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The Lambs' *Script*



A publication of The Lambs[®]
America's first professional theatrical club, established in 1874.

Fall 2009



*Top: Peter Kingsley and Leslie Shreve
Bottom: Joe Logrippo and Carol Lambert*

Cover image designed by Randy Phillips.

The Lambs' Script

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From the Editor's Desk

I must begin with sincere thanks to the many members who have offered such encouragement and positive feedback regarding the work of our *Script* staff and myself on our last issue. Thanks too, to our Assistant Editor, and to all the contributing editors that you see recognized in the masthead above. They work very hard on their columns, and without compensation, except of course for the considerable satisfaction of assembling the ongoing historical record of this, the oldest theatrical club in the land.

Thanks to Peter Kingsley for a second wonderful installment in our "Theatre Tales" series, this time with a closer look at Lauren Bacall. Thanks as well to my favorite librarian, my alert sister Sara Bentley (a.k.a. Sally), who located a Bacall photo we could include without fear of copyright infringement. By the way, if you have a Theatre Tale to share with our readers, please e-mail a copy to me for consideration. The address is: LambsScript@gmail.com. If you feel you are not a writer, fear not. I will happily fine-tune your story as needed, and send it back for your pre-publication approval.

Lambs' First Lady, Sheila Smith, outdid herself directing the stunning reading of *The Fabulous Lunts*, which I happily reviewed for this issue. We include as well, Sheila's report on the lovely memorial service for our recently departed Lamb, Mike Mearian. Also for this issue, I had the pleasure of writing a report on our wonderful Shepherd's Luncheon featuring guest of honor, Peter Filichia. Talk about "Theatre Tales!" Peter had plenty of them, --- all fascinating.

Finally, with the holiday season approaching, be sure to circle Friday, December 18th, 2009 for this year's Christmas Party. Details may reach you before this *Script* arrives, and the Farmer's Almanac predicts much better weather this year. In any event, hope to see you there!

- David Dow Bentley, III

On the fifth floor lots of action took place. First there was an October meeting of the Lambs' Council. Many people used the fifth floor as a rehearsal space. Our own First Lady, Sheila Smith, used her magic in directing a production of "The Fabulous Lunts" that played to an overflow crowd. The cast was excellent, and we took special pride in the performances of our very own Lambs, **Peter Kingsley** and **leslie Shreve**. BRAVO! [See a related story from our editor in this issue.]

Our entertainment chairman, **Marc Baron**, is planning for a schedule of regular play readings, with a play sub-committee led by **Jill Tasker**, with **Peter Kingsley**, **Scott Glascock**, and **Annette Hunt**, **Margot Astrachan**, assisting in choosing the material. We also had a very interesting speaker at our Shepherd's Luncheon as leading theatre critic, Peter Filichia, related many insightful tales of the people he has met and shows he has reviewed during his writing career. Our editor, **David Dow Bentley, III**, a well-known drama critic himself, has written a story in this issue about that special afternoon. Some of the events to be scheduled in the future will be the annual Christmas party, a Victor Herbert Night hosted by **Jacqueline Kroschell**, and a Valentine Love Fest, hosted by Yours Truly.

As I said, this summer I was away most of the time. But I did get a chance to see a movie called, *Tickling Leo*, with a cast that included Eli Wallach. When I ran into him and his wife, Anne Jackson, I thanked them for giving us so many years of fine performances. I told them I was a Lamb. Anne Jackson grabbed my hand and sang, "Baa, Baa, Baa." They were so lovely, and they certainly knew our theme song.

Before I close, I want to wish good health to **Roseann Sheridan**, and **Faye Lytelle**, and offer my condolences to **Kevin McMullen** on the loss of his partner, Jim. Wishing you all a wonderful and healthy holiday season and a great 2010. Let us keep you *In the Fold*.



In the Fold
by *Davida Rothberg*



Hello, and welcome to *In The Fold*. The autumn leaves have fallen off most of the trees, but the rain and chill of the coming winter has not dampened the Lambs Club's Friday night Low Jinx. The people who have brightened those nights included talented Collies and performers with special themes. Congrats to **Camille Savitz**, who took us to Disneyland, and gave us a magical evening. She was also responsible for a grand trip to Italy on an Italian Theme Night that was complete with a special menu to match. A big thank-you goes to the club chef for his cooperation and culinary talents. **Vivienne Gilbert** hosted a sensational Latin Night, and with more help from the club's chef and bar, the evening featured food and drink that had a special Spanish flavor. Some of our worthy Collies include **Joan Scafarello**, **Linda Fields**, that classy lady, **Helen Klass**, **Kathy Kelleher**, **Scott Glascock**, and **Eleanor Carney**. [Author's Note: I wasn't around much during the summer, so if I left any of you collies out, please let me know and I'll give you a special mention in the next issue.]

