

# Annie People



The Little Orphan Annie Fan Club Newsletter

No. 69, May 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.



## THROUGH THE EYES OF AN OUTSIDER...

Over the last 9 months or so, I have had the great pleasure of watching an *Annie* production take shape from the very first rehearsal all the way through the closing night performance. In the 11+ years since Tricia and I first began publishing *Annie People*, this was the first time I have had the opportunity to follow a theater group doing the show from the ground up.

The Show Kids Invitational Theatre (SKIT) group first performed *Annie* three years ago, and they included in their schedule two performances at Monmouth College inside the building where the Mansion scenes in the *Annie* movie were filmed in mid 1981. These performances took place in November 1991 in front of the famous marble staircase in the Mansion, and this event marked the only time a production of *Annie* has ever been done in the historic building, which normally is the administration building for the college (see AP #54, December 1991).

Ever since then I have followed all of SKIT's shows, and when they decided to do *Annie* again this year, I asked if I might attend the rehearsals so that I could see what happens during the process of getting an *Annie* show together. This proved to be an eye-opening experience for me, since I saw for the first time exactly what goes into a show, everything from rehearsals to getting costumes together to setting up scenery drops, plus all the other little details unseen and unknown to the casual spectator in a theater audience.

SKIT is based in High Bridge, New Jersey, and consists of four large groups of children, grouped according to how long they have been with the organization. More than just a theater group, SKIT gives these kids a great deal of instruction in all aspects of theater along the way, and they come across as a highly motivated team when they are seen on stage. The organization began 8 years ago with 11 elementary-age kids, and now there are over 175 members in all, ranging from kindergarten age to seniors in high school. The original kids from 1986 are now about to graduate, and, thanks to their work in SKIT, they will go on to college with a wealth of experience not only in all aspects of performing, but in directing and choreographing as well. Parent involvement in SKIT is essential, and many, many of them participate as sound people, stage hands, promotion people, and the like. The producer and director, Carolyn B. Newman, has won several prestigious awards for her SKIT leadership, but she always generously and modestly insists that these awards "belong to all of SKIT" and not just to herself.

Because of the unusual nature of this type of theater group, this cast of *Annie* was probably the largest I have ever seen, numbering about 50. Most of the cast was kids of all ages, but there are always enough willing and talented parents to fill ensemble parts and the essential adult roles in SKIT shows. It was this large number of people involved that made my experience of watching the whole process especially interesting. Foremost in my mind at first was the prospect of a show with something like more than two dozen Orphans; I was eagerly wondering how in the world that would work. A couple of years ago Mrs. Newman read in *Annie People* one of our traditional observations about local productions of *Annie*: "The quality of a show is inversely proportional to the number of Orphans in it," so I think she was also eagerly wondering what I would think of her coming SKIT show which would have a rather huge number of them in it.

And so, the rehearsing began. Most of the rehearsals took place in the fairly small recreation room of a local church, so it always required an interesting bit of logistics to handle such a large cast of performers. The first rehearsal was 9 months ago in mid June of last year, and that particular day happened to be one of record heat; that day went down in history as *the hottest spring day ever recorded* in northern New Jersey, hitting an amazing 102 degrees in the shade, and the first day of summer hadn't even come yet!

This month, March 1994, as I was seeing closing night to a sellout crowd, I thought back to that day in the incredible heat watching the Orphans listening to "It's The Hard-Knock Life" and then beginning to learn how to sing it under the direction of musical director Carole P. Warfield. Since *Annie* had already been done with a different SKIT group in 1991, most of the choreography was pretty well set up, but it was the responsibility of SKIT's able dance master, high school senior Krisy Newman, to teach the HKL steps to this new crowd of young dancers. Inasmuch as this show of *Annie* was unusual in that it had so many Orphans, HKL looked at first as if it would be a rather unwieldy number (especially knowing that mops, brooms, sheets, and pillows would be added later), but the great thing about SKIT is that even in an Orphan cast that massive, *every* kid is used in the number in an active role. That is what makes a large *Annie* cast work well, and I realized that this production would be an "exception to the rule." I have seen other productions in which there were large numbers of Orphans, but the production didn't work well because too many of them were used merely as props instead of actors. In SKIT, every single kid is a singer, dancer, and actor, and they are *all* used.

