and again Kanter answered, "Why not."

All his experiments did not succeed. Sometimes the play he chose was weak. Sometimes the play was great but the production didn't work.

"In theater, you've got to be prepared to fail," Kanter asserted. "It's the only way to cut new ground.

Sometimes, of course, the experiments worked well, and occasionally they worked brilliantly. One of these gems was *Shadow Box* , which Joe Adler directed in 1979. With this moving drama, Adler demonstrated how the success of a production can hinge on the validity of the director's interpretation.

Ironically, Adler had seen *Shadow Box* on Broadway, didn't like it, and wouldn't have directed it if Bob Kanter hadn't invited him to. Adler felt the play, which is about the life, fears, and relationships of three cancer patients dying in a hospice, was pretentious and cluttered with heavy-handed theatrical devices. Faced with directing the play in Miami, he set out to make what he felt were important changes.

He began with the belief that people who are dying deserve a pleasant atmosphere.

"If you were going to build a place for people to go when they're dying, wouldn't you want to make it bright and upbeat?" Adler asked, and changed the set.

Unlike the original, which was predominantly dark, Adler's featured light woods and colors reminiscent of northern California.

Adler also decided to heighten the comedy.

"I felt the play was depressing and somber enough. What

we had to do was build on the great comic moments that were in the play, especially in Act I," Adler said.

At intermission, the audience seemed happily surprised with the uplifting quality of the drama.

"Then," Adler said," we clobbered them with the second act."

"I always liked watching the audience leaving after the play. I would look to see how many people had red eyes, how many people had really been moved to tears. Then, when the theater was empty, I'd walk down the aisles toward the stage and count the crumpled tissues lying on the floor, and I'd give a count to the actors. 'Hey, today we had a thirty-tissue matinee,' I'd report."

Despite the pain of the second act, *Shadow Box* was an exceedingly positive experience for audience and cast alike.

"The humor helped the audience to accept what was happening on stage and cope with the play's issues of life and family bonding," Adler said.

While *Shadow Box* benefited from Adler's interpretation, its success derived from the effective melding of good direction with a fine script, outstanding acting, and an effective set. *Getting Out*, which Bob Kanter directed in 1981, demonstrated that same concert of qualities.

This play, which asks whether ex-convicts deserve society's acceptance, reveals the desperate loneliness of a woman newly released from prison. Haunted by memories of being abused as a child and abandoned in a jail cell, Arlene struggles to endure her job as a dishwasher and her home in a tenement. The battle with her memories is personified in her alter ego, Arlie, who appears, in flashbacks, still in jail.

Because the setting shifts back and forth between apartment and jail cell, designer Lyle Baskin was faced with the challenge of designing a split set. He used dim lighting on peeling wallpaper to heighten the squalor of Arlene's apartment. He also magnified the cold hollowness of the prison by utilizing the black cement wall at the back of the stage and lighting it in chilling blue. If these efforts weren't enough, every time the cell door closed, a jarring clang echoed Arlie's emptiness and despair.

Into this scene, came Megan McTavish in the role of Arlene. Helping her capture Arlene's torment was Bob Kanter as director.

"Megan became so emotional that she could not get through her long speech near the end of the play," Kanter remembered. "So I suggested that she play the speech by trapping the emotion rather than allowing it to explode. This approach enabled her to stifle her anguish through over control."

This intensity contributed to Megan McTavish's impassioned performance, and her performance contributed to the power of the production. As Mark Londner of the Miami NBC News affiliate said, "*Getting Out* is a sensational piece of theater. The writing is strong, the staging is crisp, and the overall effect is spellbinding."

During Bob Kanter's five years as artistic director, Players exemplified the bold and experimental nature that characterizes much of non-profit regional theater. Also during his tenure, the Players State Theater sold the Coconut Grove Playhouse to the State of Florida.

With their mortgage payments in mind, the Player's Board looked to the future and realized that the theater might not survive. To avoid this possibility, the Player's Board of Trustees approached the State. Thanks to Secretary of State George Firestone, the state of Florida agreed to purchase the building in 1979. That purchase, in addition to financially unburdening the Players, assured the future of the Playhouse building.



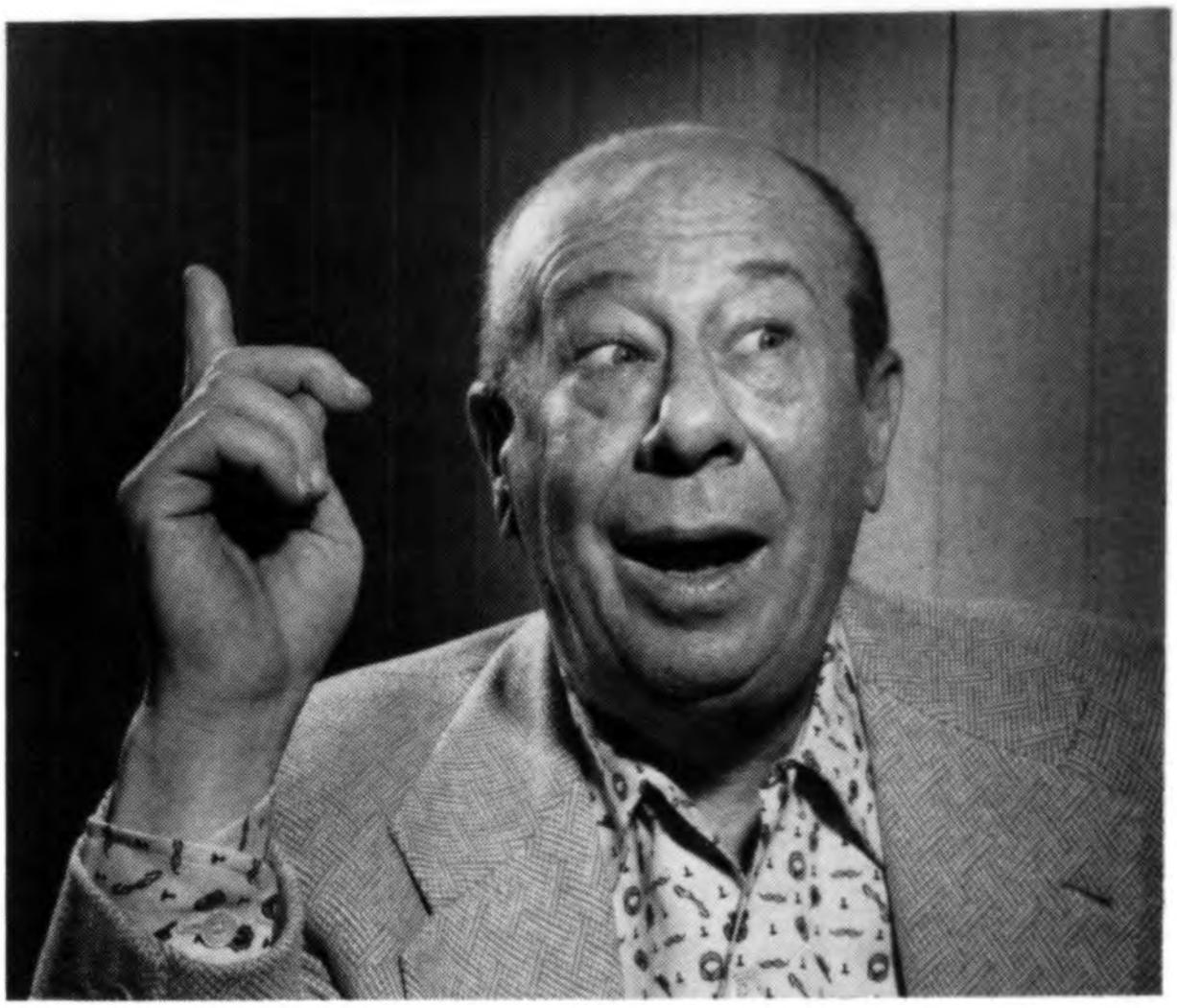
George and Dorothy Engle celebrating Mr. Engle's birthday in the Playhouse Art Gallery.



Mr. and Mrs. Engle entertain guests in the Playhouse dining room. Architect Alfred Browning Parker is seated at the far left.



The Playhouse Gallery and Celebrity Room.



Bert Lahr during *Waiting for Godot*



Tallulah Bankhead during *A Streetcar Named Desire*.



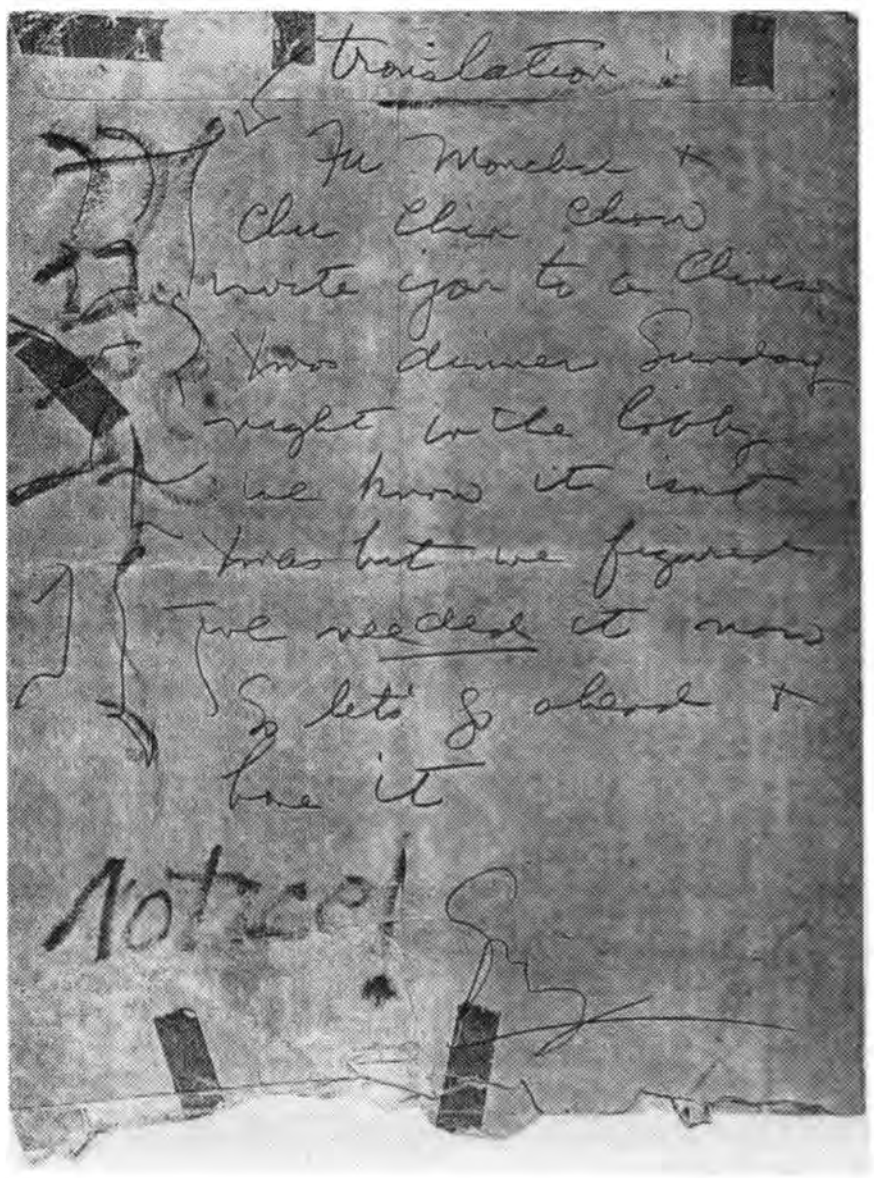
Victor Borge, who performed at the Playhouse.