An ailing **Kathy Kelleher** called me to ask if I could switch evenings with her as a Collie. I was recovering from a bee sting, but she had no voice so I was glad to oblige. The next week Kathy came back with her own jokes and a clear voice. It turned out to be a great evening of celebration as the birthday of **Joyce Randolph** brought out a full house. I cracked lots of age jokes, and even had the pleasure of interviewing our talented "Trixie" at the evening's end! We had still more to celebrate as we sang Happy Birthday to two other special lambs, **Sandy Bendfeldt** and **Robert Anderson**. Champagne and birthday cake completed the festive evening.

October's theme was a fun-filled Halloween Night with **Billie Stewart** and fellow singers all in costume. As I write these lines, a special Noel Coward Night is scheduled for November with an evening of song and sophistication hosted by **Lynn Rogers**. By the way, our Shepherd, **Randy Phillips**, has been lending his fine voice to start each Low Jinx evening. We wish he would do more singing. Of course our wonderful accompanist, Woody Reagan, always adds to the Low Jinx enjoyment with his special talent at the piano.

Those "Fabulous Lunts"
by *David Dow Bentley III*
www.ThePeoplesCritic.com

The Lambs Club's 5th floor black box theatre was abuzz with excitement on a beautiful fall evening in New York City. Arriving guests that would fill the room to capacity were busy signing the evening's guest book, and Lambs' Shepherd, Randy Phillips, was ready with warm words of welcome. The enthusiastic crowd included theatre critics Peter Filichia and Jim Miller, Manhattan television talk show host, Linda Fields, and Script columnist Davida Rothberg. Also spotted in the audience were producers Julie Miller and Adam Gale. Lamb Sylvia Schwartz was there too, (former associate producer with David Merrick Productions), as were various literary and theatrical agents, and Broadway actors, Lewis J. Stadlin, Katie Henney, and Edmund Lyndeck. Even Sandra Bendfelt and Broadway's Gene Bayliss had made the trip in from Connecticut. But if the real stars of the evening were in fact phantoms, they were about to be resurrected with elegance and style. Such was the scene as the audience anticipated the opening curtain for Dennis Brown's, *The Fabulous Lunts* (adapted from the biography by Jared Brown).

Looking sleek in a sharp dress-black suit, the show's stylish director, Sheila Smith, took to the stage first with a few words of welcome, and some brief background on the play's celebration of the lives of legendary acting couple, Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne. A veteran of many Broadway shows herself, Smith had the good fortune years ago to see the Lunts perform on two occasions. She joked a bit as she explained a few historical details about the famed couple and their fellow actors, but cautioned the audience not to worry because, "...they're all dead now." Smith even poked a bit of fun at herself, describing how her fetish for "cabernet and French fries" helped get her through the directing process.

Then it was on to the main event as the formal reading of Brown's insightful play began. It was fitting that the only set piece was a pair of impressive thrones at center stage, each bedecked with crimson velvet. There, for most of the evening, would reside this royal couple that were fittingly described as the "Crowned Heads of Theatre" during their long and successful reign. Appropriately heading the cast as Alfred and Lynn was yet another acting couple of long standing, Joe Logrippo and

Carol Lambert, who coincidentally had just celebrated their own 40th wedding anniversary. Rounding out the cast of four that Smith had accurately described as a "tour de force quartet of actors who just eat this stuff up," were talented Leslie Shreve (yes, she spells it with a small "l"), and Broadway veteran, Peter Kingsley. Most often situated on high-back bar stools on either side of the stage, the latter two actors would not only serve superbly as narrators of the story, but each would also brilliantly portray eleven different characters that touched the lives of the Lunts. They would be critical to so successfully creating the impression of a full production.

