

# Annie People



The Little Orphan Annie Fan Club Newsletter

No. 68, March 1994

Jon Merrill, Editor and Publisher

Tricia Trozzi, Co-Editor

Contents copyright © 1994 for the contributors. *Annie People* is published every other month in January, March, May, July, September, and November at 517 North Fenwick Street, Allentown, PA 18103. Publication has been continuous since January 1983. Member of the National Association of Fan Clubs.



## ***ANNIE WARBUCKS CLOSSES OFF-BROADWAY***

July 6, 1993 - January 30, 1994

We are very sad to report the closing of *Annie Warbucks*, which played its final performance at the Variety Arts Theatre at 5:30 p.m. on Sunday, January 30, 1994. The show ran a total of 238 performances: 38 previews beginning July 6, and 200 regular performances beginning August 8, 1993.

On December 17th the cast flew down to Washington, D.C. to perform an abridged version of the show in the afternoon for President and Mrs. Clinton (see photo and sidebar elsewhere in this issue). Then the cast raced back to NYC in time to perform that evening's regularly scheduled performance! At this point, things were looking pretty good for *AW*. The rumor of a move to a Broadway theater in time for Tony Award eligibility was circulating, and the show was doing excellent box office business during the holiday season from Thanksgiving to Christmas. The weekend shows would be completely sold out.

Unfortunately, attendance dropped off greatly in the beginning of January. The location of the Variety Arts Theatre had been mentioned as a factor—at Third Avenue and 14th Street it is quite far from the Broadway theater district of 44th to 52nd Streets between Seventh and Eighth Avenues. Being so far away from the other theaters would not encourage tourists, for example, who might be reluctant to journey to a neighborhood they are unfamiliar with away from the comparative safety the Theater District offers. But in January 1994, no one in the New York metropolitan area was going *anywhere* because of the coldest, snowiest, most brutal winter weather in years. The multiple snowstorms severely affected the *AW* box office, especially for the weeknight performances. The weekend matinees were still respectably attended, but the show was losing money. While all Broadway shows experience a slump in box office sales in January, some have big enough advance sales for future months to survive through the snowstorm (pun intended), but other shows are forced to close when they are playing performances to empty houses and losing money every week.

Ironically, right up until the day the show closed, there were still bits in the newspapers and the theater magazines about moving the show to a Broadway house, and there was even an open casting call for replacement Orphans held on January 24th! ("Girls only, age 7 to 12 and no more than 54 inches in stocking feet. They'll each be asked to sing 'Tomorrow,' so come prepared.") On January 21st, all of the hopeful rumoring of a move to Broadway was put to rest when the *New York Times* ran a piece detailing that despite a \$2.5 million investment deal in the works to finance it, the move could not be made in time to be eligible for Tony Awards because "the producers had overlooked a provision in the Tony rules that says a show must transfer to an eligible house within 30 weeks of its original opening at an ineligible house in order to qualify for any nominations (the idea is to keep long-running shows from masquerading as, and competing with, new ones)." With the show kept downtown on this technicality (by our reckoning, the show ran exactly 29-1/2 weeks from first preview to closing performance), the show's producers tried a different approach. In a full-page article on whether Off-Broadway shows should be made eligible for Tony Awards (which ironically appeared on January 30th, the day *AW* was closing), producer

Ben Sprecher asked for *AW* to be given Tony consideration, arguing that the creators "are Broadway regulars....if the Tonys really celebrate excellence in the New York theater...it is simply not fair to overlook this production because it is 20 blocks" south of the Theater District. His request was denied by the Tony Award organization.

The final performance itself seemed a little special, even though there were no curtain call speeches as there were for the final performance of *Annie* on Broadway 11 years earlier. It was obvious though, that much of the audience was "papered"—a theatrical slang term meaning that free tickets were given out by the production. These people gave a wildly cheering standing ovation for the cast that definitely said, "You are the best! This was a great show!" Afterwards, there was an informal "Closing Night/200th Performance" party in the theater that lasted for about 1-1/2 hours. The cast and crew said goodbye to one another over sandwiches and champagne. Ben Sprecher and the other producers were there, as were general manager Peter Neufeld, and Thomas Meehan and Martin Charnin. The attitude of everyone seemed rather subdued; this party didn't have the "celebration" aspect of *Annie's* closing—that is, the marking of a long-running super hit. But Little Orphan *Annie's* trademark optimism was still to be seen: Reportedly, Martin had told the cast that "not all of the plugs have been pulled" on this show, and that a tour will begin this coming September in New Haven. We will keep you posted of the developments as details become available to us at *Annie People*.