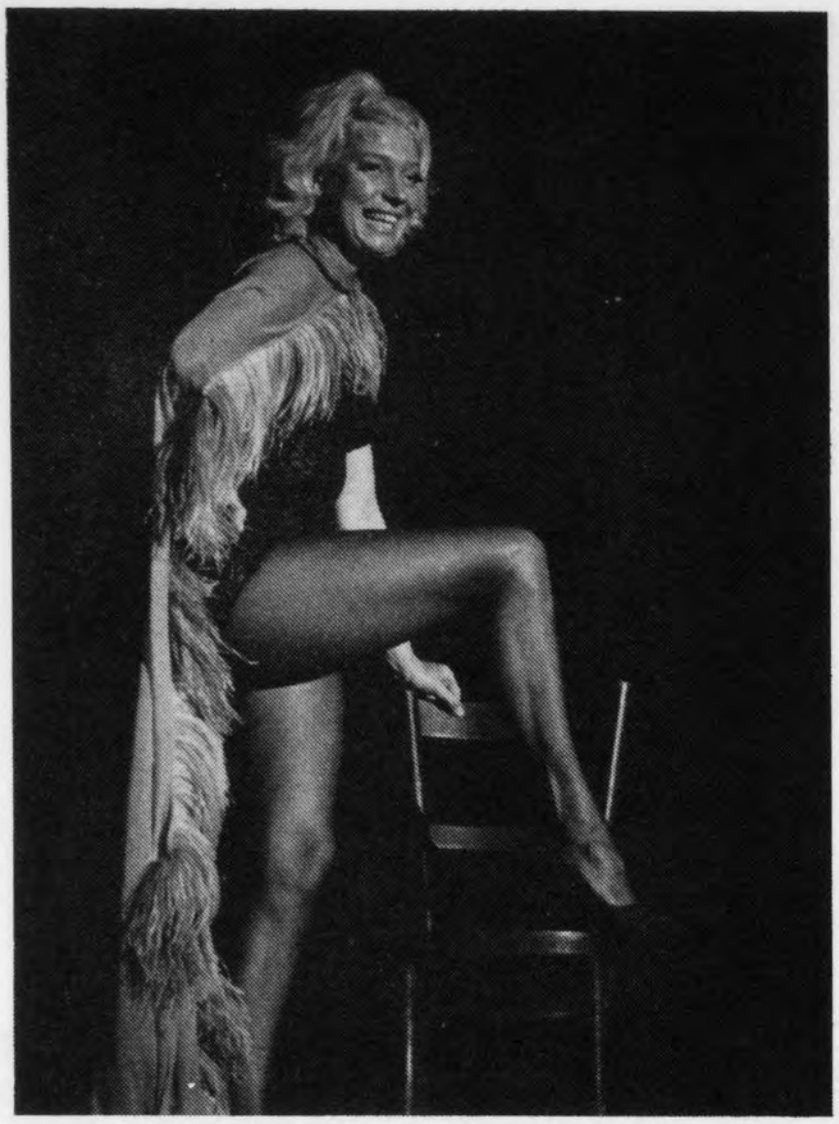
Bea Lillie during *An evening with Beatrice Lillie*.



Gypsy Rose Lee in her Playhouse dressing room.



Gypsy Rose Lee's hand written invitation to a Chinese Christmas dinner.



Carol Channing in
Show Business.



Tennessee Williams during the run
of *A Streetcar Named Desire*.



Edwina Williams and Owen Phillips dining at the Playhouse restaurant on the opening night of *Period of Adjustment*.



President Harry Truman and wife Bess with the cast of *The Happy Time*, starring their daughter Margaret Truman.



Curtain call
for the cast of
The Women.

OCTOBER 19 THRU OCTOBER 24

DOROTHY J. ENGLE presents

"The Women"

(A TIMELESS SATIRE)

BY **CLARE BOOTHE**

DIRECTED BY OWEN PHILLIPS

Settings and Lighting by the production staffs of
The Women Company and the Coconut Grove Playhouse
under the supervision of Tom McKeehan.

CAST (in order of appearance)

JANE ..... PATSY (Mrs. Frank J.) ROONEY
NANCY (Miss Blake) ..... PAT (Mrs. Gene F.) GABRIEL
PEGGY (Mrs. John Day) ..... ANNETTE (Mrs. James Jr.) BILLINGS
SYLVIA (Mrs. Howard Fowler) . . KAY (Mrs. John M.) MONTGOMERY
EDITH (Mrs. Phelps Potter) ..... TOBY (Mrs. Dick) MERRILL
MARY (Mrs. Stephen Haines) ..... ISABEL (Mrs. Lee) GILBERT
MRS. WAGSTAFF ..... BILLIE (Mrs. Stefan H.) ZACHAR
FIRST HAIRDRESSER ..... GINA (Mrs. James) BROWNE
SECOND HAIRDRESSER ..... PAT (Mrs. Richard H.) BOHN
PEDICURIST ..... MABEL (Mrs. Donald F.) MARION
OLGA ..... BETTY (Mrs. Stuart W.) PATTON
EUPHIE ..... SUE (Mrs. Joseph F.) MAYOR
A MUD-MASK ..... EUNICE (Mrs. John) HALIFAX
COOK (Ingrid) ..... PAT (Mrs. Paul) BROMBERG
MISS FORDYCE ..... HELEN (Mrs. George H.) BEEBE
LITTLE MARY ..... MINETTE YUNES
MRS. MOREHEAD ..... IRENE (Mrs. Ralph W.) CRUM
FIRST SALESGIRL ..... MARY LOU (Mrs. Clark) LA SALLE
SECOND SALESGIRL ..... EDITH BLAKE
HEAD SALESWOMAN (Miss Shapiro) . . BARBARA (Mrs. John) BITTER
FIRST MODEL (Miss Myrtle) ..... ANNE (Mrs. Leonard) SHAW
SECOND SALESWOMAN ..... ETHEL TOMBRINK
A FITTER ..... VIRGINIA (Mrs. Daniel M.) VALENTINE
PRINCESS TAMARA ..... PAMELA (Mrs. Franklin H.) JOHNSON
CRYSTAL ALLEN ..... JUNE (Mrs. Robert V.) EDWARDS
EXERCISE INSTRUCTRESS .... NANCY (Mrs. Deering) McCORMICK
MAGGIE ..... HELEN (Mrs. William W.) MUIR
MISS TRIMMERBACK ..... SHIRLEY (Mrs. Lockwood M.) PIRIE
MISS WATTS ..... RENEE (Mrs. F. Stilwell) DIXON
A NURSE ..... FRANCES (Mrs. R. B. Jr.) GAUTIER
LUCY ..... GERTRUDE (Mrs. Frederick A.) KENT
COUNTESS DE LAGE ..... NORMA (Mrs. Harold) ABBOTT
MIRIAM AARONS ..... MURIEL (Mrs. Robert H.) ROGERS
HELENE ..... FRANK ALMA (Mrs. Horace) CARTEE
FIRST CUTIE ..... BETTY (Mrs. William M.) HICKS
SECOND CUTIE ..... JUDY (Mrs. Rurik F.) EKSTROM
FIRST SOCIETY WOMAN ..... BEVERLY (Mrs. G. Willard) HORNE
SECOND SOCIETY WOMAN . . LILLIAN (Mrs. Edward N.) CLAUGHTON
SADIE ..... DORIS (Mrs. Dalton) WRIGHT
CIGARETTE GIRL ..... GLORIA (Mrs. W. R.) ANDREWS
A DOWAGER ..... Played in rotating fashion by:
NANCY (Mrs. Claire) MENDEL
MADELON (Mrs. Fred) RAVLIN
CLAIRE (Mrs. Sydney) WEINTRAUB
RICKY (Mrs. Philip) WYLIE
A DEBUTANTE ..... EVELYN (Mrs. Thomas B.) GUYTON
A GIRL IN DISTRESS ..... JUNE (Mrs. William) SOTTILE

PRESENTED BY SOCIETY OF THEATRE ARTS
UNDER AUSPICES OF MIAMI THEATRE GROUP, INC.

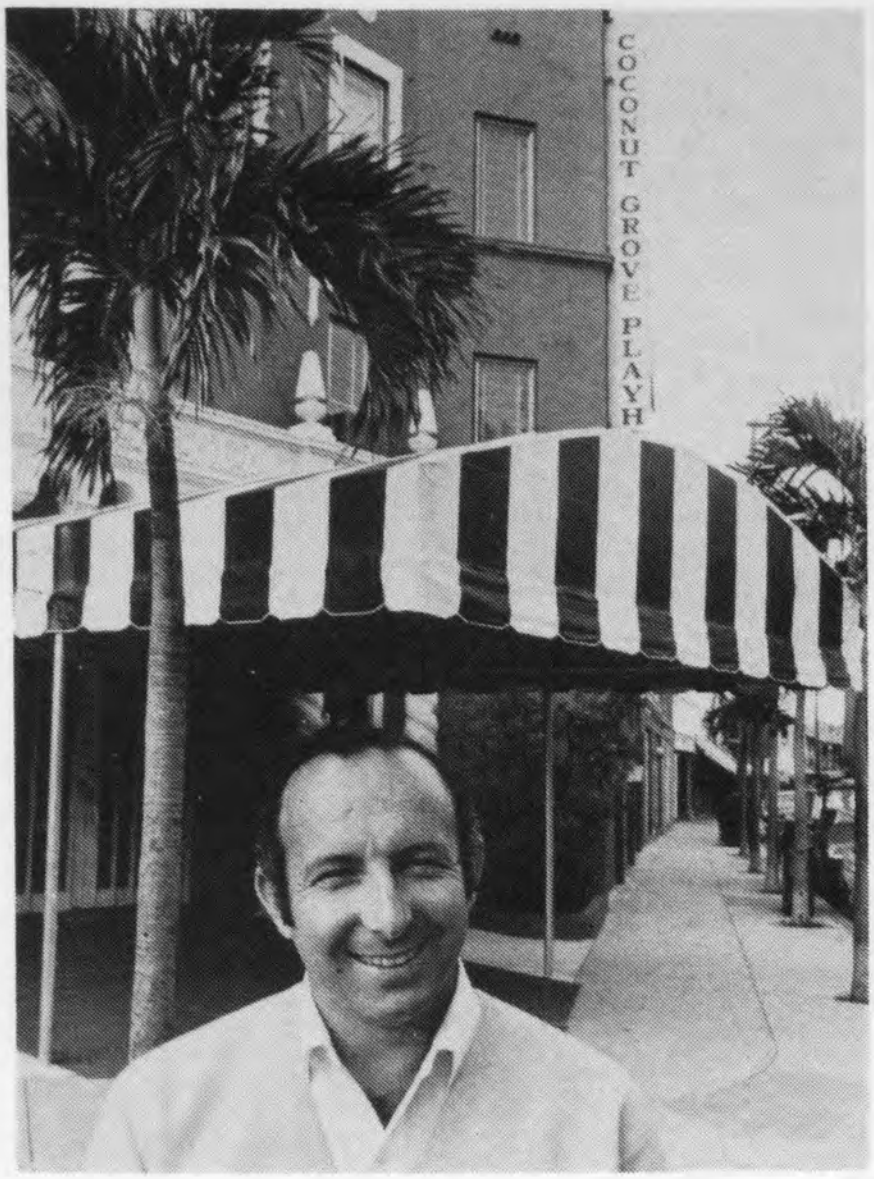
COCONUT GROVE PLAYHOUSE



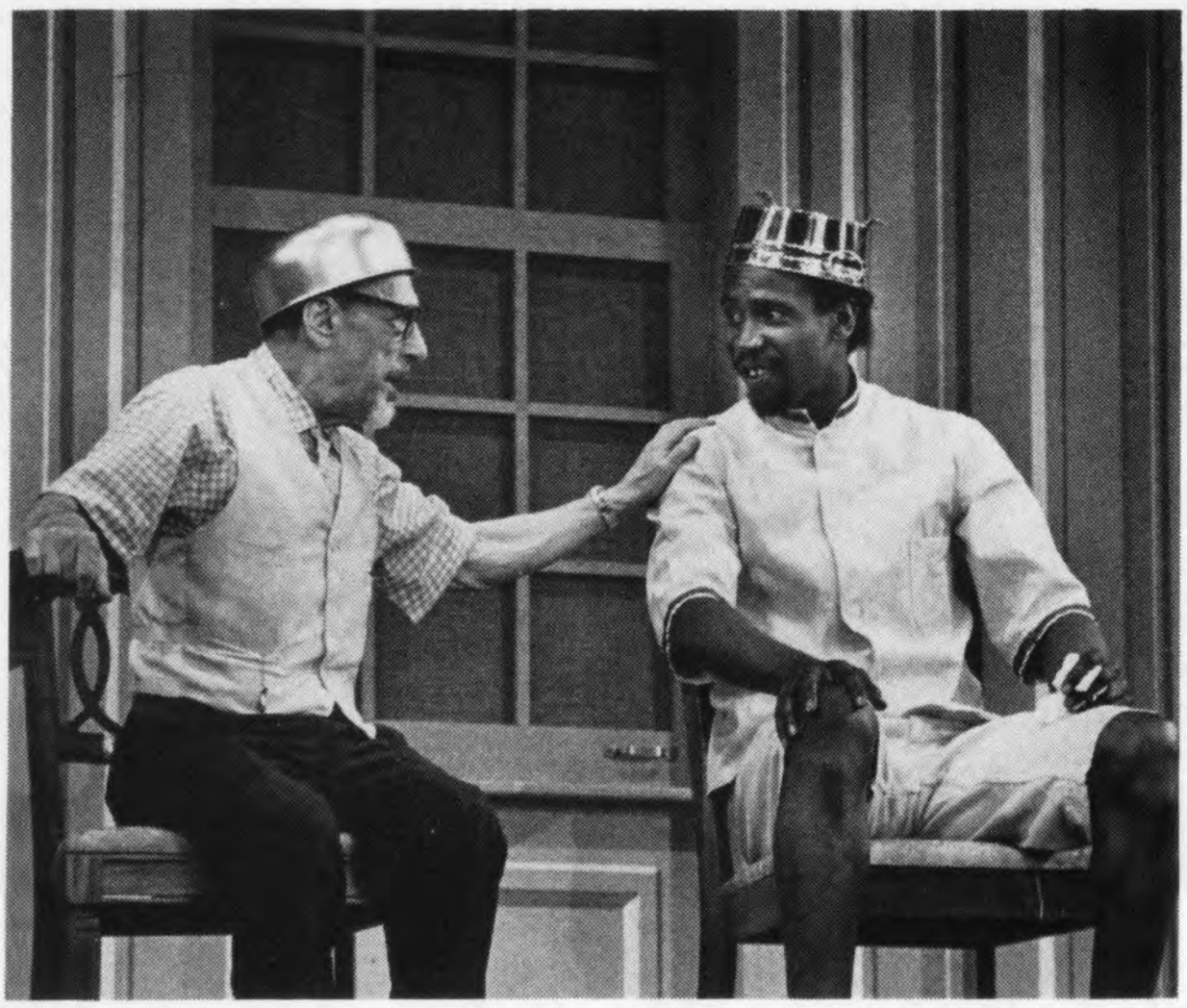
The Coconut Grove Playhouse in 1964.