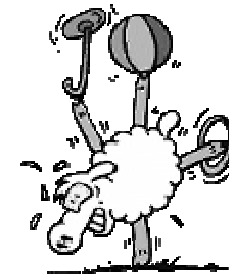
As for our stars, the Lunts, the play is so cleverly constructed that Lambert and Logrippo have the opportunity to play the pair from childhood to old age. We learn that young Alfred wanted to be an actor from the age of four. As she does so often while lighting up the stage, Lambert positively beams as the childhood Lynn declaring, "I'm going to be an actress!" She goes on to have the opportunity of studying with the legendary Ellen Terry, who teaches young Lynn that in theatre, "...everything you need to know is in the words." Meanwhile, young Alfred's father dies, and the considerable family fortune is squandered during his mother's second marriage to a doctor who makes her a widow for the second time. But by age 20 Alfred was on the stage in Boston, and Lynn was working in London with a new friend, the acting great, Laurette Taylor. Miss Shreve delightfully portrays Taylor, and before the evening was over this gifted actress would capture the essence of such other characters as Ellen Terry, Cathleen Nesbit, and Theresa Helburn, as well as Alfred's icy mom and assorted reporters.

It wasn't long before George Tyler entered the picture, and it was great fun to see Kingsley's depiction of that great producer as he rants and raves about the outrageous notion of paying actors one-hundred dollars a week! It appeared that Kingsley had a special knack for taking on producer personas as he went on to seemingly embody Booth Tarkington, Bob Sherwood, S.N. Berhman and Terence Rattigan, as well as critic Brooks Atkinson and director Peter Brook.

While working a season of stock for George Tyler, Alfred and Lynn quickly fall in love. Soon Alfred stars in Tarkington's "Clarence," opposite Helen Hayes. Miss Shreve portrays Hayes in yet another delicious characterization, her hair gaily decorated with flowered ribbons that are just a minor example of the many bits of jewelry and the millinery masterpieces (from director Smith) that adorn the cast in scene

historic sites throughout Union County, New Jersey. Jacqueline's Cameo Productions, which is heavily involved with historic projects, will also be working with the Tri-State Actors Theatre to provide music and songs that Lincoln found inspiring. As I write these lines, Mr. De Pass is planning a performance at Iguana on the Sunday after Thanksgiving. There he will present selections from his uplifting, and always inspiring original creations. I'll be there! **Carol Shedlin's** *Feelin' Groovy* provided another kind of "historic perspective." Her songs and descriptions covered fifty years of things that surrounded us, things we thought were "groovy" at the time. How tastes changed as we became more sophisticated! As usual, Carol's song choices were right on the money.

Woody Regan provided the music and sang along with Richard Marshall and Alix Elias in their Don't Tell Mama production of *Food of Love*, a celebration of love songs from 1929 to 2009. The tunes ranged from the zany to both the dramatic, and the truly romantic. The trio works well together, and was great fun to listen to. Also coming up in December is **Camille Cacciatore Savitz**, *Town and Country*. Camille's shows are always fun. I'm looking forward to spending at least one December Sunday at Don't Tell Mama. Have you taken a look at the new Lambs Message Board on the Internet? I found some very interesting things there, like a post from **Fr. John Sheehan** announcing an autobiographical musical about his trip from Broadway to the Jesuits. Imagine Fr. John's voice with Woody Regan at the keyboard! How did I miss that? I'll tell you how: I didn't keep a sharp eye on the message board. That's how! My pre-pre New Year's Resolution No.1 is to watch the Lambs message board. You don't have a computer? Prevail upon your friends. Don't miss the good stuff.



new and unseen material in a variety of venues. This is not the first year that Ryan has taken part in the festival. He is currently living in Shanghai where both he and his girlfriend are appearing in a show called *Hollywood to Broadway* [For more about Ryan see Lambs Around the Globe in this issue].

The Shooting Star Theatre down at the South Street Seaport was active again, with an award-winning play by Mayo Simon titled, *The Old Lady's Guide to Survival*. **Anita Brown** starred in this funny but touching play.

Linda Fields' *Cabaret Today* on cable in Manhattan gets better and better with each interview. Through the summer and during the early fall she interviewed Anthony Santelmo Jr., a wonderful singer with a big Broadway-operatic voice, who likes to do fun-filled songs as well as serious material. In addition, Linda presented a tribute to the late Peter Howard, gave us an intimate look at **Frank Torren**, and brought back Erik Michael Gillette, one of the prime cabaret and musical performers and coaches. (P.S.-- Linda looks great!)