In February, *Theater Week* magazine ran a bit about how the various *Annie* sequels "will also have to go down as one of the biggest money-losers in memory. The *Annie 2 (Miss Hannigan's Revenge)* that folded in D.C. dropped \$7 million; the fall 1992 five-city tour reportedly lost a couple of million and nearly bankrupted a theater or two; and the recent *Annie Warbucks*, which operated at a loss during much of its run, must have ultimately lost considerably more than its original investment of \$1 million. Well, at least *Annie Warbucks* produced a cast recording and is bound to have a life in stock." Unfortunately for us collectors, the rest of the souvenirs were never produced. There was supposed to be a new showcard, a sweatshirt, and a souvenir program. It's a real shame not to have photographs of the show and pictures of all the actors preserved in a souvenir program.

If we may be allowed a bit of editorializing, we feel that it is terrible that the show closed after only 7 months. *Annie People* has been sharing the journey of the *Annie* sequel with all of the *Annie* fans since, well, since our very first issue, when Martin told the audience at the final performance of *Annie*, "What if—we did *Annie 2!*" We've followed *Miss Hannigan's Revenge*, and all, and now when *Annie Warbucks* is as touching, funny, and thoroughly entertaining and enjoyable as the original show, its life in New York is cut short. In being "regular attendees" at the Variety Arts (Tricia saw the show 12 times, Jon 6 times), we got to know the cast and staff. And once again, we were reminded that the title of this Fan Club Newsletter is very appropriate: it's the *Annie People* who make the difference. It's the creators who wrote the show, the actors who make it come to life every night, the producers and theater staff, crew and orchestra who supply everything from the tickets and souvenirs to the lights and music to make the magic of theater happen. Without that great bunch of people, the experience of the show could have been a lot less. We at the *Annie People* Fan Club salute them all for the work they did and wish them the best of luck for the future, especially in the hope of a reunion for an *Annie Warbucks* tour!

---

## Seventh Annual Broadway Flea Market September 18, 1993



The original Miss Hannigan, Dorothy Loudon, signs autographs at the celebrity table.

Do you want to buy Andrea McArdle's roller skates from *Starlight Express*? Get an autograph from Dorothy Loudon? Bid for a chance to have Bernadette Peters or Carol Burnett record your answering machine message? Have your picture taken with Kathryn Zaremba and Cindy Lou? Bid for a one-night appearance as an Orphan in *Annie Warbucks*? You could have done all of this at the Broadway Flea Market, an annual benefit for the Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS organization. Many Broadway and Off-Broadway shows were represented with sale tables piled high with treasures and trinkets (depending on what you were looking for) and donations to the Grand Auction which was held late in the afternoon. Some of the shows participating were *Phantom of the Opera*, *Les Miserables*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Crazy for You*, *Nonsense*, *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, *Blood Brothers*, *Miss Saigon*, and, of course, *Annie Warbucks*.

When Tricia arrived at Shubert Alley (the famous theatrical landmark thoroughfare between 44th and 45th streets in New York City) at 9:30 a.m., preparations were well underway. Already there were the backbone of the *Warbucks* table crew: Brooks Almy, Steve Steiner, Michael E. Gold, Colleen Fitzpatrick, Joel Hatch, Harvey Evans, and stage manager Jill Cordle. They set up a very attractive table display, one of the nicest of the whole Flea Market. During the course of the day, other *AW* people came by to drop off some bake sale goodies or to help sell. These included Kathryn and Elisabeth Zaremba, Bill Berloni and Cindy Lou, Marguerite MacIntyre, J.B. Adams, Missy Goldberg, Jennifer L. Neuland, Kip Niven, and Martin Charnin.



