

Annie People



The Little Orphan Annie Fan Club Newsletter

No. 82, July 1997

Jon Merrill, Editor and Publisher

Tricia Trozzi, Co-Editor

Contents copyright © 1997 for the contributors. *Annie People* is published every third month in January, April, July, and October at 517 North Fenwick Street, Allentown, PA 18103. Publication has been continuous since January 1983. Member of the National Association of Fan Clubs.



SHORTENED BROADWAY ANNIE SHOW HANGS ON

Producers Chop Up Script to Try to Rescue Sagging Box Office

Unfortunately, the news we have to report since our last issue of *Annie People* about the 20th Anniversary Broadway production of *Annie* is not good. The show is entering its fifth month in New York, but it has been beset with problems and one bit of bad publicity after another ever since its opening. The atmosphere and media coverage of the show has been the exact opposite of what was going on in 1977 during its triumphant run. By this time twenty years ago, *Annie* had already won seven Tony awards and was the hottest ticket in town; now, in 1997, it seems that the producers are spending their time desperately thinking up ways to increase sales, such as a special 6 p.m. half price performance on July 4.

The cast is definitely first rate and has been all along; everyone knows that. However, theater patrons are coming away disappointed, because of the shortening of the show. In another ploy to pump up the box office, the producers decided to make *Annie* more suitable for the children in the audience, whom they said tended to become "antsy" during the show. And so, they decided to have between fifteen and twenty minutes cut out of the script to make the show shorter. What they have cut out--and, again, this is because of the fear of "losing" the kids in the audience--are all the historical references to politics or the Depression. The entire Hooverville scene and song are gone. Part of the Cabinet scene is gone. Rumor has it that further shortening is planned, and the radio show scene will be the next to go.

Audiences are coming to Broadway and seeing only 7/8 of *Annie*. The problem is, the wrong things are being cut from the show, and for the wrong reasons. The reality is that kids of today--and grownups of today who saw *Annie* when they were kids--actually like the historical references, then and now, and are sad that they are gone. What was the purpose of the Study Guide on the Web page if that stuff is not part of *Annie* anymore??

Martin Charnin has always said that *Annie* was not written as a "kids' show" but was written for adults. After all, the book was inspired by Harold Gray's *Little Orphan Annie* comic strip, which certainly was not written with a kid audience in mind either. The fact that there are several kids in the cast makes it enjoyable for kids as well, to be sure, but to take away the historical aspect of *Annie*--which adults and kids miss--seriously compromises the quality of the material and was an unfortunate decision. Hooverville is a wonderful scene; perhaps if time really is an issue, maybe the new song "You Make Me Happy"--which was written only for this production anyway--should come out and Hooverville be put back in.

Details of the cuts in the script are elsewhere in this issue.

Bad Publicity Continues to Plague the Broadway *Annie* Revival

It has been reported that the cast members have described the atmosphere backstage as "scary," due to the fact that infighting among performers has hit the papers and has cast a pall over the show. This production is definitely not the joyous occasion and experience for the cast and crew that *Annie* is supposed to be. The New York *Post* Online reported on May 26 that Nell Carter and the mother of Christiana Anbri, who plays Molly, were involved in a shouting match backstage involving Molly's mother's charge that Ms. Carter was intentionally handling Molly unnecessarily roughly during the Orphanage scenes. The 6-year-old's mother reportedly stated that if this sort of thing did not stop, she would "go to the cops." Ms. Carter denied all allegations, but a complaint was filed against her with Actors' Equity. Ever since then, to prevent further leaks to the press involving such issues, the producers have banned all the Orphan mothers from the set.

It was also reported on May 21 that one of the Broadway Orphans, Melissa O'Malley, who plays Kate, once muffed a line, and, as punishment, she was not permitted to participate in the curtain call that night. The result was an entire loyal Orphan troupe in tears. It was charged that the punishment was unjustified, because the line that Orphan Kate said incorrectly was one that had recently been cut from the script while the show was being shortened. Tensions were high backstage while it was being investigated whether this punishment against the young actress was in violation of the contract with Actors' Equity.