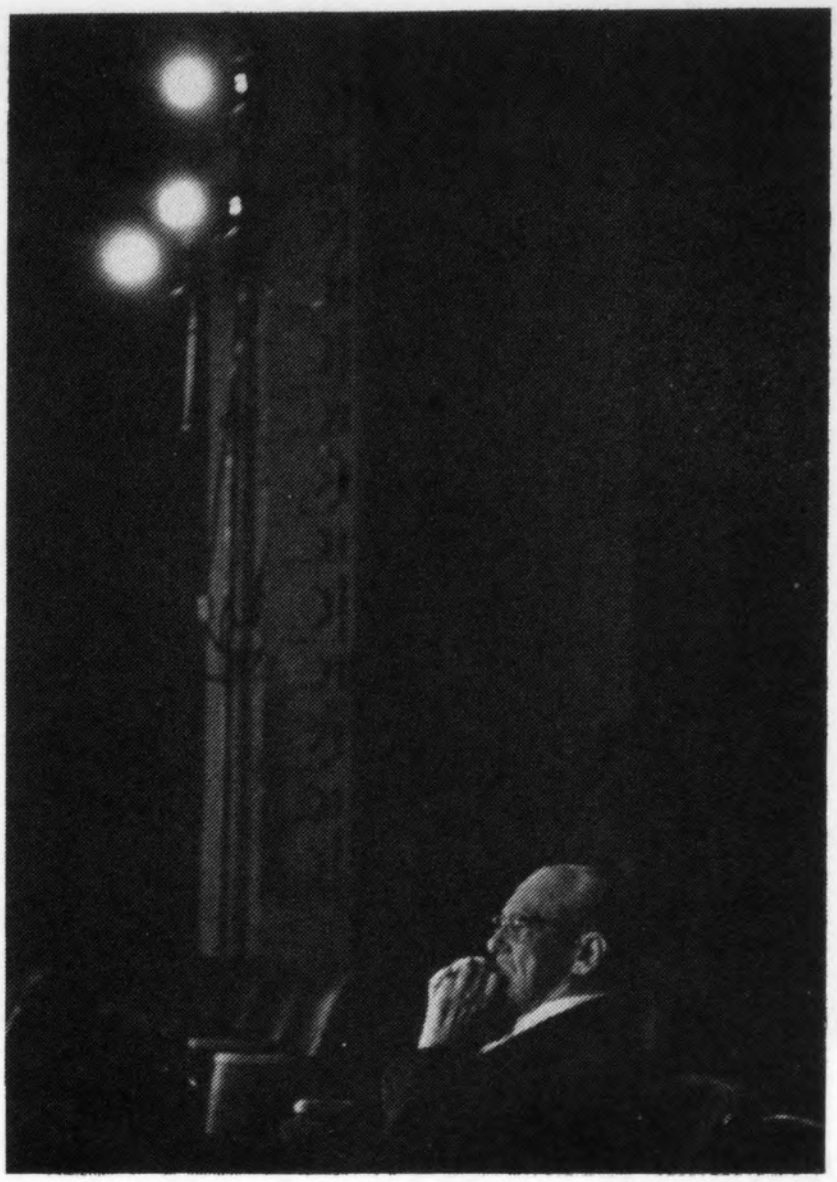
Opposite the Playhouse on Main Highway during the first Coconut Grove Art Festival.



Zev Bufman during the run
of *Sweet Charity*.



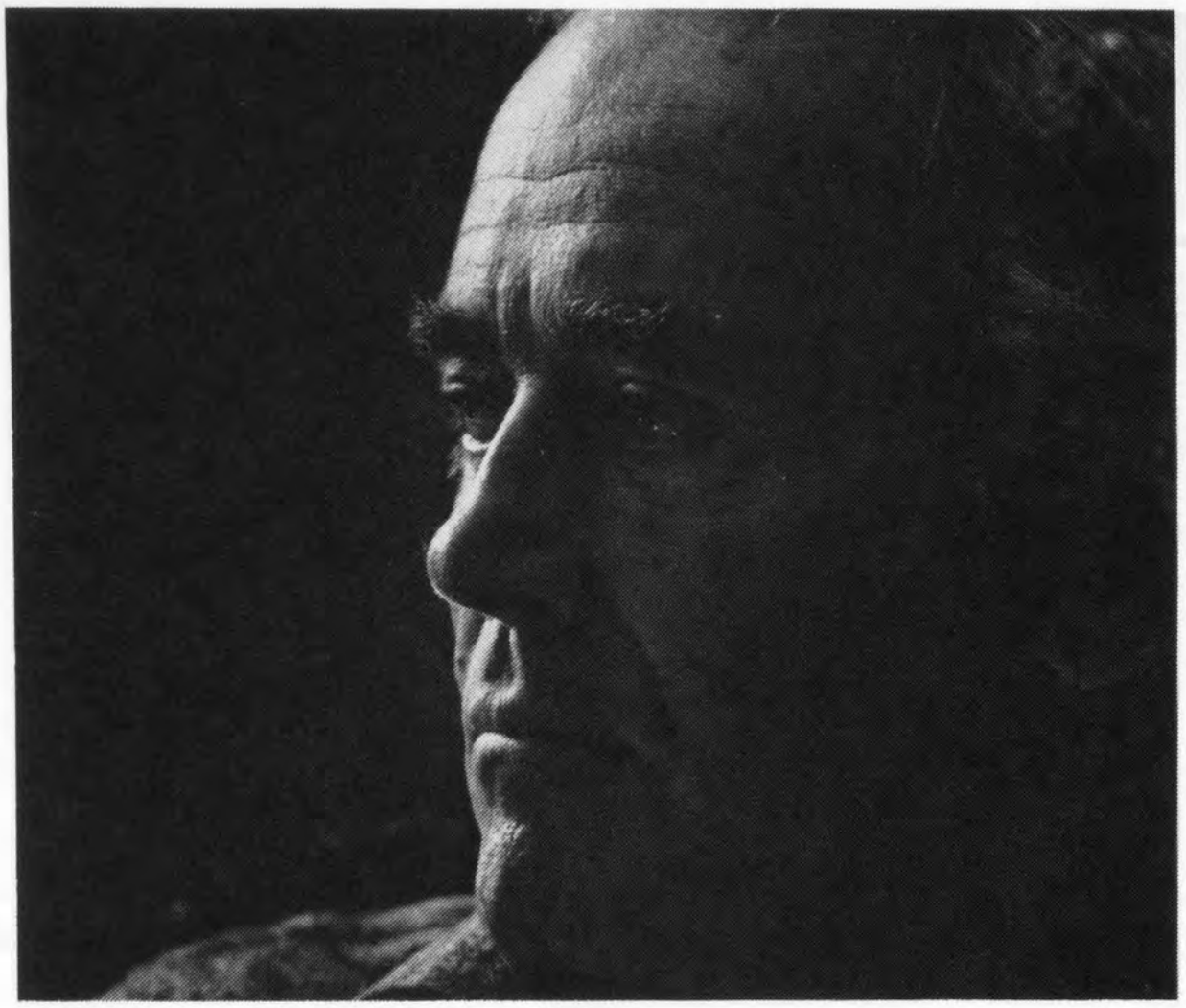
Menasha Skulnik and Louis Gossett
in *The Zulu and the Zayda*.



Director George Abbott watches rehearsal of *Never Too Late.*



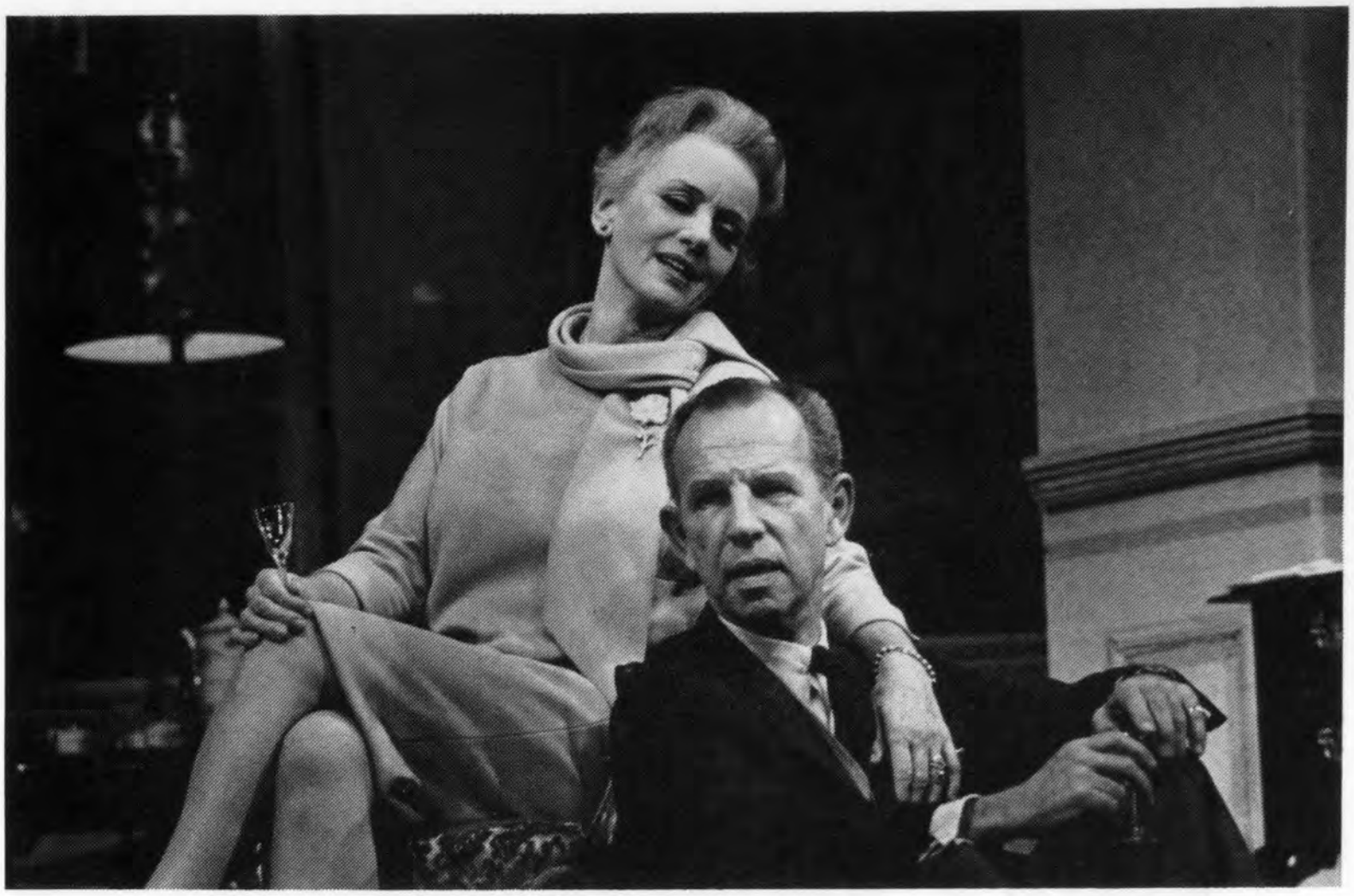
Liza Minnelli in *The Fantasticks*.