The *AW* crew at 9:30 a.m., left to right, Joel Hatch (Simon Whitehead), Michael E. Gold (Fletcher), the *Playbill* cover in felt made by Michael, Brooks Almy (Mrs. Pugh), Colleen Fitzpatrick (Miss Clark), Steve Steiner (Senator Vandenberg), and stage manager Jill Cordle.

The lifesize photo blowup of Annie and Sandy, and the painting of Warbucks that was available for picture-taking for a \$2 donation.



Michael E. Gold was enthusiasm personified—here he stands on a chair waving autographed *Playbills* and showcards, calling out to patrons with the best line of the day: "Spend some bucks on *Warbucks!*"





Part of the *AW* table featuring the stained glass piece and lots of baked goods! The handmade Sandy is at the right edge.



Kathryn and Cindy Lou appeared at the celebrity photo booth--"Your picture with the stars for a \$5 donation." Tricia was glad to oblige.

Everyone had obviously given very generously of their time before the Flea Market, baking or creating in some way things for the sale table. There were red AIDS-Awareness ribbons crocheted by the Orphans. Missy took the basket of these up and down the Alley, selling all of them for \$1 each. Kathryn and Elisabeth made peach jam. Tricia can personally attest to the deliciousness of ALL the baked goods--having eaten more of them than she should care to admit. There were cookies shaped like Annie, and some shaped like Sandy's dog biscuits! Joel made huge chocolate chip cookies, and brownies were supplied by Jill and Colleen (using Katharine Hepburn's recipe!), with butterscotch brownies by Marguerite. Michael had created the huge replica of the Playbill cover out of felt *the night before* the sale! This was really beautiful craftsmanship, and this gorgeous piece of artwork hung on the building behind the table heralding that *Annie Warbucks* was here! And there must have been some serious writer's-cram at the Variety Arts when the entire company signed several showcards (\$20) and at least a hundred of the opening-night *Playbills* with the color cover (\$5). Even Cindy Lou lent her "pawtograph" to autographed photos of her and Kathryn (\$1). For \$50, there was one framed showcard autographed by the three creators (Charnin, Meehan, Strouse), which was bought by *AP* reader Paul Goldie. Tricia, ever the collector, was very happy to get a lovely handmade Sandy (with blank eyes!) made by Bill Berloni's girlfriend Dorothy (\$40); a stained glass rendition of the show logo (which was an opening night gift from Los Angeles November '92) (\$30); some "lead sheets" of songs from the Marriott Lincolnshire engagement in Chicago (\$10)' and some of the above-mentioned *Playbills* and brownies!



Part of the AW table with the basket of Playbills. The table was practically sold out by the end of the day.

Other items for sale were an opening night gift cap, books, clothes, shoes, Harve Presnell's decanter set from the MGM Studio, Donna McKechnie's makeup mirror from *A Chorus Line* (autographed in lipstick!), a bustier Harvey Evans was playing ZaZa in *La Cage Aux Folles*, and Ray Thorne donated some of the 1977 Annie souvenir matchbooks. There was a lifesize photo blow-up of Kathryn and Cindy Lou and a huge painting of Warbucks that was meant for the set for the Variety Arts but was never used and patrons of the Flea Market could have a Polaroid picture taken with "Annie, Sandy, and Warbucks" for a \$2 donation. Eventually, Tricia became part of the AW crew when she helped out with the Polaroids and later took a basket of the baked goodies up and down the Alley, netting \$10 for Broadway Cares. All the company worked very hard all day, staying as late as they could until they had to run downtown and do the matinee show! Unfortunately, the weather, which had been threatening all day, broke into a torrential downpour late in the afternoon, sending all the sales tables scrambling to protect their wares from being soaked. But the AW goods had sold so well that there wasn't much left to pack!

The Grand Auction was held after the rain stopped. Thanks go to Kevin Rehac of Jeffrey Richards Associates who supplied us with the information that the winner of the one-night walk-on role was a seven-year-old girl named Katherine Didrichsen. Her grandmother had the \$800 bid which won the girl a part in "All Dolled Up" and in the finale. She also received a *Playbill* and show T-shirt autographed by the cast. The Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS organization received over \$200,000 from all of the sales and auctions of the 1993 Flea Market, and the *Annie Warbucks* cast should be pleased with the contributions they made to this worthy cause.