Peter Dizzoza and **Don Flynn** provided material and performances for a series of short works and comedy rants with musical interludes, all presented at the famous Neighborhood Playhouse on East 54th Street. The series lasted two nights with different line-ups each night. Peter's work, *A Question of Solitude* was directed by George Ference and presented on the first night. Don's play, *A Money Back Guaranty*, was performed the second night and was directed by Virginia Venk. Peter provided the music for both nights. **Roseann Sheridan** has been "out of service" for the last several weeks with a broken foot requiring major surgery! Get well soon, Roseann. We miss you!

leslie Shreve appeared with Steve Ross, Tammy Grimes, and Joe Sirola at the National Arts Club on Gramercy Park . They did readings from Elizabeth Harland's book, *Passionate Pilgrimages: From Chopin to Coward*. leslie read letters from the dying Catherine Mansfield, a New Zealand writer and member of the Bloomsbury group, who moved to the south of France to avoid the rigors of English weather. Her letters were written to her beloved John Middleton Murry, the English writer who had remained in London.

Steve DePass and **Jacqueline Kroschell** re-enacted a 1909 celebration honoring the late president Abraham Lincoln. The performance was one of the many events of the 12th annual Four Centuries in a Weekend celebration, a time-travel opportunity to tour

after scene. Though only a reading, it is such subtle touches that perfectly accent the brilliant acting that moves us believably among assorted characters and time periods throughout the piece. One minute we have the elegantly feathered chapeau of Tullulah Bankhead (another winning performance from Shreve), and in the next Mr. Kingsley appears in a sporty riding cap and goggles that should have placed him in a Model-T Ford. There was a pleasant song or two, and with backstage help from stage manager, Larry Ling, there were discreetly introduced bits of recorded music here and there. It was all great fun.

Within two years Lynn's performance in "Dulcy" had made her an established star. Lambert's radiant energy continues to give us a glowing Lynn, even if she is simply caressing a rose. Mr. Logrippo's Alfred has a quietly compelling dignity, and gentle warmth that sweetly cements the couple's romance. Then the stage ignites with Kingsley's appearance as theatrical giant, Noel Coward. In an absolutely uproarious performance, and strutting about with effete flair and nose in the air, Kingsley perfectly captures the wit, style, and vocal mannerisms of this famed playwright, composer, and performer.

The Lunts stage and screen triumph in "The Guardsman" is highlighted in the play as well; and then we learn of the Lunts' decision to forgo big money offers in Hollywood ("We can be bought, but we can't be bored!"), for a long and successful stage career together with the Theatre Guild. There they reunited with Mr. Coward in his comedy, "Design for Living." Kingsley kept the audience in stitches as Coward declares with delicious pomposity, "If you want to know people really well, rehearse with them," and goes on to give Alfred marital advice during a tiff with his wife: "Let's leave her to sulk and go to a movie!"

Countless other Lunts successes are detailed, especially their courageous efforts to bring meaningful theatre to the war years, even to England during the blitz. When the London theater they were performing in was destroyed in the bombing, they were undeterred and took their play on tour. Alfred even works as director on the play, "Ondine," starring Audrey Hepburn and husband, Mel Ferrer.

As the Lunts begin to spend more time at their Wisconsin farm, Ten Chimneys, Logrippo's rich voice sports a kind of reflective wisdom as Alfred peers at his wife from above the glasses on the end of his nose and observes, "Our lives are winding down." Well, not quite. There would be yet another stage triumph for the Lunts with the vengeance, greed and murder of "The Visit," and when the play opened in 1958 at

the Lunt Fontanne Theatre (formerly The Globe), the critics were described as "joyous."

The Lunts finally retired to Wisconsin in 1960 to enjoy "relaxing, entertaining, and reminiscing." It would not surprise me if the audience of which I was a part will one day do some reminiscing of its own, looking back on director Smith's polished production, her talented actors, and the wondrous world of "The Fabulous Lunts." It was a wonderful evening of "Great Performances," and I didn't even need PBS.