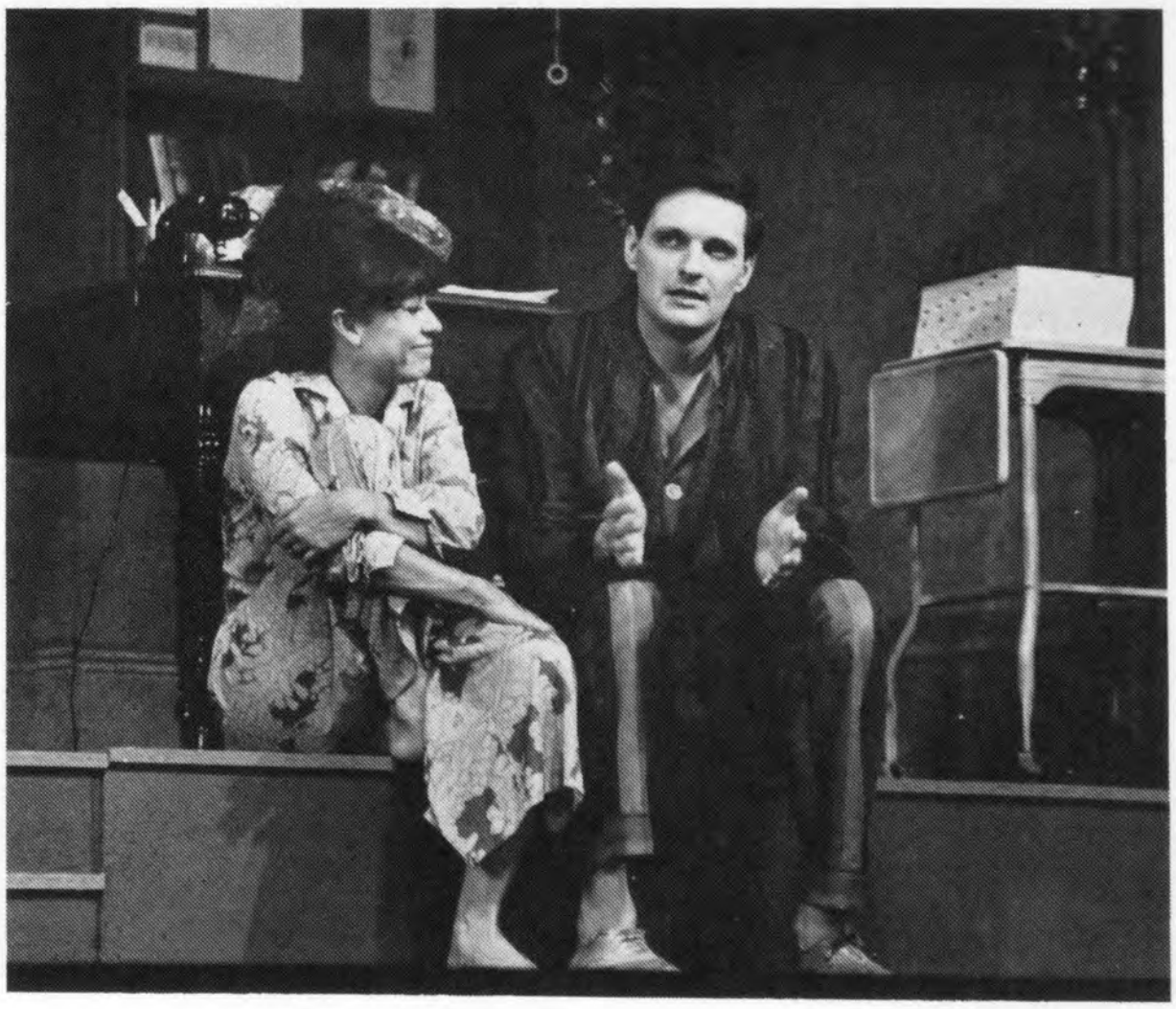
Henry Fonda in *Our Town*.



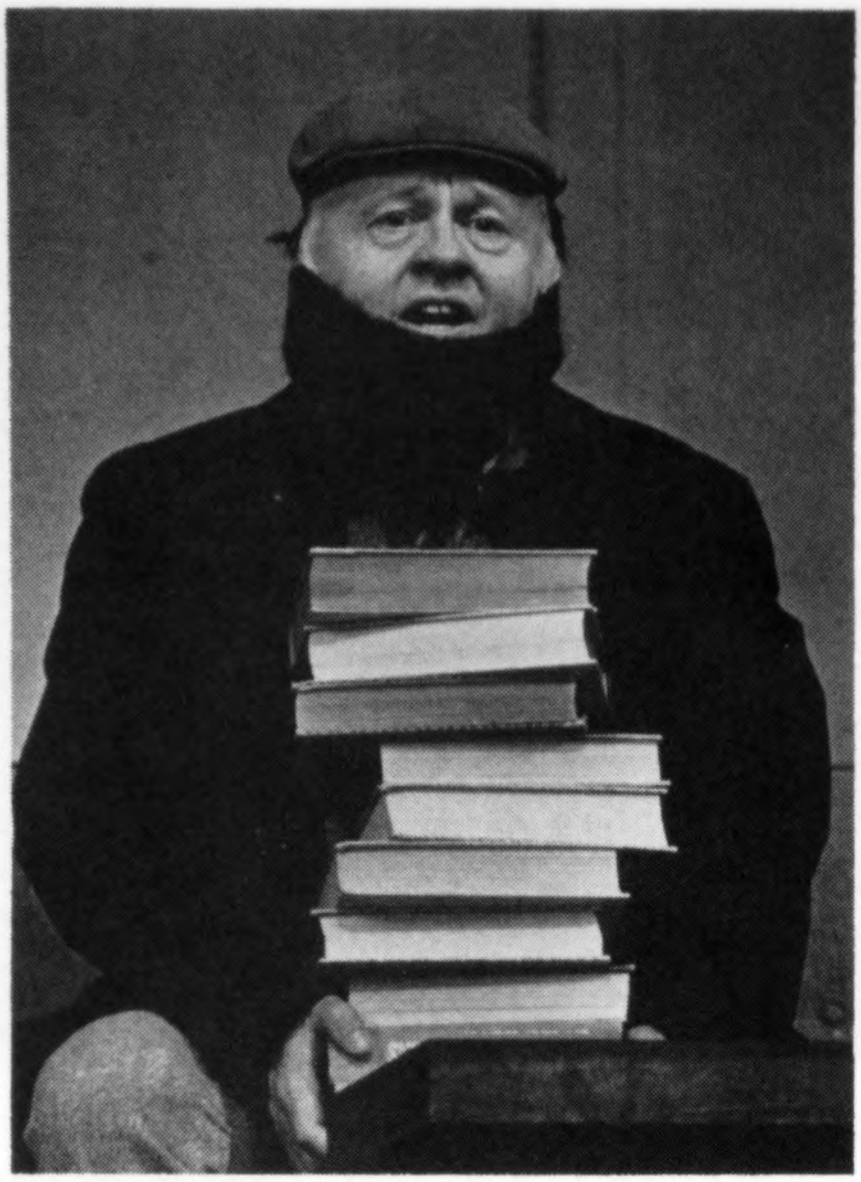
George C. Scott and wife Colleen Dewhurst
in *The Lion in Winter*.



Jessica Tandy and Hume Cronyn in *A Delicate Balance*.



Rita Moreno and Alan Alda in
The Owl and The Pussycat.



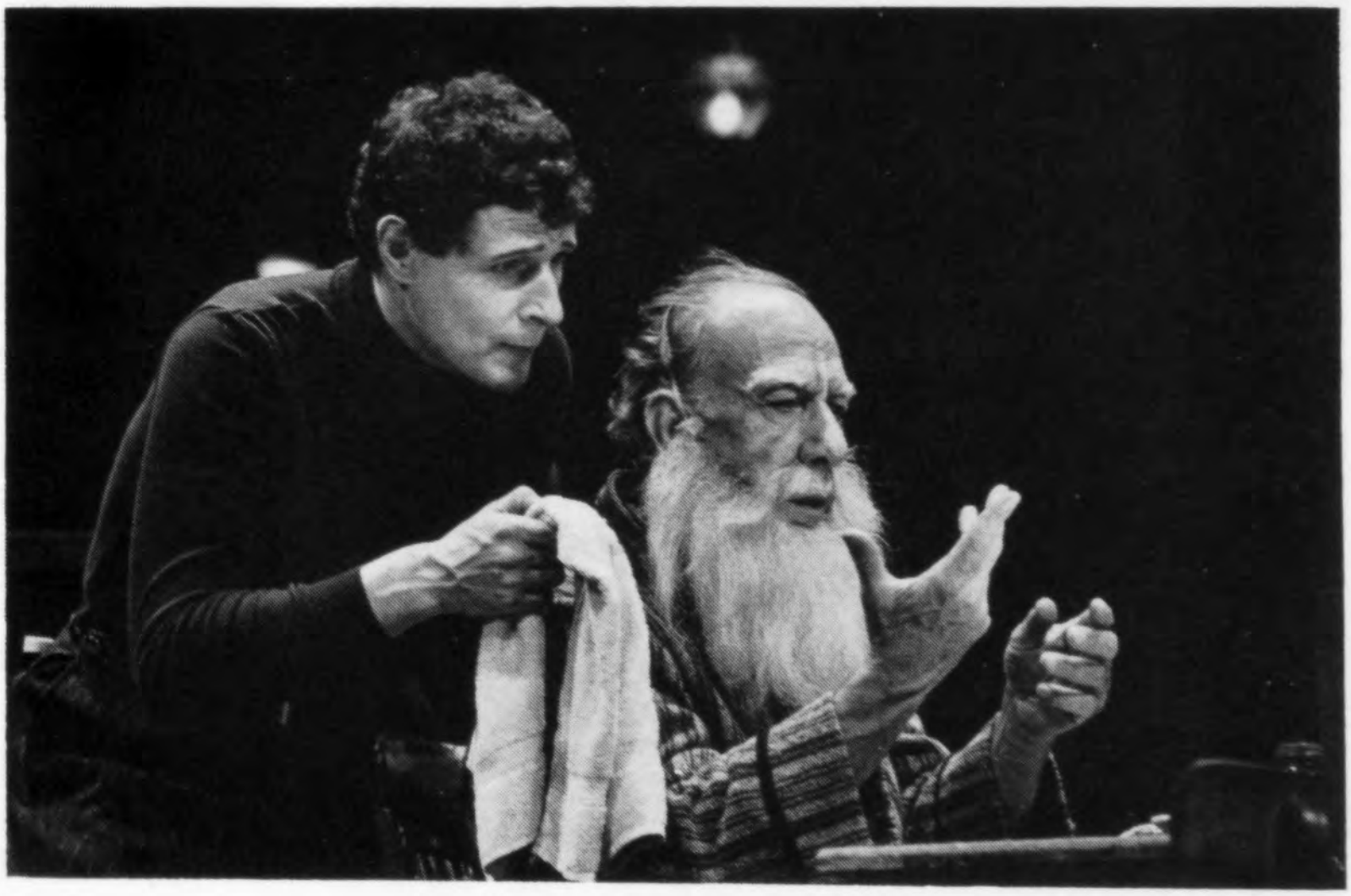
Mickey
Rooney in
*No Sex Please
We're British.*



Robert Fishko and Arthur Cantor.