Tom 'w at 2:30 & 8  
 Sun. at 3:30 & 7:30  
 TELE-CHARGE (212) 239-6200

Special Holiday Perfs.  
 Dec. 27 at 8  
 Dec. 28 at 2:30 & 8

See Theatre Directory  
 for Details

**USAir**  
USAir begins with you

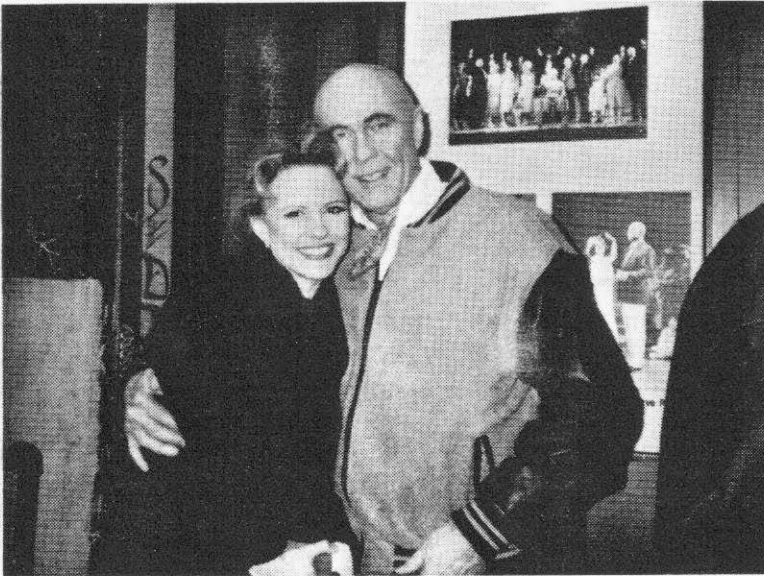
Photo: C. Rongg/M. Swope/Annc.

# Annie Warbucks

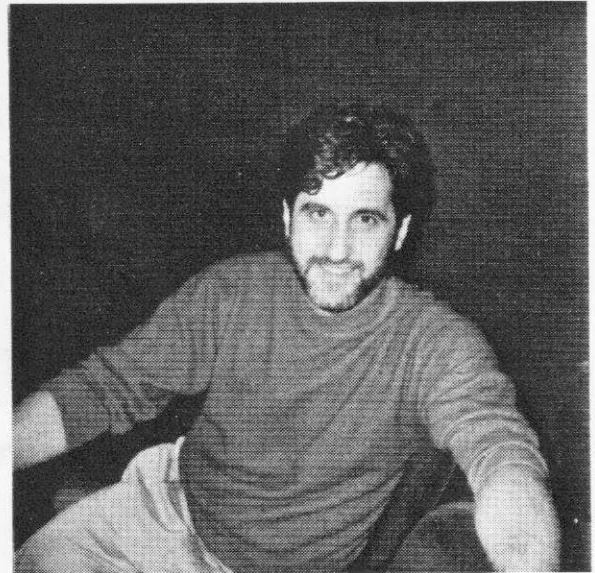
"Just how Broadway musicals should be!" -Liz Smith



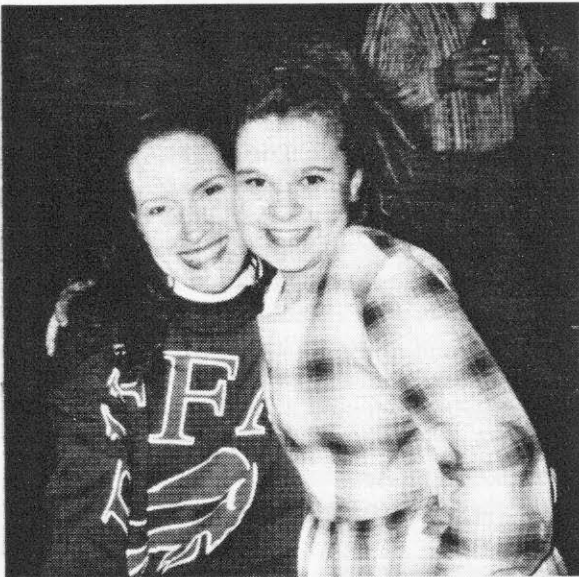
AT THE FINAL PERFORMANCE OF ANNIE WARBUCKS...