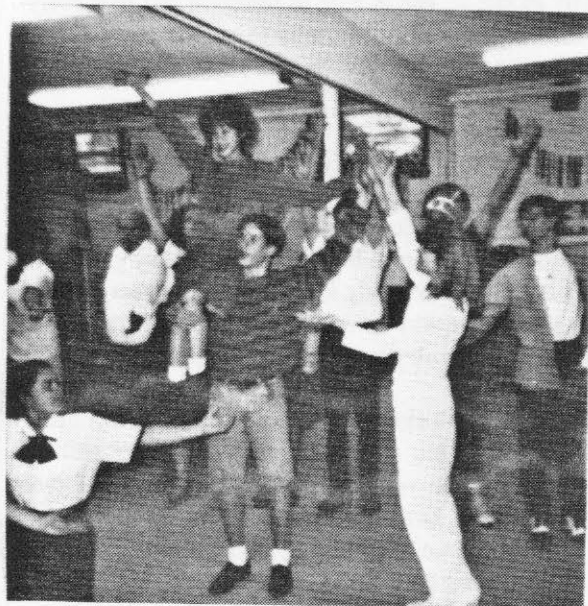
We had a few rehearsals in June, mostly for the Orphans to get a little familiar with their two big numbers. Then *Annie* took the summer off while a couple of the senior kids ran a workshop for the members of one of the other SKIT groups, the brand-new ones. But then September came, and *Annie* rehearsals began in earnest and went every weekend in the fall. Krisy worked tirelessly with the Orphans on the Fully Dressed dance, and gradually it began to come together. Mrs. Newman wanted to make sure that the mood of the number was firmly entrenched in the girls' minds from the very beginning, and shouts of "Smile! SMILE!! SMILE!!!!" were heard over and over again in the little church basement above the feet noises. I also remember the director cautioning that even in such a large group of dancers, even one who doesn't know the dance will stick out like a sore thumb on stage. And so, often during break times at rehearsals, I saw little groups of kids in the corners perfecting their technique on the dances. I was always impressed with the dedication of these SKIT kids on that sort of thing, but I realized I "hadn't seen anything yet" until the heaviest schedule of rehearsals began as we turned the corner after Christmas into January 1994.

I don't have to tell anyone in the Northeast U.S. what a brutal winter it was, with record snowfall and unusual below-zero temperatures here in New Jersey. For *Annie*, the snow and ice storms wreaked havoc with the rehearsal schedule in January, wiping out any number of important rehearsal dates because of impassable roads in the hilly country. At those times when we did get to rehearse as scheduled, I remember many times carrying the keyboard over glare ice and huge piles of snow in and out of the church for Mrs. Warfield. Also, remember that even though each individual group in SKIT does its own show, there still is a lot of overlap, so a lot of the *Annie* kids were finishing up rehearsals for *Lil Abner* in January at the same time. A typical day at the church might be several hours of *Lil Abner* in the morning followed immediately by several hours of *Annie*. But once *Lil Abner* went up (its opening night was cancelled due to the weather), the *Annie* rehearsals got more intense.

Obviously, with a group this large, not every scene in *Annie* was worked on at each rehearsal. A typical entry on the rehearsal schedule might be: "Saturday - Annie, Warbucks, Grace, Servants from 2 till 4; Orphans from 4 till 6; Sunday - everyone from 2 till 8." SKIT's *Annie* was 11-year-old Ashley Freiburger, an immensely talented, stage-smart, and energetic performer who had won lots of acclaim for her dancing as the lead of Clara in a production of *The Nutcracker* at Christmas time. A few months earlier, when Ashley and her family were at my house seeing my *Annie* collection, I gave her a book of LOA comics with the suggestion she read it before she did the title role to see what the character is like. Then, as rehearsals began, almost immediately, Ashley grasped the essence of what the Little Orphan Annie character is all about and brought that knowledge and expertise to each and every rehearsal. Here was a case where the lead in *Annie* is also a huge fan of the show in general, and her love for it showed.