Highlights from The Council Meeting 10-14-09

by Kay Arnold, Recording Secretary

- The Membership Committee report indicated we have one returning member, Kristine Lewis, and two new members: Christopher Johnson & Meg Dooley.
- The Entertainment Committee report indicated that the Low Jinks have been scheduled through the end of the year. We had both a Latin Night, and an Italian Night, and for each we had food that was appropriate to the theme. The Halloween Night event was scheduled for October 30th, and a Noel Coward Night was scheduled for November 13th. A performance of *The Fabulous Lunts* was planned for October 26th, and on November 16th, Peter Kingsley was scheduled to direct a play reading. Dec. 18th is the date scheduled for this year's Christmas Party.
- It was announced that we have a message board on the web site, and people are taking advantage of it. The site also features a disclaimer explaining that The Lambs is not related to either the Church of the Nazarene, or to the Chatwal Hotel that is now taking up residence at The Lambs' landmark former address on 44th Street.
- The club finance report indicated that careful funds management during the current economic downturn is key to maintaining a healthy financial outlook.
- Honorary Membership was issued to Judy Frank Mearian, the widow of Mike Mearian.

News of the Lambs

by Gerry Ruth

September 12th was a very good day. **Missy McMahon** and Frank Porretta were married. Missy, an actress and long-time member of The Lambs, is the daughter of another long-time member, the late **Horace McMahon**, a popular movie, TV, and Broadway actor of the 40's, 50's, and 60s, and Louise Campbell, a movie star back in the early Bing Crosby era. They met when Missy was singing in the choir and Frank, whose career includes both Broadway and Opera, was the Choir Master. Cupid sure hangs out in interesting places. We wish you both years of happiness!

September 13th was a downer for **Alice Dillon**. She slipped off a chair in her kitchen and did some serious damage to her hip and femur. After several weeks in the hospital recuperating, she is now in rehabilitation at the Lillian Ferris Booth Actors' Fund Residence. **Joyce Randolph**, Missy, and I visited Alice on Veteran's day. Alice looks good and is progressing nicely, but she is anxious to be back on her feet and walking again. (For you newbies, Alice's late husband, **Tom Dillon**, was a long-serving Shepherd of the Lambs and President of the Actors' Fund of America).

Kevin McMullan has planned a Memorial Concert at St. Malachy's Church Actors' Chapel for his forever-partner, Jim Fraderich, who passed away on August 27th. Jim was a concert pianist, composer, musical director and orchestrator. Kevin is busy collecting Jim's musical works and putting them in order. **Scott Glascock** is at it again, acting that is. This time he played Mikhail Gorbachev in a reading of *Reykjavik*, a new play by Pulitzer Prize winning author Richard Rhodes. The event took place at the CUNY Graduate Center on 34th Street and 5th Avenue. The Grad Center is a great place for history related drama readings. Scott has done several things there, all of them interesting. Meanwhile, the fun event of this autumn had to be the October 17th luncheon cruise aboard the Spirit Cruise Line Bateau. In addition to lunch, there was music, dancing, and a chance to make a contribution to the Emergency Relief Program of the Episcopal Actors' Guild.

Ryan Foy was back in town for a production of *Fancy Footwork* with the New York International Fringe Festival. The Fringe is an interesting project. For several weeks in the early fall, the group sponsors



she was! Lauren Bacall came walking up that aisle. Imitating her twenty year-old self, she slowly, blithely cruised me from top to toe, and then from toe to top. By the time her eyes met mine I was waiting for her. I winked. She flushed, and jerked her head aside like a horse being reigned in.

Later, there was a reception, and I found myself in a clique of freeloaders like myself gathered with Betty Comden, Adolph Green, and Myrna Loy. The show had been something of a disappointment, but the conversation was lively and funny. Suddenly, brazenly, Lauren Bacall stuck her head into our conversation. Now not a single stagehand, dresser, or chorus boy had I ever heard call her anything but Miss Bacall (or something else unprintable here). The group met her joyously and Myrna chirped,

“Peter, meet Betty Bacall.”

I looked at Betty as brazenly as she had me, and said,

“Oh, we’ve already met.”

Flames shot out of her mouth as she retorted,

“WHERE?”

Now George had recently moved to the Dakota on 72nd Street and Central Park West where Miss Bacall had long resided.

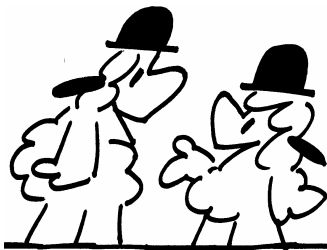
“Your little dog peed on my limousine,” I replied.

The flames rose higher,

“WHOSE LIMOUSINE?” she roared.

“The one I drive!” I shot back, to an explosion of laughter in which she gladly joined.