Both Christiana and Melissa were fired from the show on July 15.

More press: Nell Carter complained that the *Annie* commercial being aired on local TV is misrepresenting her role in the show. To save costs, instead of shooting a new commercial, the producers used Broadway footage from 1982 showing Marcia Lewis as Miss Hannigan. Ms. Carter claimed it was not a racial issue, but the press quickly picked up the fact that the Miss Hannigan seen in the old footage of the commercial was white.

The press continues to give a lot of attention to the Joanna Pacitti situation, even though her firing as *Annie* before the previews was months ago. It seems as if, historically speaking, what the 20th Anniversary Broadway production will be most remembered for in the future is the fact that the first *Annie* picked was fired from the role and subsequently had her sad-faced picture on the front page of the New York *Post* with her head on her hand.

Joanna herself, by the way, continues to be in the news on a regular basis. She performed in the title role in *Annie* in North Carolina this summer, and she has been picked for a new children's Broadway-bound show, *Kids Are People Too*. The lawsuit against Macy's for Joanna's having had her "prize" taken away after "winning the contest" is still pending.

Even the tabloids have gotten into the act. Brittny Kissinger has been doing a fine job as *Annie* and has won over legions of new fans with her performances, but the *National Enquirer* did a very uncomplimentary piece on Brittny discussing her past as a frequent pageant contestant, trying to compare her showbiz upbringing to that of the late JonBenet Ramsey.

The question of a 20th Anniversary *Annie* cast album is still up in the air. We do not know if it is in the plan to make it, and, if it is, whether the Hooverville song will be omitted.

Annie was nominated for one Tony award for Best Revival of a Musical, but it lost predictably to the big hit *Chicago*. The press continued to gloat over *Annie*'s misfortunes.

The show is projected to play on Broadway until late September, at which time the cast will go out on tour (see next page for the tour schedule). It is not known at this time if the former script of the show will be restored for the road, or if the new shortened New York version will be used. There has been much controversy and criticism over the cuts made in the script, likening it to the legendary NBC-TV airing of the *Annie* movie in 1984 which so severely butchered the film that it generated thousands of letter complaints.

We wish we had better news to report about the 20th Anniversary Broadway production of *Annie*, but this is the way it has been. Fortunately, we saw the "whole" show in previews in March before it was cut, so we know what it *could* be now. It is sad to wait years and years for an event such as this and then have the press reduce *Annie* to a national joke. The cast deserves better, the material deserves better, and most of all, the creators deserve better. However, are the creators standing up to try to preserve the integrity of their material??

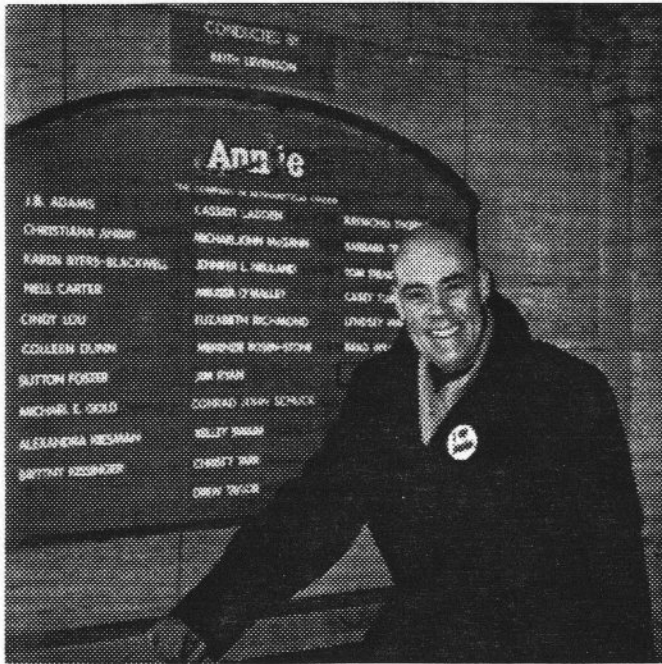
When the Broadway production closes--even if it does make it through the entire length of its projected run--*Annie* will go out "not with a bang but a whimper." We wonder if the show will ever be able to regain the respect and admiration it once had, or whether this is the bitter end for our favorite red-haired orphan on stage. It wasn't supposed to happen this way.