February wasn't much better, weatherwise, but the reality of showtime in one month had set in by this time, and six-hour rehearsals became commonplace on Saturdays and Sundays. By this time, thanks to a lot of work and the more adept dancers helping the newer ones, all 28 Orphans were comfortable with the dances and were ready to go. In this group also were large numbers of Servants and Hooverville-ites, played by teenagers and adults, so of course those dances had to be perfected too (here again, 25 Hooverville-ites on stage at the same time works just fine as long as they can *all* sing and dance and are not merely used as human stage props). Once in a while, due to an absence, I was called on to fill a space in the dance routines. Of course, I am *not* a dancer, not by a long shot, but I did gain a greater appreciation for what these kids do in learning a

dance routine by actually being in the middle of it once in a while. (I also stood in for Warbucks several times during the radio scene rehearsals, which was fun, but a stage is much more my friend when I am looking *at* it rather than being *on* it!) The blocking of the major scenes was pretty well done too, but remember, we're still in the church basement; the cast hadn't done it with costumes or props or on a real stage yet! During this finishing touch process, I was often asked to put in my two cents on how I felt about how a line should be delivered, that sort of thing (e.g., change "next thing you know she'll be in the movies" back to "...funny papers," which is a much better line; make sure that Annie does *not* cry out or flinch while being paddled, in order to establish the relationship between her and Miss Hannigan right away for the audience; don't rush "somewhere, somewhere" right before Maybe but rather have Annie savor the moment and convey to the audience what she is thinking about; etc.). I also helped with that wonderful bit in I Think I'm Gonna Like It Here when Annie tries to imitate the Servants as they are leaving the room and Warbucks grabs her out of the line and roars at Grace, "Who is this?" (By the way, if any of you other *Annie* fans out there ever have an opportunity similar to mine to sit in on rehearsals, I caution you on one thing: If you have a suggestion or a correction, always wait to be *asked*. Some directors do *not* appreciate some pushy upstart there telling them how to run their show!)



Show Kids Invitational Theatre rehearses the end of "I Think I'm Gonna Like It Here" in the church basement



Jon with Ashley Freiberger (Annie) along with two of her Orphans, Lauri Festante (left) and Renee Stocker

All winter behind the scenes, several dedicated SKIT mothers were sewing furiously, preparing all the Orphan dresses, which was an incredible job. Finally, the day came when all the costumes were brought to rehearsal to be tried on and rehearsed with. That was a day to remember, especially because great armfuls of costumes had to be carried from the building where they are housed across a parking lot that was absolutely smooth, wet, glare ice from the previous night's ice storm. It was decided that all the Orphans would wear what are called "rainbow dresses" to the New Deal scene in the Warbucks mansion, so all 28 of the girls had to be fitted for them and *many* made from scratch, since there had been only 15 Orphans in the 1991 production and therefore only 15 existing rainbow dresses. What a fabulous job the mothers did! Then, there were "orphan shoes" which had to be located, identical black stockings for the Servants, unusual items for the NYC scene, that kind of thing. Makeup had to be ordered too, and the kids were cautioned *never* to share mascara (because it can spread eye diseases). The costume situation was even more complicated due to doubling of parts, and one teenager had 9 changes in the show!

(One of her 9 costume changes involved a very clever variation which SKIT invented that I have never seen done by any other group doing *Annie*: As the Overture played, a couple came down the aisle dressed as David and Margaret Bennett and left a "baby" wrapped in blankets at the door of the Orphanage and left. Miss Hannigan came out and read Annie's note and disgustedly took the bundle inside ("Just what I need--another kid!"). Another SKIT variation unique to me in over 130 seeings of *Annie*: The Jell-O commercial ("That's Jell-O, yum, yum! Jell-O Pudding, yum, yum, yum!") was actually *staged*, using three dancing girls inside computer boxes painted as exact replicas of Jell-O boxes.)



Another memorable day in February was the day NYC was put together. The choreographer for NYC, Anne Marie Niemysk, did the entire thing in two hours, and I had never seen so much going on in the NYC scene in my life! It was like a drama in itself and involved almost the entire cast in various roles, like bag ladies, roller skaters, a nun with school children, Santa Claus with kids, pickpocket kids, movie stars being photographed with autograph seekers, Rooster meeting Lily for the first time, shoppers, Red Cross workers, a tour group, and two sailors flipping a coin to see which one would have first pick of a couple of "ladies of the evening"! And I'm sure there were other things going on that I am forgetting to mention at this time. Anyway, it was certainly the most elaborate NYC I have ever seen done, and the crowds at the performances loved it.