Fame is a terrible test of human character, which most famous people readily fail. In Betty’s case the good and bad had been so blown up, and so distorted for so long that whatever remained of that sexy, taunting little girl from 1945 had morphed into something else completely. But I shall never forget that charged cruise I got from her! A fox’s brush! Or was it only a brush with a fox?



Lambs Around the Globe by D. D. Bentley III

The influence of The Lambs extends well beyond our home base here in New York. In keeping with the success of his illustrious ancestors, Lamb Ryan Foy followed his *Fancy Footwork* performance in last summer’s New York International Fringe Festival by jetting off to China where he is in residence for five months to perform in a new show entitled Hollywood to Broadway at the Ritz-Carlton in Shanghai. Confessing that “the language barrier is pretty tough”, and that he was slow to get over the jet lag, Ryan nevertheless describes the whole experience as “quite an adventure.” He invites members to learn more at his website, www.ryanfoy.com, and he looks forward to seeing everyone at the club on his return.

And speaking of Singapore, Lamb, Peter Kingsley’s play, *More Angry Women*, has been staged there by noted Aussie producer/director, Aubrey Mellor, and the word is it was well received. Members may recall that First Lady, Sheila Smith, staged a production of that play at the club several years ago.

In other out-of-town news, Sheila’s favorite Australian architect loved the copy of our last Script that she sent him in the Land Down Under. Meanwhile, Sheila reports that a Rhode Island critic, to whom she sent a copy, requested a second copy after sending his original to Joan Fontaine.

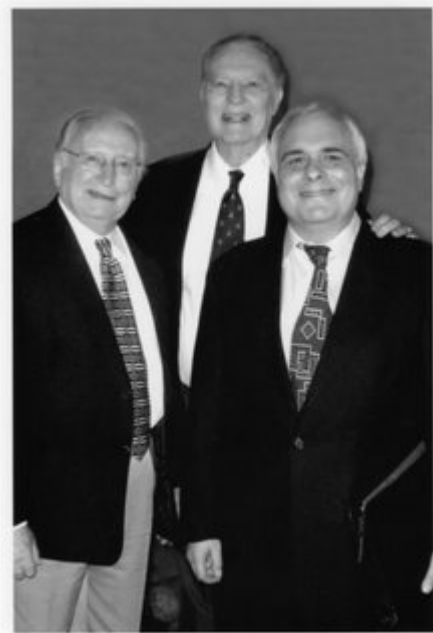


(Left: Sheila Smith toasts Joan Fontaine in *Forty Carats* - national tour.)

A Critic's Critic For A Shepherd's Luncheon
by DAVID DOW BENTLEY III

When the organizers of September's delightful Shepherd's Luncheon at The Lambs first asked me to author a Lambs' Script report of the event, I confess I had some misgivings. As a performing arts reviewer myself, commenting on the performance of a fellow critic seemed potentially out of bounds. But when the luncheon's guest of honor, noted critic and author Peter Filichia, began his fascinating remarks at the podium, it became clear that he is not just a mere critic, he is a superb raconteur.

(Pictured Right: Gene Bayliss, Shepherd Randy Phillips and Peter Filichia.)



Filichia's columns are featured in print with the Newark Star-Ledger, and on the air with television's News 12 New Jersey. His weekly "Stage-Struck" column for Theater Week magazine had a nine year run and was featured at Playbill-on-Line. Now fans can follow his theatrical insights in the thrice-weekly Peter Filichia's Diary offered at TheaterMania.com. Meanwhile, not content with his many adventures in assorted media, Filichia is the author of *Let's Put on a Musical*, now in its third printing, and is just completing his new book, *The Biggest Hit of the Season / The Biggest Flop of the Season: The Last 50 Years of Broadway Musicals*. In addition he has served four terms as president of the Drama Desk where he is known for writing and hosting the organization's annual awards show. He has also emceed the past twelve seasons of the Theatre World Awards, where actors are recognized for major Broadway or Off-Broadway debuts. It is worth noting that three such prior winners were in attendance at the luncheon: Sheila Smith (The Lambs' First Lady



(Left: Lauren Bacall as featured in Yank - The U.S. Army's weekly magazine during World War II. This image is a work of a U.S. Army soldier or employee, taken or made during the course of the person's official duties. As a work of the U.S. federal government, the image is in the public domain.)

this played a part in the multiplying stories that were eagerly received by uncharitable backstage staff, revealing that the "Little People" of show business did not particularly like Miss Bacall. According to such reports she was a monster, a harridan who couldn't act, couldn't sing, and couldn't behave; a bossy old cow, in fact, who had seen far better days. It was rumored that this backstage attitude did not change even after she won the Tony for Best Actress, the news of which reportedly sent some fellow members of the production into paroxysms of mocking laughter. I confess I am not in a position to evaluate this hearsay evidence since I never got the chance to catch her show or to dress her. But I did once have the chance to meet her in person under rather extraordinary circumstances.