Marguerite MacIntyre and Harve Presnell going into the theater for the final performance.



Bill Berloni relaxes at the party.



Jennifer L. Neuland (who played Mrs. Sheila Kelly for the final two weeks) and Elisabeth Zaremba (Tessie).



The Paterson family gets together: Molly Scott (Ella), Harvey Evans (Alvin T.) and Jackie Angelescu (C.G.).



The day before the show closed, "Annie Warbucks" from 1990 through 1992, Lauren Gaffney, dropped by to visit her friends in the cast. Elisabeth Zaremba, Lauren, Larissa Auble, and Missy Goldberg join Tricia for a pose backstage.

**LAST PERFS!**

**"MARVELOUS!"**  
-David Richards,  
The New York Times

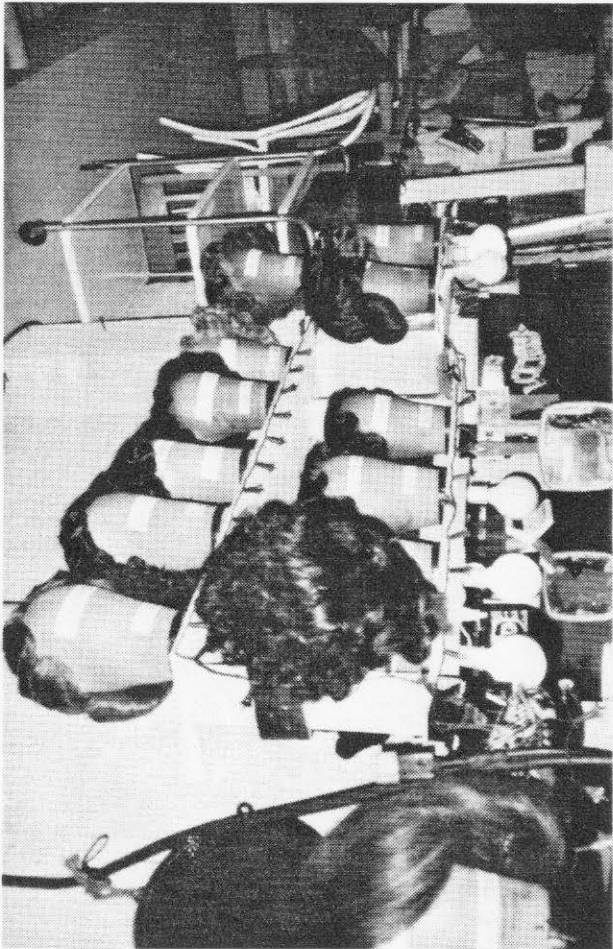
**"WELL WORTH CATCHING!"**  
-John Simon,  
NY Magazine

See Theater Directory for Details.