Performers, parents, and outsiders have often remarked that SKIT is "like a family," and I would certainly agree. Even among the kids alone, there is a tremendously wide range of ages, affording a unique opportunity for the younger kids to learn from watching and knowing the older ones. Each of the older teenagers knows that he or she is a role model for a couple of dozen smaller kids, further enhancing the camaraderie in the group. Furthermore, each child is regarded as an integral part of the group as well as an individual, no matter what the age. I remember at one of the early rehearsals, the 5-year-old "Littlest Orphan" was introduced, and the cast was cautioned by the director that, as cute and cuddly as she is, she is here to rehearse just like everyone else and should be treated accordingly. It would have been easy for Mrs. Newman to use this little girl in the show merely as a prop to be a crowd pleaser, but it was important to make sure that she was utilized as a member of the cast. Who knows? Maybe the little redhead will be Annie in 2000.

At rehearsals there was always a little time for Mrs. Newman to bring all the kids together for a little "brainstorming" about the show, so that they would all feel as if they were a part of the planning process. And once in a while a kid would make a suggestion that would be tried, and maybe even used, in the show. And of course there was lots of opportunity during these long, tiring rehearsals for an occasional collective yell or cheer or applause to give themselves a well-deserved pat on the back. I believe, having seen so many groups do this musical, that one reason SKIT does so well is because this director not only knows how to direct a show, she truly knows how to direct *kids*. One cannot direct children the same way he or she would direct adults, and over the years of going to *Annie* I have been able to tell when this has been done incorrectly, just by seeing the show on stage. It shows.

Self-discipline is an essential element in SKIT and is stressed at all times. There are no "prima donnas" in SKIT; if any kids were to act stuck-up around the others at rehearsals, their peers would quickly make it known that such behavior is unacceptable. Additionally, Mrs. Newman warned the kids "not to direct each other"; helping one other with a dance routine or something is fine, but one telling another "you did that wrong" is not. Break times often were times when a group of two or three would be off in a corner working on one of the dances, and sometimes it even was a younger dancer showing an older but less experienced one how to master a move. The chaos on costume fitting days was alleviated by the kids helping each other adjust bows, pick out the appropriate size shoes from the available supply, and the like. As one long rehearsal was drawing to a close in the tiny rehearsal hall, one girl was upset about something and was alone in a corner crying; immediately, an older girl went over to her, drew her aside, and gave her some confidence with encouragement and hugs. Remember, this is a "family," and that's the only way such a large group like this one can function.

Finally, "tech week." For those in theater, you know that this is when the cast gets on the real stage for the first time (in this case at the local high school where SKIT does all its shows), and the details of lights, sound, and scenery are coordinated with the cast for the first time. On the first day of tech week I spent an entire day with the crew erecting the wooden scenery drops (9 sections, each 4 feet by 12 feet, connected, making a total of 36 feet across, which then had to be lifted, flipped, and attached to the battens with wire and raised to the fly area of the stage. There were three separate ones of these expertly painted by the scenery people--the Orphanage, NYC, and the Mansion. I must say that after that day I have a profound appreciation of what goes on behind the scenes to get a show like this up, having participated firsthand in that backbreaking task. Meanwhile, other production crew members were busy painting small staircases for the platform to be used downstage during the two Orphan dances so all 28 performers could be seen.

Tech week brought the entire cast to the stage every night from 6 till about midnight. Remember that some of these kids are only 7 or 8 years old, and all the kids had to get up and go to school every day in between too! Also during tech week was all the publicity stuff--the newspaper pictures and interviews, and, perhaps most important, Sandy came. Annie had already had a couple of private rehearsals with Sandy (an experienced, professional dog named Duffy, owned and trained by Paul Goldie of Goldie Theatrical Dogs, Inc.), but tech week was the first time the rest of the cast had been with the dog as well. Mrs. Newman has always stressed that the success of SKIT is dependent upon self-discipline and dedication on the part of the kids--and the parents--and there was no time when this was more apparent as to see the success of tech week. And of

course, true to form, yet another snowstorm killed one entire critical evening in the middle of tech week. But everyone rallied round to make up for that lost day, and the show was ready to go.