ANNIE 20TH ANNIVERSARY
TENTATIVE TOUR SCHEDULE

<u>Week Beginning</u>	<u>City</u>
October 20	Providence, Rhode Island
October 27	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
November 3	Boston, Massachusetts
November 10 & 17	Cleveland, Ohio
November 24	Buffalo, New York
December 1	Schenectady, New York
December 8	Wilmington, Delaware
December 15	Rochester, New York
December 22	Chicago, Illinois
December 29	Columbus, Ohio
January 5	Charlotte, North Carolina
January 12	Tampa, Florida
January 19	Miami, Florida
January 26	Pensacola/Jacksonville, Florida
February 2	New Orleans, Louisiana
February 9 & 16	Detroit, Michigan
February 23	East Lansing, Michigan
March 2	Omaha, Nebraska
March 9 & 16	Denver, Colorado
March 23	San Diego, California
March 30	Salt Lake City, Utah
April 6	Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
April 13	Las Vegas, Nevada
April 20	Long Beach, California
April 27	Costa Mesa, California
May 4	Dallas, Texas
May 11	St. Louis, Missouri
May 18	none
May 25	Grand Rapids, Michigan
June 1	Memphis, Tennessee
June 8	Newark, New Jersey
June 15	Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
June 22	Green Bay, Wisconsin
June 29, July 6, 13, & 20	Washington, D.C.

Further details on the individual theaters can be found online at the *Annie* 20th Anniversary Production Web site (<http://www.annie20th.com>).

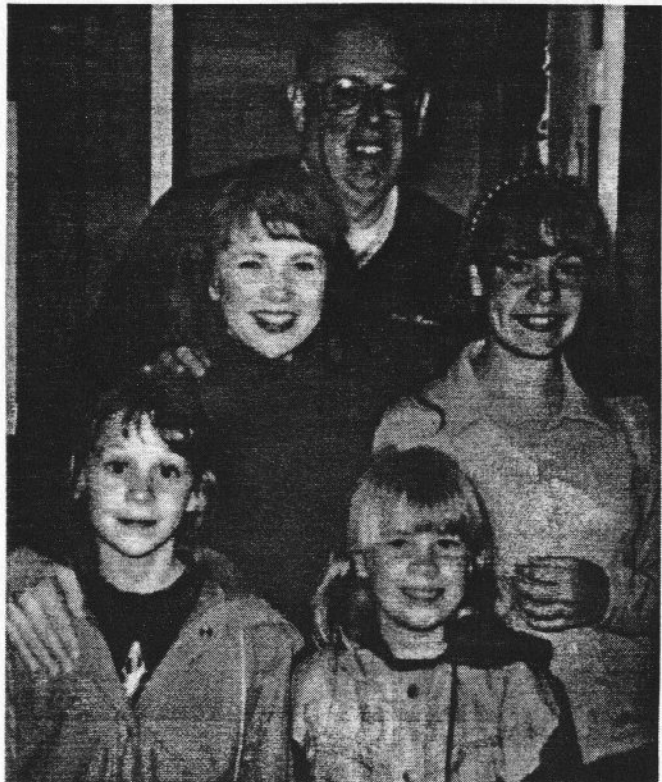
There are a number of exceptional *Annie* 20th Anniversary souvenirs and collectibles available at the show, but for those who cannot make it to New York to see it, these souvenirs can be ordered from the above Web site.