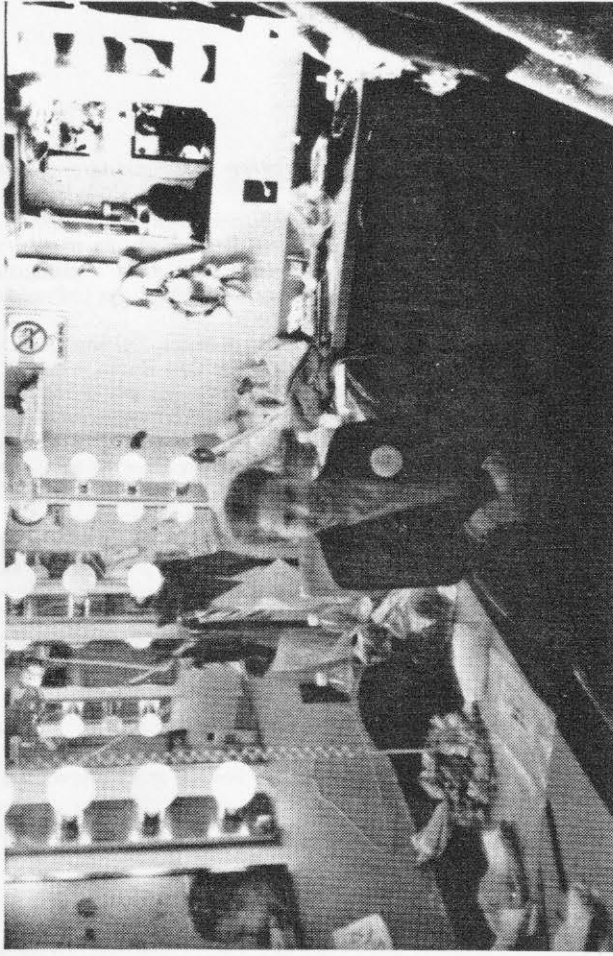


**Annie Warbucks**

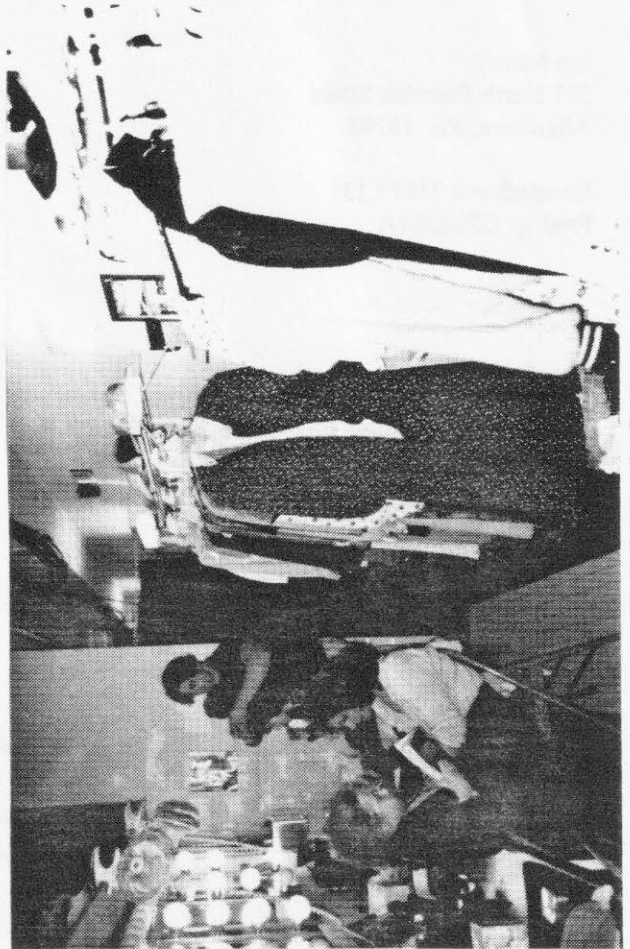
BACKSTAGE VIEWS THE VARIETY ARTS...



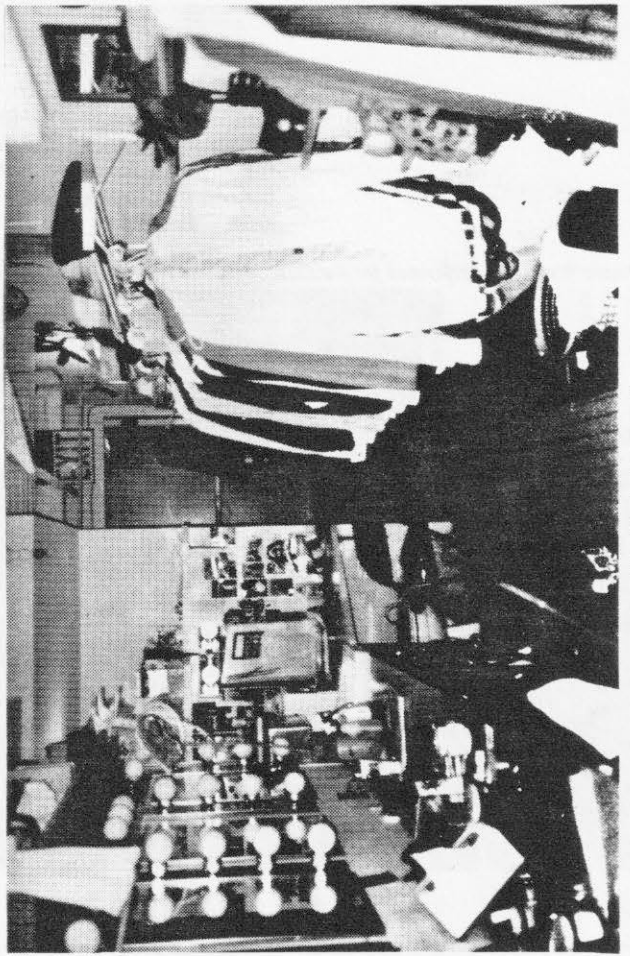
Wigs and upside-down furniture share the crowded space in the wings.