Opening night was Saturday, March 12th. It was a moving experience for me to watch that performance, thinking back over the three-quarters of a year that had led up to that moment. My favorite moment in any *Annie* production is always *Hard-Knock Life*, and to see 28 Orphans doing it perfectly in sync and all hitting the high F sharp every time, was indicative of not only the quality of the performers but also the dedication of the director and the musical director and everyone else who helped put this show together. I also was impressed with the program, which had a professional headshot picture *and* a bio of every single performer in the show, from Annie herself right down to the last chorus member or non-speaking "NYC person." It is too bad that space does not permit me to name everyone connected with SKIT's excellent production, but I was proud to be listed among them in the program as SKIT's "*Annie* historian."

At opening night in the lobby I held a flea market of *Annie* collectibles, which were eagerly bought by the Orphan mothers for their kids. After it was all over, I donated the proceeds to the Jenny Kovacs Scholarship Foundation, which was set up in memory of one of SKIT's best-loved members who passed away a couple of years ago at age 14 from a severe food allergy attack. It has been very obvious to me that this terrible experience of SKIT's suddenly losing one of its own so tragically has made this organization seem more like a family than ever. Ever since then it seems as if the effort put forth in every performance of every show SKIT does is a monument to the memory of Jenny and all that she gave to SKIT during her life.

The Friday, March 18th show was cancelled due to what else? (snow) and was rescheduled for Sunday night the 20th. This meant that the kids did two shows in a row that day. The amazing thing was I didn't see any letdown in that second show, at which time they *had* to be weary from all the performing. But even after the second performance, few, if any, rushed home afterward; rather, we all stayed to celebrate and eat cake and talk among ourselves about how much fun *Annie* had been. 9 months and 5 performances, and it was over, almost every show a sellout. The cast is hoping to again perform the show at Monmouth College this fall, as in 1991.

A little later was the cast party, held poolside at the local Holiday Inn. We all swam and ate and reminisced about *Annie*. At the end Mrs. Newman asked each performer, crew member, and member of the production staff up to the front for a congratulatory hug and a memento of *Annie*. Off the top of her head Mrs. Newman cited something to be remembered about every individual in the cast in turn, and it brought back a lot of memories of an exciting and rewarding experience.

For me, the whole 9 months was the opportunity to renew old friendships and make lots of new ones, many of which I know will extend long beyond the kids' individual SKIT years. It was also the opportunity to see firsthand what a skilled and sensitive director can bring out in terms of kids' talents and enthusiasm. And, it was the opportunity for me to gain yet a new experience in the world of this musical I have followed for so many years. For those of you who feel as I do about *Annie*, I strongly advise you try to do as I did--attend and help out at rehearsals in order to find out what *really* goes into getting *Annie* up and running!

**LAST PERFS!**

Tonight at 8  
Tomorrow at 2:30 & 8  
Sunday at 1 & 5:30

TELE-CHARGE  
(212) 239-6200

See Theater Directory  
for Details

**Annie  
Warbucks**




**LAST PERFS!**

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

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

See Theater  
Directory  
for Details.