Some months prior to *Amadeus*, I had been working part-time as a chauffeur to a family of great wealth. George, my employer, was busily accumulating all the necessary entrées to those societies, clubs and guilds, which any successful young billionaire requires to assure status within his own class. This accumulation of social distinctions demands that a great deal of money be donated to endless charities. So once, when George had a conflict in social scheduling, I was offered his ticket to a \$3,000.00 a seat charity performance at my old theatre, The American Place. My old friend Myna Loy had also been invited. She was a member of the theater's board of directors, and along with a bevy of other celebrities, would round out an audience heavily populated by millionaires. This audience was now to include me, --- for free!

I remember wearing a rather flashy hacking jacket of pure alpaca wool tailored to fit me like a glove. During the intermission, I recall standing at the back of the house by the left hand aisle. All at once, there

Theatre Tales
LAUREN BACALL: One For The Boys
 by Peter Kingsley

Time, that Great Illusionist, can sometimes improve your vision and understanding. Take, for example, the films of Lauren Bacall. When I was young those old movies of hers from the 1940's seemed hilariously over-styled and outmoded. I don't think so today. Now, when I see her in those oldies like *To Have and Have Not*, or *The Big Sleep*, I think what a gorgeous young animal she was as she spilled out that sexy young soul directly into a camera's lens. She eagerly and gracefully jumped through hoops for the likes of Howard Hawks and Humphrey Bogart. Her cigarette tenor and smoldering glances more than made up for whatever else she may have lacked as a mere actress. Of course her success continued far beyond the 1940's with such films as *How to Marry a Millionaire*, *Designing Women*, and countless others. But for me, she will always be that twenty year-old filly taunting Bogart over a shot of bourbon in a seedy nightclub, with smutty double entendres about the kind of jockey she really prefers. What a Babe!

By 1981 she was starring on Broadway in *Woman of the Year*, for which she was to win the Tony Award for Best Actress. It was about that time that I first became aware of her existence as something other than just an image on a screen. I had been working as an understudy to Mark Hamill as Mozart in the Broadway production of *Amadeus*, and as anyone who has ever worked under an Equity Production Contract can tell you, there is a lot of gossip from the stagehands, particularly the dressers and wardrobe people. Now any actor who begins in films and then moves to the stage has habits shaped to the needs of motion pictures rather than live theatre. Costumes, particularly the costumes of women, are of special consequence since a close up can give you a nose the size of a billboard or a stain the size of Lake Constance. Not so on the live stage. Hence, the overly fussy attention to minute costume detail is the hallmark of a film-trained star.

Our show had already been running for some months at the Broadhurst when Bacall opened in *Woman*. Hamill's dresser sometimes moonlighted as Bacall's dresser on matinee days over at the Palace where she was the star. Unflattering stories began to leak out about Bacall's backstage tantrums, and unreasonable demands; and there were even reports of her throwing costumes or props in fits of anger. All of

won for *Mame* 1966-67), Jill O'Hara (An original *Hair* cast member, and Joel Grey co-star in *George M*, she won for *Promises, Promises* 1968-69), and Mark Jacoby (Remembered for his roles as Gaylord Ravenal in *Showboat*, the Father in *Ragtime*, Fredrik in *A Little Night Music*, and the *Phantom of the Opera*, he won the 1985-86 Theatre World Award for his performance in that year's *Sweet Charity* revival). Also spotted in the luncheon crowd were Lambs, **Lynne Rogers** (author of *How to Be a Working Actor*), and **Louis Rachow** (just announced as winner of this year's Theatre Library Award for Lifetime Achievement), along with artist/portraitist, David Beynon Pena. Still another guest introduced by host and Shepherd, Randy Phillips, was Director/Choreographer and longtime associate of Gower Champion, **Mr. Gene Bayliss**, known for his work on *Make a Wish*, *Carnival*, and the memorable teen-gossip "Telephone Hour" he choreographed for the original *Bye Bye Birdie*.