Swing Orphan Larissa Auble in the kids' dressing room.



The Ladies' Dressing Room



The Men's Dressing Room



In *Annie Warbucks* the ten-year-old of the title treks to the White House to meet the President (FDR); in real life, on Dec. 17, the cast did the same, performing a condensed version of their show for President Clinton.

The cast of *Annie Warbucks* performed for the Clintons at the White House

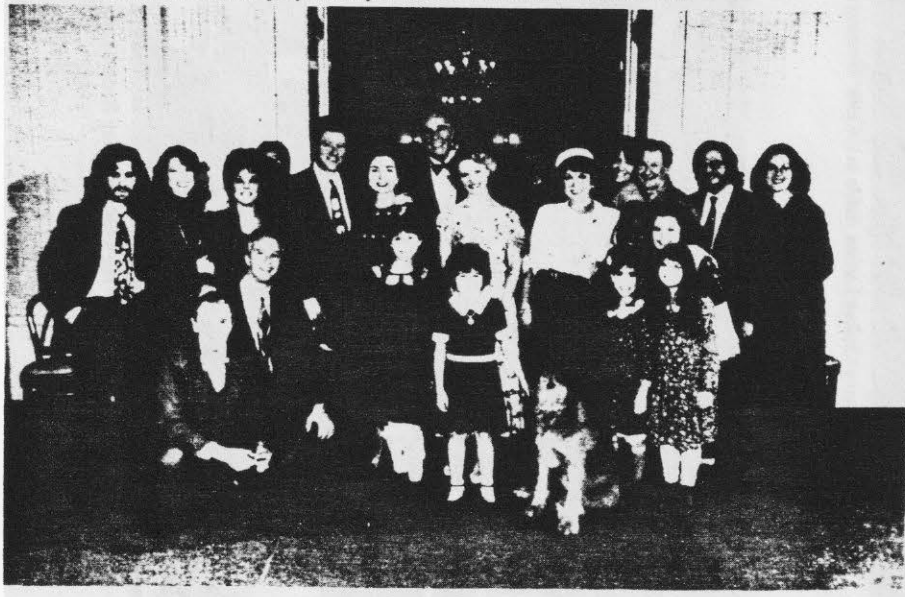


PHOTO COURTESY OF THE WHITE HOUSE

## WHITE HOUSE SALTS *WARBUCKS* AWAY

When the cast of *Annie Warbucks* performed at a White House benefit for homeless children last month, its members were treated like a bunch of waifs. The show's producer, Ben Sprecher, is furious and wrote a scathing letter to President Bill Clinton about the fiasco.

The cast was made to wait six hours, Sprecher says, in two basement "bathrooms" below the East Room, where it would eventually perform. Sprecher tells Clinton that the White House offered the 36 actors, producers, and crew members only cookies and water during their stay in the bowels of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. "We were forced to send out to a deli near the White House so the cast could eat," Sprecher writes. "The act of getting sandwiches for 36 people delivered to the White House is a movie unto itself." Sprecher and the other producers, William P. Miller and Dennis Grimaldi, picked up all expenses for the trip and performance, and Sprecher says, "There was not so much as a simple thank-you." A White House spokesman says he hasn't seen Sprecher's letter or heard about the problems. "But the rooms below the East Room are where dignitaries wait," he says. "[They're] not bathrooms."

JANUARY 17, 1994/NEW YORK

Jon Merrill  
517 North Fenwick Street  
Allentown, PA 18103

CompuServe 73677,135  
Prodigy GRHD27A

# Little Orphan Annie