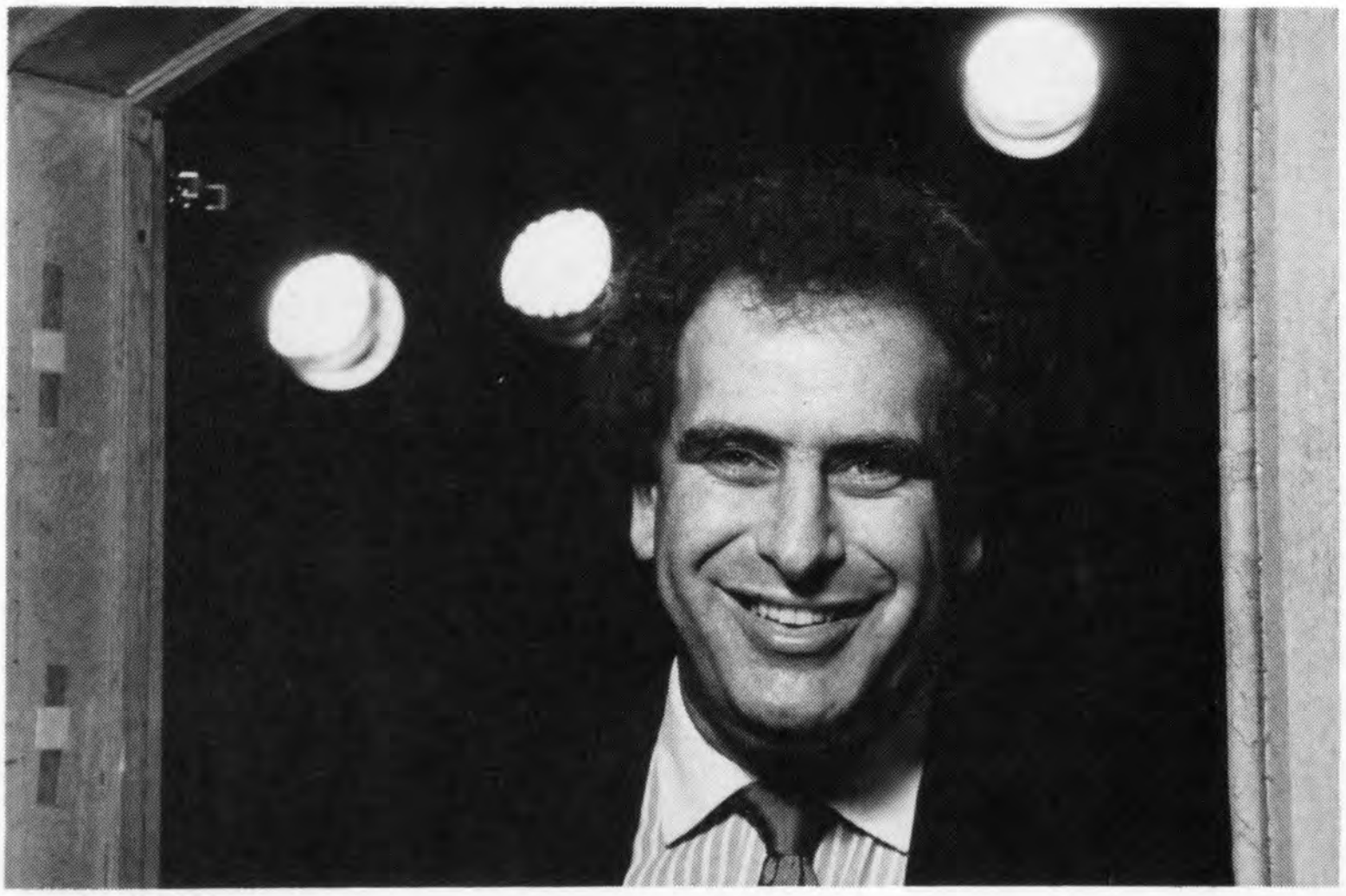
Milton Berle
starring in *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way To The Forum*.



Michael Tolaydo and Jose Ferrer in *The Dresser*.



Imogene Coca during *Happy Birthday* . She returned in 1986 for the Playhouse's Thirtieth Anniversary Celebration.



Arnold Mittelman at the Playhouse.

11

IN December 1982 then president of the Players Board, Dr. Phillip T. George, announced a new leader for the Playhouse: theater giant Jose Ferrer, actor, director, playwright, and producer; winner of an Academy Award and five Tonys as well as the prestigeous Theater Hall of Fame and National Medal of Arts awards. Ferrer agreed to adopt the Coconut Grove Playhouse. For the token salary of $1.00 a year, he would choose and cast the plays as well as act in and direct some of the productions. By affiliating with the playhouse, Jose Ferrer would bring the theater prestige and national recognition.

Ferrer was no stranger to the Players Repertory Theater. With hopes of taking *Quartet for Sad Sackbut and Swallows* to Broadway, he directed the American premiere of this French musical at the Museum of Science in 1973. Neither was Ferrer a newcomer to the Coconut Grove Playhouse. He first appeared there in 1964 in *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum.*

"If I had to pick my five favorites in the Grove, Forum would be one of them," said Zev Bufman. "I think I came to nineteen performances, and each time I laughed louder and louder."

Bufman invited Ferrer to return to the Playhouse in *After the Fall* in 1966. Although Bufman approached Ferrer months before the scheduled performance, Ferrer turned him down flatly.

"Come on. Zev," Ferrer responded, "I'm not going to learn that part for two weeks in Coconut Grove. Get someone who has played it before."

Bufman looked elsewhere but called Ferrer again less than two weeks before the show was to open.

"Joe, this time I'm calling as a friend. I need you to get me out of a bind," Bufman pleaded. "I've hired a cast. The set is built. But I have no one to play the lead."

Ferrer agreed, although he knew he would have to memorize what amounted to a three-hour monologue. For ten days, whenever he was not on stage, he studied the part. He also devised a plan in case his memory lapsed.

"I have a compartmentalized mind," Ferrer explained. "If I forget a line, I'll remember that I forgot it and find someplace later on to work it in."

On opening night of *After the Fall*, Jose Ferrer forgot lines, held them in abeyance, and worked them in whenever he could. The audience never knew.

By the time Jose Ferrer returned in 1982 to play in *The Dresser*, he had changed his approach to forgotten lines.

"It's best not to fumfer or adlib," he decided. "I'll just remain confidently silent, and it'll look like someone else's fault."

That's what happened in the middle of the first act on opening night. Ferrer, who played an actor dressing to go on stage, forgot his lines. He stopped talking, sat at his dressing table, and silently put on his make-up.

In desperation, Michael Tolaydo, who played his dresser, ran off screaming, "Maude, Maude." Actually he wanted to check the script. But the actress who played Maude didn't know that. She thought she had missed an important cue.

Confused, she walked on stage and said to Ferrer, "Did you want something, Sir?"

Ferrer, committed to silence, just looked at her as an unwanted intruder. She hastily retreated, and Ferrer continued to put on his make-up silently.

Before long, Tolaydo returned and said something to which Ferrer knew the answer. Those lines came near the end of the act. They had unwittingly omitted twenty-five pages from the script, but the audience hardly knew. In fact, at the cast party later that night, someone said to Ferrer, "Brilliant cuts in the first act."

In 1983 when Ferrer played Father in his own production of *Life with Father*, he had the opportunity to supply a line for

Hal Bergman, who played Dr. Humphreys. During one performance, Bergman entered the living room to talk to Ferrer and then ask him for a telephone.

"I got up to asking for the phone," Bergman remembered; "I looked over at Joe, and there were his big dark eyes looking at me. And suddenly, my mind was wiped clean. I had no idea what my next line was. Without a flicker, Joe said, 'if you're looking for a telephone, we don't have one. I don't believe in them."

When Ferrer assumed the role of artistic advisor to the playhouse, he said, "Calling me artistic advisor is a more diplomatic and useful description. If I were artistic director, I would feel honor-bound to be here at all times. I don't intend to abandon my own career."

Though he left Miami to work on occasional films, he dedicated himself physically, intellectually and emotionally to his work at the Playhouse. He got up at six-thirty in the morning and arrived at the Playhouse by eight. He rehearsed from ten until six, then made his phone calls to Los Angeles before going home.

Persevering through adversity has always been Ferrer's credo. Proud of the stoicism he learned from his father, Ferrer has tried to protect others from agonies he had suffered.

"In difficult situations you look only to yourself for help," he said.

He illustrated this tenacity in his historic portrayal of *Cyrano* in 1953. The pre-Broadway production was atrocious. Even the renowned playwright and producer Joshua Logan, who saw the show in Boston, approached Ferrer as a friend and begged him to resign.

Ferrer stayed with *Cyrano* to meet his obligations. In the end, of course, he accomplished much more than that goal. He developed his Cyrano into a brilliant protrayal for stage and screen. Cyrano became the role with which Ferrer is most often identified and which won him an Academy Award.

He believed that the Playhouse is not a small regional theater and that, because of its size, it should present well known talents. Practical and down to earth, Ferrer candidly acknowledged that "zippy names," as he called them, would

increase audience interest, subscriptions, and donations. Because he had earned respect in the industry, he drew some acclaimed actors like Kim Hunter, Constance Cummings and Lois Nettleton to the Playhouse stage.

Despite his dedication, Jose Ferrer's two-year tenure as artistic advisor was a difficult period, and the Playhouse did not prosper financially. Yet, several achievements stand out.

Reviving American classics and casting well-known names brought the American theater tradition back to Coconut Grove. George Abbott, Joshua Logan, and Kitty Carlysle Hart personified the return of this tradition when they attended the opening of Moss Hart's *Light up the Sky*.

Ferrer also brought Spanish language drama to the main stage of a large Miami theater for the first time. In August 1984 he presented on-stage readings of two Milcha Sanchez-Scott plays. The Spanish language evenings were so remarkably well received that Ferrer planned full main-stage productions in Spanish. In November 1984 he directed two productions of *The Glass Menagerie* for the main stage, one in Spanish and one in English. Later that season, when *'night, Mother* played in English, *Buenas Noches, Mama* played in Spanish.

Most importantly, as his successor Arnold Mittelman affirmed, "he established credibility for the theater. Few other American theaters had a person with Jose Ferrer's stature and name recognition.

"He also gave the theater an impetus for budgetary increases that were built upon the concept that one had to spend money to be able to attract actors from the New York and Los Angeles markets."

Despite the difficulties Ferrer encountered, Mittelman asserted, history will characterize the Ferrer era as a giant step forward for the Playhouse as a nationally recognized regional theater.

When Ferrer resigned, the Board of Trustees selected Arnold Mittelman because he had a combination of talents particularly suitable for regional theater. Mittelman had been founder and director of the New York Free Theater and the Whole Theater Company, two well known non-profit theaters in the New York metropolitan area, and he produced and

directed *Alone Together* on Broadway in 1984. He also had experience as an educator and fundraiser. With these credentials, he assumed the role of producing artistic director early in 1985.

In his first full year, he significantly reduced the Playhouse's million-dollar debt. He capitalized on the fundraising efforts of Sherwood Weiser of the Continental Companies and Anthony Burns of Ryder System, Inc., and successfully lobbied the state legislature for $800,000 for debt reduction. The Playhouse also received $400,000 for renovation and operating expenses. In addition, the Florida cabinet approved a plan to build a parking garage on what is currently a parking lot. This future development will pay the Playhouse at least $200,000 annually in rent. According to preliminary plans, the project will also house a second stage, classrooms, rehearsal space, and shops for set and costume construction. Thus, the new facility will not only assure future income; it will also enhance the theater's ability to try new works and fulfill its educational goals.

Mittelman, believing that a strong instructional component is integral to regional theater, also revitalized the Playhouse educational program. Under director of education Judith Delgado, the Playhouse started a theater conservatory and provided internships, play readings, and tours to schools throughout the region.

During the same year, the Playhouse reopened the Encore Room as an alternate stage for cabarets, music, and experimental productions. But best of all, that year brought unparalleled excitement to the main stage. Mittelman worked with the Cole Porter estate and the Kurt Weill Foundation and acquired rights to new productions of *Cole Porter Requests the Pleasure* and *Berlin to Broadway With Kurt Weill.*

Edward Albee, who had recently bought a home in Coconut Grove, agreed to direct his Pulitzer winner *Seascape.* He reunited his original designers to recreate their beach set, and he directed Jacqueline Brookes, Marissa Chibas, Henderson Forsythe, and John Ottavino in a production which he liked better than the one on Broadway.

In addition, Joseph Papp gave Mittelman the rights to *Rum and Coke*, the play about the Bay of Pigs invasion, so that

the Playhouse could stage the show to coincide with the twenty-fifth anniversary of that disaster.

"*Rum and Coke* should have originated in Miami," Papp told Mittelman.

With a trained eye and good fortune, Mittelman put together a season which garnered for the Playhouse an unprecedented thirty nominations and nine Carbonell Awards.

Among those honored by the South Florida Entertainment Writer's Association was Miami actor Jim Puig for his extraordinary portrayal of Miguel in *Rum and Coke*.

"Puig [moved] his audiences in a way that an actor less immersed in his character cannot," Christine Arnold wrote in the *Herald*. Puig became the "believable embodiment of the men of Brigade 2506," Arnold said. Standing on the stage-set deck of a destroyer before the invasion, Puig felt Miguel's love for Cuba, the commitment to his mission, and his gnawing fear. So did his audience.

Because of this powerful portrayal, Puig went from relative obscurity to signing a year's contract with the New York Shakespeare Festival, and in November 1986 he opened on Broadway.

By the close of the 1985-86 season the Playhouse had confirmed its role and affirmed its mission. It celebrated its thirtieth anniversary season, by presenting a revival of the Broadway musical *On The Twentieth Century*.

"This theater is here to stay," Mittelman told a theaterfull of well-wishers on October 10, 1986, when the play premiered.

Few in his audience needed reassuring that night. Everything about the Playhouse spoke of its glory, past and present. In an aura reminiscent of George Engle's first opening night, women in evening gowns and men in tuxedos took their seats in the freshly polished and painted auditorium. Dorothy Engle, widow of the man who started it all, came as special honored guest. With her was Helen Muir, who had covered many of the plays, the players, and their audiences in both *The Miami Herald* and *The Miami News* . Secretary of State George Firestone was present. So were other recent supporters including Tony Burns, Woody Weiser, Monty Trainer and Representative Bud Gardner.