**Annie  
Warbucks**



Newspaper ads from the closing week of *Annie Warbucks*  
January 1994

# ANNIE'S BACK

**Our favorite little orphan returns in Annie Warbucks, a new musical that picks up where Annie left off**

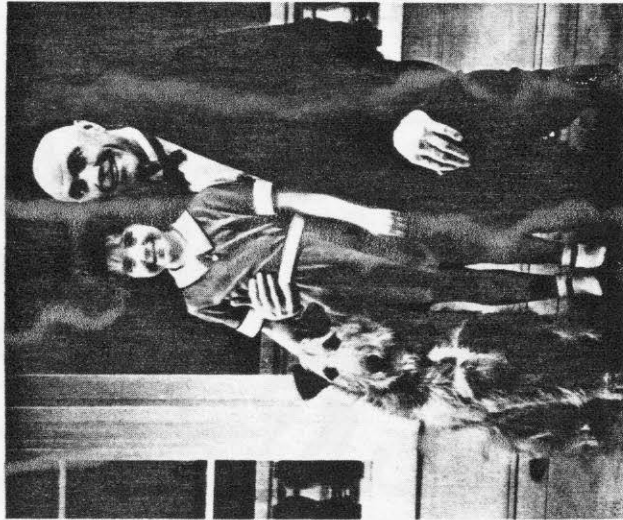
Lazarus returned from the dead only once, but Little Orphan Annie, the heroine of two musicals, has resurrected thrice. It is no secret that *Annie*, the first musical based on Harold Gray's famous comic strip, was a miscarriage in its first conception at Connecticut's Goodspeed Opera House in 1976. But then, a miracle occurred that could only happen in show business or in a Frank Capra movie. The musical's three creators—Thomas Meehan (book), Charles Strouse (music) and Martin Charnin (lyrics and direction)—somehow whipped the show into shape and with a savvy new producer, Mike Nichols, turned the property into a Tony Award-winning musical that ran for 2,377 performances, earned a profit of \$20 million to \$30 million and "arising" in regional theatres and schools all over the world.

Believe it or not, history has repeated itself with its sequel, *Annie Warbucks*, now happily ensconced at the Variety Arts Theatre on Third Avenue and 14th Street in Manhattan. In its 1990 workshop production at Goodspeed and in a \$7-million touring version headed for Broadway and called *Annie 2: Miss Hannigan's Revenge*, the project came a cropper and closed out

of town. Another producer took over the musical, which was rewritten and improved with new songs, and sent the \$5.5 million show on tour. Once again the production closed out of town for lack of financing.

All seemed lost until three enterprising producers named Dennis Grimaldi, Ben Sprecher and William P. Miller (Sprecher and Miller own the Variety Arts Theatre Off-Broadway) came to the rescue with a proposal to do a scaled-down, million-dollar production at their spanking new house. And this time, it works. The sequel pleases most critics (including crusty John Simon who barks his approval) and the musical racks up a \$250,000 advance sale, an Off-Broadway phenomenon.

A few weeks after the Off-Broadway opening, PLAYBILL met with the show's three creators — Meehan, Strouse and Charnin — and found them in somewhat of a daze at what's happened. "We're still reeling from the experience," Charnin says. "It's like coming out of an intensive care unit after what we've been through." Adds Strouse: "The *New York Times* recently ran a chronology about all the problems we've had — the fights, the



MARTHA SWOPE ASSOCIATES/CAROL ROSBOG

Sandy (l.) and adopted family, Annie (Kathryn Zaremba) and Daddy Warbucks (Harve Presnell)

**Annie is played by ten-year-old Kathryn Zaremba who has the voice and assurance of a tiny Merman**

revisions, the new producers. It's a wonder that we three are still friends." Meehan admits that as much trouble as the first *Annie* was, the second was much more of an ordeal.

An amusing aspect of the trio's collaboration goes back to the beginning. It was Charnin's idea in the first place to do a Broadway musical based on the beloved *Annie* comic strip. Meehan and Strouse were appalled by the idea. Neither wanted anything to do with the project. "I was particularly hostile to the idea," says Strouse, "because I had just done the musical *It's A Bird, It's a Plane, It's Superman* based on the comic strip, and although it got good notices, it didn't run."

However, Charnin is a very aggressive salesman, and he soon talked his friends into doing the musical. Despite all the tribulations in getting it right, the show turned into a gold mine for them. After it was all over, Charnin wrote an amusing book about the experience called *Annie—A Memoir*.

The original *Annie* won seven Tony Awards, including one to Dorothy Loudon for her hilarious portrayal of the malicious Miss Hannigan. When the sequel was planned, it was determined to focus on Hannigan's revenge on Annie after she has been rescued from her orphanage and adopted by the millionaire Daddy Warbucks. In retrospect Charnin now says: "It was the wrong-headed approach to telling the story. This version is more truthful and real. We were slapped on the hand by critics for our



Donna McKechnie as Mrs. Kelly has her sights set on Harve Presnell's Daddy Warbucks

other version. David Richards, who was the *Washington Post* critic in 1989, asked, "How dare you do this to *Annie*?" He's now with *The New York Times*, and he liked our current version of the show. Other Washington critics who panned us have come to this one and told us how much better it is."