Above: David Dow Bentley III and Peter Filichia at the Shepherd's Luncheon.

But let us move on now to Filichia the storyteller, as was witnessed by about fifty lucky Lambs and guests on a lovely September afternoon. Of course I had to laugh at his tongue-in-cheek description of our profession: "We have no talent at all. That's why we become critics." His presentation utilized an interesting technique as he randomly selected his tales from a stack of prepared note cards highlighting the interesting and often amusing stories he has accumulated during his years as a critic. Guests heard of his infatuation at the age of fourteen with the soundtrack of *My Fair Lady*, and his unexpected opportunity to see the full Broadway production in 1961 when, as the curtain rose on his first live theatrical experience, he naively believed the dimming of the house lights was a blackout, and then thought the scrim revealed was the screen on which he would see a movie. It was the beginning of a career full of surprises.

Filichia shared his early fascination with the bits of rebellion he found in some musicals. There was Henry Higgins' "Why Can't a Woman Be More Like a Man?" the blasé "It's a Bore" from Gaston in *Gigi*, and daring language like "Ain't that too damn bad?" in *South Pacific*. The audience learned he was nicknamed *Little Mary Sunshine* by high school buddies who discovered he had purchased the soundtrack album of that show. He recalled the flirtations of a woman seated beside him in the audience of *Me and My Girl*, and how quickly she rejected him when the sentimental critic was brought to tears by the production. There were amusing recollections of the ill-fated musical, *Gilligan's Island*, and then an uproarious story describing how Filichia out-foxed David Merrick to gain entry to a special performance of *42nd Street* that Merrick had arranged for the Democratic convention delegates in 1980. Another tale described the dubious 1981 *Bring Back Birdie* production that had the audience booing by the close of Act One, in spite of a cast that included Donald O'Connor and Chita Rivera.

There were anecdotes about such notables as James Earl Jones, Ben Vereen, Steve Allen, Walter Kerr, and Laurette Taylor. But beyond amusing stories, Filichia expressed a considerable sensitivity for the deeper meaning of his craft when he remarked, "I want to be a theatrical matchmaker. I want to bring the right show and the right audience together." He went on to say, "We have all the solutions for the world in the theatre, if they would just let us do it!" Then he described his willingness to give attention to small acting companies: "You don't get to be a big theatre group unless you are first a little theatre group." He

went on to emphasize the critic's ability to nourish: "A theatre piece is a living, breathing thing. We all want affection and approval. What critics are seeing is not the finished product. It never is. For too many critics it is all about the fire. Fire can warm you, or burn you. It is important to use the power for good." To that, this fellow critic will add a hearty, "Amen!"



A "Lovely"

Mearian

by Sheila Smith

Celebration for Mike

On September 24th, the Grand Salon resembled a candlelight supper club as "Dame" **Judy Frank Mearian** welcomed guests from around the globe to the memorial celebration honoring her late husband, Mike. Pianist, Paul Chamlin, accompanied the cocktails and buffet with the rich and rarely heard sounds of Mike and Judy's favorite Brit musical, *The Good Companions*, with its lovely score by Andre Previn (music) and Johnny Mercer (lyrics). Some of the tunes included, "The Pleasure of Your Company", "Stage Struck", "Ta Luv" and "Camaraderie."

The formal event began as a Scottish piper strolled the hushed room. As emcee, **A.J. Pockock** introduced a slide show of Mike's life that was narrated by Friar David Konig, and assisted by the technical expertise of **Wally Munro** and **Steve Grosskopf**. Then AFTRA's John C. Hale, Actors' Fund's Joe Benicassa, and Mike's youngest son, Lucas, shared their memories of Mike. Finally, Shepherd **Randy Phillips** closed with this reflection:

"Mike was always a gentleman, a fine actor, loving father, and Judy's spectacular husband. Without his support and guidance, The Lambs would not be celebrating its 135th anniversary this year. Shakespeare wrote: 'The good that men do is oft-interred in their bones.' Not true! The good that Mike did lives on in the hearts and minds of those who knew him."

We welcome Judy as an Honorary Lamb, and offer our thanks for presenting the perfect tribute to "A Mike For Everyone!"

Floreat Agni...