On Stage, there was another unification of past and present. Leading the cast of *On the Twentieth Century* was Imogene Coca, seventy-six years old, who first appeared at the Playhouse in the inaugural season production of *Happy Birthday*. Co-starring in *Twentieth Century* was Judy Kaye, who enchanted Coconut Grove audiences in her 1986 appearance in *Berlin to Broadway With Kurt Weill*, which won four Carbonell Awards. Representing a decade in between was acclaimed actor, comedian and singer Frank Gorshin, who starred in the 1972 production of *The Prisoner of Second Avenue*. As if to toast the past and wish the future well, these Playhouse veterans, together with the rest of the cast, donated their performance that night to the theater's fundraising drive.

"Happy birthday to us," said Arnold Mittelman. "Happy birthday year."

Thirty Years of Playhouse Productions

Play / Playwright	*Director*	*Actors*
Spring 1956		
Waiting For Godot by: Samuel Beckett	Alan Schneider	Bert Lahr, Tom Ewell
A Streetcar Named Desire by: Tennessee Williams	Herbert Machiz	Tallulah Bankhead Gerald O'Laughlin
King of Hearts by: Jean Kerr, Eleanor Brooke	Aaron Frankel	Donald Cook, Ronald Graham, Louise King
An Evening With Beatrice Lillie	John Philip	Beatrice Lillie Fred Keating
Tea And Sympathy by: Robert Anderson	Robert Caldwell	Linda Darnell John Lehne Mark Allen
The Solid Gold Cadillac by: Howard Teichman George S. Kaufman	Paul Crabtree	Billie Burke
Black Chiffon by: Lesley Storm	Paul Crabtree	Judith Anderson Murray Matheson
Comedy In Music	–	Victor Borge
Bus Stop by: William Inge	Harold Clurman	Barbara Baxley Bibi Osterwald
Happy Birthday by: Anita Loos	Dan Levin	Imogene Coca
Nina by: Andre Roussin	Edward Everett Horton	Edward Everett Horton
Summer 1956		
The Bad Seed	–	Dolores Del Rio
1956 - 57		
The Tea House Of The August Moon by: John Patrick, Vern Sneider	Tom Sand	Terrence Kilburn, Gene Blakely, Martin Wolfson
The Mikado by: Gilbert and Sullivan	Dorothy Raedler	Raymond Allen, Sally Knapp, Dorothy Hatch
Burlesque by: George Manker Watters Arthur Hopkins	Bert Lahr	Bert Lahr, Arleen Whelen
The Fifth Season by: Sylvia Regan	Robert Caldwell	Chico Marx
Comedy In Music	–	Victor Borge

Play/Playwright	Director	Actors
Anniversary Waltz by: Joseph Field Jerome Chodorov	Robert Caldwell	Lee Roman, Lynn Bart
The Seven Year Itch by: George Axelrod	Robert Caldwell	Eddie Bracken Louise King
The Old Lady Shows Her Medals by: Sir James Barie, Jr.	John Holden	Biff McGuire Gracie Fields
Affairs Of State by: Louis Verneuil	Robert Caldwell	–
Janus by: Carolyn Green	Donald Cook	Joan Bennett Murray Matheson Donald Cook
Witness For The Prosecution by: Agatha Christie	Robert Caldwell	Albert Dekker, Margaret Phillips, Gene Lyons
The Boy Friend by: Stanley Lebowsky	John Heawood	Millicent Martin Douglas Deane
The Reluctant Debutante by: Douglas W. Home	Robert Caldwell	Edward Everett Horton
1957 - 58		
Cat On A Hot Tin Roof by: Tennessee Williams	Albert Lipton	Victor Jory, Jean Inness Olga Bellin
The Match Maker by: Thorton Wilder	Robert Caldwell	Miriam Hopkins, Signe Hasse, Bill Daniels
The Tunnel Of Love by: Joseph Fields Peter De Vries	Robert Caldwell	Marsha Hunt Tom Drake Russell Nype
Mask And Gown	Leonard Sillman	T. C. Jones
Inherit The Wind by: Jerome Lawrence Robert E. Lee	William Woodson	Ed Begley
Simon And Laura by: Alan Meville	Ruth Rawson	Lynn Bari, Murray Matheson, Orson Bean
The Chalk Garden by: Enid Bagnold	William Weaver	Judith Anderson Cathleen Nesbitt
Plaintiff In A Pretty Hat by: Hugh and Margaret Williams	Jack Minster	Glynis Johns Hugh Williams
Picnic by: William Inge	Albert Lipton	Farley Granger
Orpheus Descending by: Tennessee Williams	Owen Phillips	Maureen Stapleton Rip Torn

Play / Playwright	Director	Actors
Middle Of The Night by: Paddy Chayefsky	David Ford	Ed Begley
1958 - 59		
The Diary Of Anne Frank by: Frances Goodrich Albert Hackett	Walter Strauss	Joseph Wiseman
Auntie Mame by: Jerome Lawrence Robert E. Lee	Charles Bowden	Shirl Conway
Period Of Adjustment by: Tennessee Williams	Tennessee Williams Owen Phillips	James Daly Robert Webber Barbara Baxley
A Hole In The Head by: Arnold Schulman	Owen Phillips	Frank and Joan Lovejoy
Visit To A Small Planet by: Gore Vidal	Robert Caldwell	Reginald Gardner Paul Lynde
Say, Darling by: Richard and Marman Cassell A. Burrows	Owen Phillips	Jack Manning
Where's Charley? by: Brandon Thomas	Lee Sherman	Dick Shawn Elizabeth Allen
Triple Play (Three One-Act Plays) by: Sean O'Cassey Anton Chekhov John Mortimer	Hume Cronyn	Hume Cronyn Jessica Tandy
Dear Liar by: Jerome Kilty	Jerome Kilty	Brian Aherne Katherine Cornell
Babes In Arms by: Rogers and Hart	Stanley Prager	Julie Wilson
Fallen Angels by: Noel Coward	Robert Caldwell	Nancy Walker Margaret Phillips
Look Homeward Angel by: Ketti Frings [from a novel by Thomas Wolfe]	Kermit Kegley	Miriam Hopkins Ed Begley
The Dark At The Top Of The Stairs by: William Inge	Elia Kazan	Barbara Baxley Audrey Christie George L. Smith
Garden District by: Tennessee Williams	Herbert Machiz	Diana Barrymore George L. Smith
Hilary [World Premiere] by: Gerald Savory	Jerome Kilty	Joan Fontaine

Play/Playwright	Director	Actors
Bells Are Ringing –	Owen Phillips	Kyle MacDonnell
Pal Joey by: John O'Hara Rogers and Hart	Owen Phillips	Carol Bruce, Erin O'Brien Richard Tone
1959 - 60		
The Women by: Claire Boothe	Owen Phillips	[Prominent Miami Women]
Once More, With Feeling by: Harry Kurnitz	Owen Phillips	Robert Q. Lewis K. T. Stevens
Summer And Smoke by: Tennessee Williams	Owen Phillips	Kim Hunter, Lee Philips
Father Of The Bride by: Caroline C. Francke	Owen Phillips	Pat O'Brien
The Incomparable Hildegarde	–	–
Come To The Dance by: Nellise Child	Owen Phillips	Dennis King, Isobel Elsom, Irene Castle
Tonight At 8:30 by: Noel Coward	Owen Phillips	Arlene Francis James Mitchell
Show Business by: Charles Gaynor	Charles Gaynor	Carol Channing
The Happy Time by: Samuel Taylor	J. Robert Dietz	Margaret Truman
Angel In The Wings by: Hank Ladd, Ted Luce Paul Hartman	Owen Phillips	Paul Hartman Hank Ladd Carol Bruce Alice Pierce
Laura by: Vera Gaspary George Sklar	Jed Horner	Paulette Goddard Reginald Gardiner
Two For The Seesaw by: William Gibson	Owen Phillips	Ben Gazzara Sheila Copelan
Here Today by: George Oppenheimer	George Mallonee	Vivian Vance Emery G. Mallonee John Emery
West Side Story by: Arthur Laurents Leonard Bernstein Stephen Sondheim	James Karr	Julius La Rosa

Play / Playwright	Director	Actors
Damn Yankees by: George Abbott Douglas Wallop Richard Adler Jerry Ross	Marilya and Jack Nagle	Tom Raskin, Don Penny Sylvia Shey
A Loss Of Roses by: William Inge	George Keathley	Jan Sterling James McArthur
Auntie Mame by: Jerome Lawrence Robert E. Lee	Gerald Metcalfe	Gypsy Rose Lee
The Night Of The Iguana by: Tennessee Williams	Frank Corsaro	Rosemary Murphy Patrick O'Neil Vivian Nather
Redhead by: Herbert and Dorothy Fields Albert Hague	Earl Hammond	Gretchen Wyler Earl Hammond
1960 - 61		
The Disenchanted by: Budd Schulberg Harvey Brett	Roger Graef	Kim Hunter John Baragrey
A Curious Evening with Gypsy Rose Lee	—	Gypsy Rose Lee
Showboat by: Jerome Kern Oscar Hammerstein II	James Karr	Julie Wilson Wilton Clary
On The Town by: Betty Comden, Adolph Green, Leonard Bernstein	James Karr	Peggy Cass
The Gazebo by: Alec Coppel	James Karr	Robert Q. Lewis
Roberto Iglesias-Ballet Espanol	—	Roberto Iglesias
49th Cousin by: Florence Lowe Caroline Frank	Marmel Summner	Menasha Skulnik
Marriage-Go-Round by: Leslie Stevens	James Karr	Vivian Vance John Baragrey
Two For The Seesaw by: William Gibson	Owen Phillips	John Baragrey Gerry Jedd
The World of Suzie Wong by: Paul Osborn	Aaron Frankel	Lani Miyazaki

Play/Playwright	Director	Actors
Under the Yum Yum Tree by: Lawrence Roman	Charles Forsythe	Dane Clark
The Torchbearers by: George Kelly	Owen Phillips	Patsy Abbott
Sextet With Mae West by: Mae West	Aaron Frankel	Mae West
1961 - 62		
Take Me Along by: Joseph Stein, Robert Russell, Bob Merrill	Leslie Cutler	William Bebdix
Bye Bye Birdie by: Michael Stewart, Charles Strouse, Lee Adams	Leslie Cutler	Russell Nype Carmen Alvarez
Come Blow Your Horn by: Neil Simon	Ella Gerber	Leo Fuchs Dick Shawn
Critics Choice by: Ira Levin	Peter Kass	Eva Gabor Jules Munshin
The Girls In 509 by: Howard Teichman	William Chambers	Fay Bainter Pat Carroll
Make a Million by: Norma Brasch Carrol Moore	Sam Levene	Sam Levene
Tender Loving Care by: Elena Miramova	Tamara Geva	John Payne
The Inkwell by: Harold J. Kennedy	Harold J. Kennedy	Gloria Swanson
1962 - 63		
The Premise by: Theodore J. Flicker	Theodore J. Flicker	Joan Darling, George Segal, Theodore Flicker Thomas Aldredge
The Fourposter by: Jan de Hartog	Edward Ludlum	Zachary Scott Patricia Morison
A Shot In The Dark by: Harry Kurnitz	David Hooks	Eva Gabor
The Tenth Man by: Paddy Cheyefsky	Arthur Cantor	Donald Buka Baruch Lumet
A Thousand Clowns by: Herb Gardner	Malcolm Black	Jack Carter, Penny Fuller, Dom De Luise

Play / Playwright	Director	Actors
Mary, Mary by: Jean Kerr	Joseph Anthony	Patricia Smith, Jeffrey Lynn, John Lasell
Never Too Late by: Sumner Arthur Long	George and Judy Abbott	Fred Clark Joan Bennett
Summer 1963		
Lord Pengo by: S. N. Behrman	Malcolm Black	Walter Pidgeon
Calculated Risk by: Joseph Hayes	Howard Erskine	Dana Andrews
The Tender Trap by: Max Shulman Robert Paul Smith	Leslie Cutler	Tab Hunter
Romanoff And Juliet by: Peter Ustinov	Malcolm Black	Walter Slezak
The Indoor Sport by: Jack Perry	Gerald Hiken	Darren McGavin Shari Lewis
1963 - 64		
Irma La Douce by: Julien Moore, David Heneker, Monty Norman	Donald Driver	Genevieve, Gabriel Dell, Tommy Tune
Tchin-Tchin by: Francoise Billetdoux	Joseph Brownstone	Martha Scott John Vivyan Richard Benjamin
Golden Fleecing by: Lorenzo Semple, Jr.	Judith Abbott	Hal March
Take Her, She's Mine by: Phoebe and Henry Ephron	Judith Abbott	Brian Donlevy Susan Kohner
King of Hearts by: Jean Kerr, Eleanor Brooke	Michael Howard	Henry Morgan Alan Alda
Madly in Love by: Ruth Goetz	George Keathley	Celeste Holm Jean Pierre Aumont MacDonald Carey
Fair Game for Lovers by: Richard Dougherty	Paul Shyre	Leo Genn, Forrest Tucker Maggie Hayes, Alan Alda
Strictly Dishonorable by: Preston Sturges	Harold J. Kennedy	Cesar Romero
In One Bed . . . **(And Out The Other)** by: Mawby Green, Ed Feilbert	Jack Ragotzy	Jules Munshin, Eva Six