Only one song survived *Annie 2*—"A Younger Man," which Daddy Warbucks sings. "We did retain some of the melodies," Strouse recalls, "but with new lyrics. Donna McKechnie's big number, 'But You Go On,' was called 'One Tough Town' in Washington. The critics proved that!"

The first *Annie* made a household name



of 11-year-old Andrea McArdle who played the red-headed orphan. *Annie Warbucks* is doing the same for ten-year-old Kathryn Zaremba, who has the clarion voice and brassy assurance of a tiny Ethel Merman. William Berloni, the animal trainer who supplied the "Sandys" for both *Annies*, discovered Zaremba in a production of *Annie* in Oklahoma City and immediately appraised Charnin of her terrific talent. He auditioned her in Houston, and she got the part.

"She's beyond her years in intelligence," Strouse says of her. "And she has a bigger part in this than Andrea had in the first *Annie*," Meehan adds. "She has three times as much dialogue as Andrea," Charnin says, "and never misses a line. We rehearsed her a lot, and it shows. She has to take adult ideas, absorb them and make them her own. Thank God she doesn't understand the enormity of her success. If she did, it would alter her performance. We're sending her to the Professional Children's School, where she'll be surrounded by children who are competing with her in making it in show business. That's healthy for her to observe."

Among the delights of *Annie Warbucks* are two actors who appeared in the first *Annie*: Harve Presnell, again playing Oliver ("Daddy") Warbucks and Raymond Thome repeating his impersonation of President Roosevelt. Peter Gennaro is once again the choreographer, and Theoni V. Aldredge is back as costume designer. The delightful Donna McKechnie plays Mrs. Kelly, out to marry Daddy; Marguerite MacIntyre is his adoring secretary Grace Farrell; and Alene Robertson is the hilarious heavy as Commissioner Harriet Doyle. "Sandy" is barbed by "Cindy Lou," an endearing terrier that was rescued by William Berloni from a Connecticut pound as the first "Sandy" was.

The new show begins exactly when the other show ended — on Christmas Day — and concerns the efforts of the evil

Commissioner to annul Annie's adoption because Daddy Warbucks is a bachelor. In order to keep Annie he must marry.

There was a movie version of the first *Annie*, and mention of it elicits a harrowing groan from all three collaborators. "It was terrible!" Charnin moans. Adds Strouse: "We were not allowed on the set, and the director, John Huston, never spoke to us."

Notes Charnin: "Huston was all wrong for the movie. He'd never done a musical before, never worked with kids — or a dog. And he was at the end of his life." Meehan sums up what was wrong with the movie: "It was done as a kiddie show. Our two *Annie* musicals were written as adult shows that kids could enjoy." Strouse agrees. "When we first wrote *Annie*, we were very influenced by Charles Dickens. Harold Gray was an American Dickens."

Says Charnin: "His comic strip had social and political significance, and I really think that more adults read it than children. That's the viewpoint we had, and the movie version had no connection with our stage version."

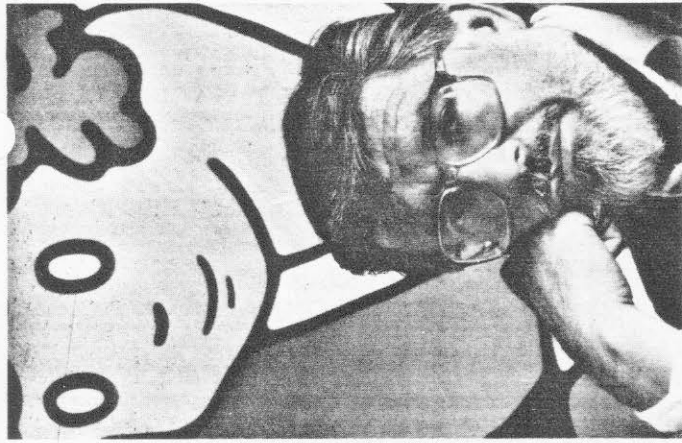
Asked if they have thought of imitating *Angels in America*, which is now alternating performances of Part One and Part Two, by doing the two *Annies* in repertory, the trio admits they have thought of the possibility. "I have also envisaged it being done — long after we're gone — in concert form at Avery Fisher Hall as they did with *Follies* and *Company*," admits Charnin.