Play/Playwright	Director	Actors
Kind Sir by: Norman Krasna	Christopher Hewett	Fernando Lamas Esther Williams
Dear Me, The Sky Is Falling by: Leonard Spigelgass	Michael Toma	Gertrude Berg Joseph Buloff
I Married An Angel by: Rodgers and Hart	Christopher Hewett	Elaine Stritch, Taina Elg
Milk And Honey by: Jerry Herman	Ella Gerber	Molly Picon
Guys And Dolls by: Frank Loesser, Jo Swerling Abe Burrows	Ella Gerber	Dan Dailey Vivian Blaine
<u>Summer 1964</u>		
Glad Tidings by: Edward Mabley	Christopher Hewett	Tallulah Bankhead
Watch The Birdie by: Norman Krasna	Arthur Storch	Joan Blondell Alan Alda Peggy Ann Garner
The Solid Gold Cadillac by: Howard Teihman, George S. Kaufman	John Allen	Martha Raye Neal Sonnett
The Fantasticks by: Tom Jones Harvey Schmidt	Word Baker	Liza Minnelli Elliott Gould
The Absence Of a Cello by: Ira Wallach	James Hammerstein	Fred Clark, Murray Hamilton, Ruth McDevitt Ruth White Charles Grodin
<u>1964 - 65</u>		
The Merry Widow by: Franz Lehar	Jack Sydow	Patricia Morison William Chapman
A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Forum by: Burt Shevelove, Larry Gelbert Stephen Sondheim	George Martin	Jose Ferrer
Seidman And Son by: Elick Moll	Menasha Skulnik	Manasha Skulnik
Diplomatic Relations by: A. A. Lewis	Morton Da Costa	Claudette Colbert, Brian Aherne, Irene Hervey
Never Too Late by: Sumner Arthur Long	Walter Peterson	Arthur Godfrey Maureen O'Sullivan

Play / Playwright	*Director*	*Actors*
Any Wednesday by: Muriel Resnik	Howard Erskine	Zachary Scott, Ruth Ford Martin Milner Martin Hailey
Gypsy by: Arthur Laurents, Jule Styne, Stephen Sondheim	Ella Gerber	Gisele MacKenzie, Lois Roberts, Alfred Sandor
Man With The Perfect Wife by: Patricia Jourdy	Windsor Lewis	Jennifer Jones, Barry Morse, Murray Hamilton Morris Carnovsky
Porgy And Bess by: Dorothy and Dubose Heyward, George Gershwin	Ella Gerber	Joyce Bryant, Andrew Frierson, Avon Long James Randolph
South Pacific by: Oscar Hammerstein II Joshua Logan Richard Rodgers	James Hammerstein	Betsy Palmer Ray Middleton Richard Armbruster
Rattle Of A Simple Man by: Charles Dyer	Christopher Hewett	Tammy Grimes John Astin
Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf? by: Edward Albee	Milton Katselas	Shelley Winters William Gibberson
<u>Summer 1965</u>		
Stop The World- **I Want To Get Off** by: Leslie Bricusse Anthony Newley	Kenneth Nelson	Kenneth Nelson Lesley Stewart
The Unexpected Guest by: Agatha Christie	Michael Kahn	Joan Fontaine Dennis Patrick
Nobody Loves An Albatross by: Ronald Alexander	Perry Bruskin	Dane Clark Sherry Britton
Enter Laughing by: Joseph Stein	Martin Fried	Menasha Skulnik Martin Huston Richard Waring
<u>1965 - 66</u>		
Barefoot In The Park by: Neil Simon	Danny Simon	Vivian Vance, Monica Moran, Darryl Hickman
This Was Burlesque	Ann Corio	Ann Corio, Steve Mills
After The Fall by: Arthur Miller	Milton Katselas	Jose Ferrer Karen Black
A Case Of Libel by: Henry Denker	Leonard Patrick	Van Heflin Paul McGrath

Play/Playwright	Director	Actors
Good-By, Ghost by: Harold J. Kennedy	—	June Allyson Hugh Marlowe
The Owl & The Pussycat by: Bill Manhoff	Alan Alda	Alan Alda Rita Moreno
Peter Pan by: James M. Barrie	Jacques d'Amboise	Betsy Palmer Sandee Duncan
A Man For All Seasons by: Robert Bolt	Harold J. Kennedy	Charlton Heston
The King And I by: Margaret Landon	Porter Van Zandt	Inga Swenson, Pernell Roberts, Joyce Bryant
The Zulu & The Zayda by: Howard Da Silva Felix Leon	Menasha Skulnik	Manasha Skulnik Louis Gossett
The Glass Menagerie by: Tennessee Williams	George Keathley	Ann Southern Joan Hackett Ben Piazza James Olson
The Well-Dressed Liar by: Jack Sharkey	George Abbott	Tom Poston, Penny Fuller, Joseph Bova
The Subject Was Roses by: Frank D. Gilroy	Paul Leaf	Mercedes McCambridge Chester Morris Walter McGinn
Summer 1966		
The Roar of the Greasepaint The Smell Of The Crowd by: Leslie Bricusse Anthony Newley	Buff Shurr	Kenneth Nelson Christopher Hewett Jill Choder
Catch Me If You Can by: Robert Thomas, Jack Weinstock, Willie Gilbert	Jeremiah Morris	Yvonne De Carlo Lawrence Keith Hy Anzell
Beyond The Fringe by: A. Bennett, P. Cook J. Miller, D. Moore	Peter Bellwood	John Hefferman Geoff Garland Peter Bellwood Brendan Burke
The Lion In Winter by: James Goldman	Milton Katselas	George C. Scott, Colleen Dewhurst, William Jordan, Louise Sorel
The Pleasure Of His Company by: Samuel Taylor Cornelia Otis Skinner	Eric Berry	Don Ameche Joan Wetmore
Marat/Sade by: Peter Weiss	Ben Janney Nelle Nugent	Peter Bromilow

Play / Playwright	Director	Actors
Luv by: Murray Schisgal	Jack Sydow	Tom Bosley Dorothy Loudon Herbert Edleman
Minor Miracle by: Al Morgan	Howard Erskine	Lee Tracy, Dennis King Pert Kelton, Robert H. Harris
1966 - 67		
The Odd Couple by: Neil Simon	Danny Simon	Shelley Berman E.G. Marshall Loretta Swit
A Delicate Balance by: Edward Albee	Alan Schneider	Jessica Tandy Hume Cronyn Rosemary Murphy
Hostile Witness by: Jack Roffey	Reginald Denham	Ray Milland Melville Cooper
Generation by: William Goodhart	William Tregoe	Bob Cummings Melinda Cummings David Lewis
Wait Until Dark by: Frederick Knott	Porter Van Zandt	Darren McGavin Julia Meade
Funny Girl by: Isobel Lennart	Milton Katselas	Barbara Minkus, Alfred Toigo, Charlotte Rae
The Impossible Years by: Bob Fisher, Arthur Marx	Danny Simon	Milton Berle Emmaline Henry
On A Clear Day You Can See Forever by: Alan Jay Lerner Burton Lane	Milton Katselas	Howard Keel Karen Black
The Girl In The Freudian Slip by: William F. Brown	Marc Daniels	Alan Young Marjorie Lord
Summer 1967		
Half A Sixpence by: Beverley Cross David Heneker	Hal Halvorsen	Kenneth Nelson
The Unsinkable Molly Brown by: Meredith Wilson Richard Morris	Billy Matthews	Rita Gardner Harve Presnell
Camelot by: Alan Jay Lerner Frederick Loewe	Billy Matthews	Michael Allinson, Lola Fisher, Bob Holiday

Play/Playwright	Director	Actors
The Apple Tree by: Jerry Bock Sheldon Harnick	Danny Simon	Sue Anne Langdon Alan Alda
The Anatomy Of Burlesque by: Joey Faye	Joey Faye	Sally Rand
1967 - 68		
Sweet Charity by: Neil Simon, Cy Coleman Dorothy Fields	Robert Linden	Gretchen Wyler Dick Patterson
Don't Drink The Water by: Woody Allen	Danny Simon	Hans Conreid, Fritz Burr
Star Spangled Girl by: Neil Simon	Anthony Perkins	Anthony Perkins
You Know I Can't Hear You When The Water's Running by: Robert Anderson	Danny Simon	Jose Ferrer Maureen O'Sullivan
Lock Up Your Daughters by: Bernard Miles, Laurie Johnson, Lionel Bart	Malcolm Black	Cyril Richard Holly Harris
There's A Girl In My Soup by: Terence Frisby	Robert Moore	Van Johnson
Is The Real You, Really You? by: John Tobias	Richard Altman	Louise Lasser Richard Schaal
Call Me Madam by: Irving Berlin, Howard Lindsay, Russel Crouse	Billy Matthews	Ethel Merman Russel Nype
Cactus Flower by: Abe Burrows	Leslie B. Cutler	Eve Arden, Brooks West, Mary-Robin Redd
The Little Foxes by: Lillian Hellman	Mike Nichols	Geraldine Page John Beal, Betty Field Richard Dysart
1968 - 69		
Your Own Thing by: Donald Driver, Hal Hester Danny Apolinar	Rudy Tronto	Jeff Chandler
You're A Good Man Charlie Brown by: Charles M. Schulz	Joseph Hardy	Ann Gibbs
The Price by: Arthur Miller	Milton Katselas	Mercedes McCambridge Ralph Meeker, Gary Merrill, Joseph Buloff

Play / Playwright	Director	Actors
Halfway Up The Tree by: Peter Ustinov	Cyril Ritchard	Cyril Ritchard Cornelia Otis Skinner
Do! I Do! by: Tom Jones Harvey Schmidt	Lucia Victor	Patrice Munsel John Cullum
Rosencrantz And Guildenstern Are Dead by: Tom Stoppard	Glenn A. Jordan	Christopher Walken John Tillinger Laurence Guittard
Spofford by: Herman Shumlin	Leslie B. Cutler	Hans Conreid Roz Simmons
The Man In The Glass Booth by: Robert Shaw	Harold Stone	Jack Klugman
Mame by: Jerome Lawrence Robert E. Lee	John Bowab	Ann Miller
Plaza Suite by: Neil Simon	Danny Simon	Barbara Bel Geddes David Wayne
Summer 1969		
The Show-Off by: George Kelly	Billy Matthews	John Garfield Jr.
Room Service by: John Murray Allen Boretz	Billy Matthews	Jules Munshin
1969 - 70		
Our Town by: Thornton Wilder	Donald Driver	Henry Fonda, Elizabeth Hartman, Ed Begley Mildred Natwick
The Boys In The Band by: Mart Crowley	Murray Gitlin	George Grizzard
Play It Again, Sam by: Woody Allen	Ben Gerard	Red Buttons
The Front Page by: Ben Hecht Charles MacArthur	Harold J. Kennedy	Ray Milland
Dames At Sea by: George Haimsohn, Robin Miller, Jim Wise	Billy Matthews	Judy Carne
George M! by: Michael Stewart, John and Fran Pascal, George M. Cohan	Wakefield Poole	Kenneth Nelson

Play/Playwright	Director	Actors
The Button by: Ben Starr	Neal Kenyon	Tony Randall John McMartin Ruth Ford Joyce Van Patten
Hadrian VII by: Peter Luke	Roderick Cook	Barry Morse
Forty Carats by: Jay Allan Barillet and Gredy	Barry Nelson	Eleanor Parker
Zorba by: Joseph Stein, John Kander Fred Ebb	Grover Dale	Robert Horton
My Daughter, Your Son by: Phoebe and Henry Ephron	Gordon Hunt	Vivian Vance Dody Goodman
1970 - 71		
Butterflies Are Free by: Leonard Gershe	Elizabeth Caldwell	Ann Southern, Beau Bridges, Pamela Kingsley
Last Of The Red Hot Lovers by: Neil Simon	Harold Stone	Milton Berle Virginia Martin Ruth Kobart Paula Wayne
How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying by: Frank Loesser Abe Burrows	Robert Morse	Robert Morse RudyVallee
Child's Play by: Robert Marasco	Mitchell Erickson	George Grizzard Arthur O'Connell
Light Up The Sky by: Moss Hart	Harold J. Kennedy	Elizabeth Allen, Don De Fore, Jane Kean, Sam Levene, Kay Medford Russell Nype
Twentieth Century by: Ben Hecht Charles MacArthur	George Abbott	Eli Wallach Anne Jackson
Private Lives by: Noel Coward	Stephen Porter	Tammy Grimes Michael Lipton
The Gingerbread Lady by: Neil Simon	Jeremiah Morris	Nancy Kelly
Bob And Ray The Two and Only	Joseph Hardy	Bob Elliott Ray Goulding
3 Goats And A Blanket by: Woody Kling Robert J. Hiliard	Jeremiah Morris	Mickey Rooney

Play / Playwright	*Director*	*Actors*
This Was Burlesque	Ann Corio	Ann Corio
1972 - 73		
Man Of La Mancha by: Dale Wasserman, Mitch Leigh, Joe Darion	Rudy Tronto	Howard Keel
The Prisoner Of Second Avenue by: Neil Simon	Jeremiah Morris	Frank Gorshin
My Fair Lady by: Alan Jay Lerner Frederick Loewe	—	Noel Harrison
Promenade, All! by: David Robison	Arthur Storch	Hume Cronyn, Jessica Tandy, Biff McGuire Russ Thacker
The Effect Of Gamma Rays On Man-In-The-Moon Marigolds by: Paul Zindel	Robert Livingstone	Shelley Winters
Comedy In Music	—	Victor Borge
Jose Molina Baile Espanoles	—	Jose Molina
6 RMS RIV VU by: Bob Randall	Jerry Adler	Sandy Dennis Leonard Nimoy
Promises, Promises by: Neil Simon, Burt Bacharach, Hal David	Samuel Liff	Orson Bean
Summer And Smoke by: Tennessee Williams	Jeffrey Hayden	Eve Marie Saint Ronny Cox
No Sex Please, We're British by: Anthony Marriott Alistair Foot	—	Mickey Rooney
Butley by: Simon Gray	Richard Barr	James Daly
1973 - 74		
The Sunshine Boys by: Neil Simon	Jeremiah Morris	Theodore Bikel
That Championship Season by: Jason Miller	John Mahon	Broderick Crawford Edward Binnss
Finishing Touches by: Jean Kerr	Ben Shaktman	Celeste Holm, Barry Nelson, Wesley Addy
The Secretary Bird by: William Douglas Home	Richard Clarke	Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.

Play/Playwright	Director	Actors
The Trouble With People by: Neil Simon	Danny Simon	Jerry Orbach, Rae Allen Harold Gould
No, No, Nanette by: Otto Harbach, Frank Mandel, Vincent Youmans	Burt Shevelove Bill Guske	Helen Gallagher, Barbara Britton, Russell Nype
One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest by: Dale Wasserman	Jim Way	Pierrino Mascarino
13 Rue De L'Amour by: Mawby Green, Ed Feilbert	Donald Driver	Leslie Caron
Don't Bother Me, I Can't Cope by: Micki Grant	Vinnette Carroll	Nell Carter Alex Bradford
1974 - 75		
Grease by: Jim Jacobs, Warren Casey	Tom Moore	Lenny Bari Frank Piegaro
Jesus Christ Superstar by: Tom O'Horgan, Andrew Lloyd Webber, Tim Rice	—	Kim Milford
Hughie by: Eugene O'Neill	Martin Fried	Ben Gazzara
Sleuth by: Anthony Shaffer	Warren Crane	Jordan Christopher Patrick MacNee
The Sponsor by: Ira Lewis	—	E.G. Marshall Eli Wallach
Purlie by: Ossie Davis	Stockton Briggle	Patti Jo Robert Guillaume
Marlene Dietrich In Concert	—	Marlene Dietrich
Moonchildren by: Michael Weller	Harris Goldman	Art Wallace, Kathryn Grody, Richard Lieberman, Frank Logan
God's Favorite by: Neil Simon	Tom Porter	Godfrey Cambridge
Equus by: Peter Shaffer	Paul Giovanni	Brian Murray Richard Dunne
1975 - 76		
Diamond Studs by: Chelsea Theater Center	—	Jan Davidson
Sherlock Holmes by: William Gillette Arthur Conan Doyle	Colin Cook	John Colicos Colin Cook

Play / Playwright	Director	Actors
Godspell by: John Michael Tebelak	—	Richard Dunne
Macbeth by: William Shakespeare	Ralph Allen	Anthony Quayle
The Magic Show by: Bob Randall	Stockton Briggle	Peter DePaula
A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Forum by: Burt Shevelove, Larry Gelbart Stephen Sondheim	Leland Ball	Milton Berle
Me And Bessie by: Will Holt, Linda Hopkins	Robert Greenwald	Linda Hopkins
Ben Franklin by: Howard de Silva Felix Leon	Howard de Silva	Howard de Silva
The Best Man 1976 by: Gore Vidal	—	E.G Marshall Kevin McCarthy
Oh, Calcutta! by: Jules Feiffer, Sam Sheppard, John Lennon et al.	Jacques Levy	—
Bubblin' Brown Sugar by: Duke Ellington, Billy Strayhorn, Earl Hines et al.	Michael Maurer	Patti Jo
Charles Dickens	—	Emlyn Williams
Vanities by: Jack Heifner	Stockton Briggle	Garn Stephens Ellen Barber Stephanie Braxton
1977 - 78		
Cyrano De Bergerac by: Edmond Rostand	John Ulmer	William Leach Pamela Lewis
Violano Virtuoso by: Betty Suyker	—	Gregory Abels
Othello by: William Shakespeare	Michael Montel	Samuel Wright Kitty Wynn
Streamers by: David Rabe	Michael Montel	Gus Kaikkonen Samuel Wright
Absurd Person Singular by: Alan Ayckbourn	Michael Montel	Veronica Castang
The Drunkard by: Barry Manilow Bro Herrod	Judith Haskell	Eric Tavares

Play/Playwright	Director	Actors
1978 - 79		
As You Like It by: William Shakespeare	Michael Montel	Donald Ewer Robert Grossman Diane Zolten
The Night Of The Iguana by: Tennessee Williams	George Keathley	A.D. Cover, Donald Ewer, Don Stout
A Flea In Her Ear by: Georges Feydeau	—	Donald Ewer
The Shadow Box by: Michael Cristofer	Joseph Adler	Roz Simmons Don Stout
The Member Of The Wedding by: Carson McCullers	Nafe Katter	Burnice Avery John Archie Harold Bergman A. Robin Reiter
Irma La Douce by: Julian More, David Henecker, Monty Norman	Michael Montel	Pamela Blair
Ain't Misbehavin' by: Fats Waller	Richard Maltby, Jr.	Gail Boggs
1979 - 80		
Ceremonies In Dark Old Men by: Lonnie Elder, III	Charles Turner	Gilbert Lewis
Emlyn Williams As Dylan Thomas Growing Up by: Emlyn Williams	Robert Crawley	Emlyn Williams
Three Men On A Horse by: John Cecil Holm George Abbott	David Robert Kanter	Elaine Hausman
St. Mark's Gospel by: Alec McCowen	Alec McCowen	Michael Tolaydo
The Imaginary Invalid by:Moliere	—	Donald Ewer
Ashes by: David Rudkin	David Robert Kanter	Dennis Creaghan Donald Ewer, Gwendolyn Lewis, Jillian Lindig
Ten Little Indians by: Agatha Christie	John Chase Soliday	Harold Bergman
The Club by: Eve Merriam	J. Haskell	E. Barbour
The Claude Kipnis Mime Theater	—	Claude Kipnis

Play / Playwright	*Director*	*Actors*
Thurber	—	William Windom
1980 - 81		
Gemini by: Albert Innavrato	David Robert Kanter	Peter Ivanov Roz Simmons
Hamlet by: William Shakespeare	David Robert Kanter	Craig Dudley Eileen Russell
A Christmas Carol by: Charles Dickens	David Robert Kanter	Donald Ewer, Glenn Swan, Eileen Russell
Getting Out by: Marsha Norman	David Robert Kanter	Megan McTavish Jaye Cameron
The 1959 Pink Thunderbird by: James McLure	David Robert Kanter	Ann Crumb, Margo Martindale, Susan Pitts
Agnes Of God by: John Piel	David Robert Kanter	Jaye Cameron, Barbara Bradshaw, Ann Gillian
Go Back For Murder by: Agatha Christie	Michael Montel	Barbara Bradshaw Stephen Temperley
1981 - 82		
Da by: Hugh Leonard	David Robert Kanter	Bill Hindman Paul Vincent
Oedipus Rex by: Sophocles, Charles Nolte	Charles Nolte	Samuel Wright Barbara Montgomery
A Christmas Carol by: Charles Dickens	David Robert Kanter	Donald Ewer Glenn Swan
The Summer People by: Charles Nolte	Charles Nolte	Ellen Adamson
A Moon For The Misbegotten by: Eugene O'Neill	Lou Salerni	Robert Donley, Peter Galman, Robert Gaston Lisa McMillan
Talley's Folly by: Lanford Wilson	James Riley	Jeff David Linda Stephens
Black Coffee by: Agatha Christie	David Robert Kanter	Mary Benson
1982 - 83		
The Dresser by: Ronald Harwood	Douglas Seale	Jose Ferrer Michael Tolaydo
Fifth Of July by: Lanford Wilson	Kent Stephens	Eric Conger Julia Murray

Play/Playwright	Director	Actors
A Coupla White Chicks Sitting Around Talking by: John Ford Noonan	James Riley	Megan McTavish Annie Stafford
Fallen Angels by: Noel Coward	Frith Banbury	Tudi Wiggins, Alfred Alvarez-Calderon
A Destiny With Half Moon Street by: Paul Zendel	Jose Ferrer	Danny Aiello
Witness For The Prosecution by: Agatha Christie	Douglas Seale	Sarah Burke, Jerry Hotchkiss, Richard Liberty, James Valentine
When Hell Freezes Over I'll Skate by: Vinnette Carroll	George Broderick	Lynn Clifton Allen Nora Cole, Sheila Ellis L. Michael Gray
1983 - 84		
Light Up The Sky by: Moss Hart	Jose Ferrer	Lois Nettleton Mary Wickes
A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Forum by: Burt Shevelove	Judith Haskell	Phill Leeds Jess Richards
Cat On A Hot Tin Rooof by: Tennessee Williams	Jose Ferrer	Terence Knox, Kim Hunter, Lois Chiles
Life With Father by: Howard Lindsay Russel Crouse	Jeremiah Morris	Jose Ferrer, Kim Hunter Harold Bergman
Dancing In The End Zone by: Bill C. Davis	Stephen Hollis	Mary Joan Negro Frederic Lehne
A Soldiers Play by: Charles Fuller	Douglas Turner Ward	The Negro Ensemble Company
Last Of The Red Hot Lovers by: Neil Simon	Barry J. W. Steinman	Iris Acker, Don Stout Eileen Russell
1984 - 85		
When You Comin' Back, Red Ryder? by: Mark Medoff	Miguel Ferrer	Terence Knox Jackie Earle Haley
The Glass Menagerie by: Tennessee Williams	—	Constance Cummings
Sleuth by: Anthony Shaffer	Jose Ferrer	Patrick Macnee Jordan Christopher

Play / Playwright	Director	Actors
Pump Boys And Dinettes by: John Foley	B. J. Allen	Mary Gutzi, David Keyes Richard Perrin Jim Lauderdale Ritt Henn
'night, Mother by: Marsha Norman	Bryna Wortman	Margo Martindale Carmen Matthews
Home by: Samm-Art Williams	Woodie King, Jr.	Gilbert Lewis Stephanie Alston Andrea-Michelle Smith
America's Sweetheart by: John Weidman Alfred Uhry	Gerald Freedman	Steve Vinovich
1985 - 86		
Corpse by: Gerald Moon	John Tillinger	Keith Baxter Milo O'Sheaa
Cole Porter Requests The Pleasure by: Philip Astor	Philip Astor	Gretchen Wyler Larry Kert, Roz Ryan Samuel Wright
I Love My Wife by: Luis Rego	Onna White	Desi Arnaz, Jr. Saundra Santiago
Berlin To Broadway With Kurt Weill by: Gene Lerner Jack Allison Fred Kolo	Jack Allison	David Holloway Judy Kaye Diane Fratonani Martin Vidnovic
Seascape by: Edward Albee	Edward Albee	Henderson Forsythe Jacqueline Brookes
Rum & Coke by: Keith Reddin	James Simpson	David Berman, John Henry Cox, Mark Epstein Zach Grenier, Annette Helde, William Mesnik James Puig Jony Shalhoub

Carol Cohan is an award winning author and educator who writes primarily about the arts, education, and medicine. She lives in Coconut Grove with her husband, Phil Glatstein, and her two daughters.

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