Whatever they do, they are certain to attract an audience. *Annie Warbucks* recently set an Off-Broadway gross record, which was reported in the *International Herald Tribune*. There have been 27 foreign productions of the first *Annie*, and Tokyo revives it every year. It's now in its 16th year there. "Girls from ages 9 to 14 have taken this show to heart," Strouse says. "They are the most loyal and loving group of people. There's an *Annie* newsletter sent

out monthly. Girls all over the world know the score. When Martin was casting the show in London, a group of girls came from Scotland and they knew the entire score, even though the album had not been released there yet. I especially like the Spanish album of the show. 'Tomorrow' sounds great as 'Mañana.'"

Meanwhile, mobs wait for Zaremba at the stage door. "They clog up the sidewalk," Charnin reports. "We have to whisk her through the crowd to get her home."

Recently, a few weeks before her tenth birthday Zaremba was asked what she would like. "I would like to visit Tiffany's," she replied. Before she could say, "Leapin' lizards!" the wish became reality. Holly Golightly only had breakfast at Tiffany's, but Kathryn Zaremba had a birthday party there with virtually every child star on Broadway as guests and with special serenades sung to her by Charnin, the orphans in the show and some of the principals. "Arf!" said Sandy. □



Director and lyricist Martin Charnin and friend

© Playbill, November 1993

\*Could this by any chance be the newsletter you are now holding?? Actually, we're only every OTHER month, but many thanks to Mr. Strouse for the mention in *Playbill*!

# ☆ Annie Stars Since Annie ... ☆

Many former *Annie*/*Annie 2*/*Annie Warbucks* stars are busy in other shows these days: ANDREA McARDLE is Fantine in *Les Miserables* on Broadway; MARCIA LEWIS is currently starring in Broadway's revival of *Grease*; KATHRYN ZAREMBA is starring in *Ruthless* in Los Angeles; GARY BEACH is Lumiere in *Beauty and the Beast* on Broadway; the current Broadway revival of *Damn Yankees* features TERRENCE P. CURRIER, PAULA LEGGETT CHASE, and SCOTT ROBERTSON; MARGUERITE MacINTYRE is Nellie Forbush in *South Pacific* at the Paper Mill Playhouse in Millburn, New Jersey; DONNA McKECHNIE is in the concert version of *Fiorello!* at City Center; GERRY McINTYRE is in *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* on Broadway. We wish our friends all the best!...Other news: MARTIN CHARNIN is directing the upcoming Off-Broadway *In Persons* starring Eli Wallach and Anne Jackson...MARY-PAT GREEN was recently on *Married With Children*...STACEY MOSELEY, who played Annie at the Darien Dinner Theatre in 1987, starred on *Law and Order* as a tennis player injured by an unknown assailant...Prominent New York kids' voice instructor Robert Marks recently ran a showcase which featured LAUREN GAFFNEY and LARISSA AUBLE. In addition, last February Lauren organized Kids Care, a fund raiser for children with AIDS. She got together a large number of Broadway kids for a 2-1/2 hour concert to raise money for the cause in connection with Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS. Besides Lauren, other performers were Daisy Eagan from *The Secret Garden* and Buddy Smith from *Tommy*. Congratulations, Lauren, for all the fine work with Kids Care.

*Annie Warbucks* fans note: The songbook is out! Look for a white cover with the logo on the front, but you'll probably have to order it specially from your local sheet music store. It has the piano and vocal scores to all but about 2 or 3 of the show's songs, plus several very nice color pictures of the show. In the absence of a souvenir book, which was not done for *AW*, this is the next best thing! Price: \$14.95 and well worth it.

---

Jon Merrill  
*Annie People*  
517 North Fenwick Street  
Allentown, PA 18103

CompuServe 72677,135  
Prodigy GRHD27A

Little Orphan  
**Annie**