Wearing an "I ♥ Annie" button, "Daddy" Warbucks himself, Conrad John Schuck in front of the cast board in the lobby of the Martin Beck Theatre



Tricia and Broadway's Annie, Brittany Kissinger before a recent performance



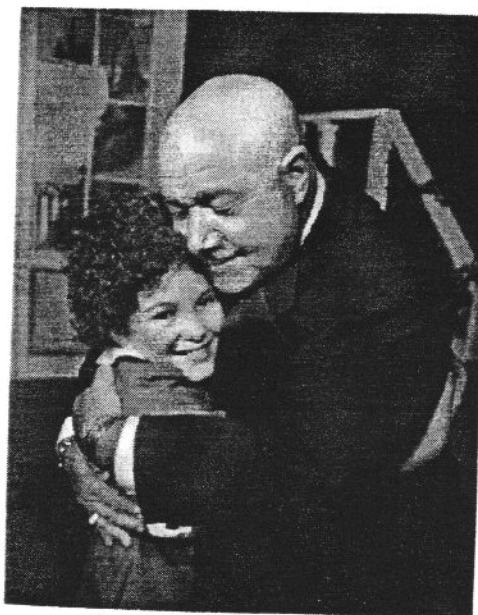
Aileen Quinn (l.) greets Jon, Shannon Conklin, 12, Shannon's sister Kelly, and Kelly's friend after a performance of her Off-Broadway show, *Dreamstuff* March 1997



Annie People Fan Club member Steve Sizer as Simon Whitehead with Jillian Rudnitzky as Annie in *Annie Warbucks* Playhouse 22, E. Brunswick, NJ April 1997



Cindy Lou (right) and her understudy Zappa. Zappa was originally going to be playing Sandy in the revival but was replaced by Cindy Lou, who had played Sandy in *Annie Warbucks* off-Broadway in 1993-1994. Bill Berloni has since given Zappa to Joanna Pacitti.



Sarah McCoy (Annie) and Larry Singer (Warbucks) in *Annie Warbucks* Streetsboro, Ohio November 1996

Submitted by Cynthia Moser

© The New York Times

ANNIE'S NEW \$49 FAMILY SPECIAL!

- ✓ Great seats for just \$49 (save up to 35%)!
- ✓ Free parking for up to 4 hours
- ✓ Free child's meal at the Olive Garden/Times Square with your ticket stub and each adult entree
- ✓ Free booster seats at the show!

All yours when you buy 4 or more tickets for any Friday or Saturday evening performance through August 30th
CALL (212) 947-8844 AND SAY "SUMMER"!

For special with parking, say "Park"
 Limit 8 seats per order. Not valid for first 13 rows orchestra, or with any other offers. Subject to availability and prior sale. Phone orders subject to standard Tele-charge fees. Parking instructions will be included with tickets.



Wed. - Sat. at 7:30
 Mats Wed. & Sat. at 2 • Sun. at 1 & 6
 Call TELE-CHARGE: (201) 239-6200
 Outside Metro NY: (800) 432-7220
 Groups: (212) 598-8385

Martin Beck Theatre
 302 West 45th St.

Based on *Little Orphan Annie*! Used by permission of Tribune Media Services, Inc.

"Great's the word!
 Take the kids!"
 -Joel Siegel, WABC-TV

ANNIE COLLECTIBLES FOR SALE
 Over 90 items from the 1930s to the present; many rare and unusual.
 Please send a long stamped, self-addressed envelope to Tricia Trozzi, 57 Annin Road, West Caldwell, NJ 07006.

Special thanks to all who contributed information to this issue of AP.

Be sure to check out the Annie pages at Jon's Web site -
<http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/jamerrill>

Cuts and Changes in the Script

Since the show opened in March, about 17 minutes have been cut from the length of the show. Most of the cuts have involved removing historical references to the Depression which the producers felt were not "relevant" to the target audience of children, which is being emphasized at this particular production. These alterations may or may not have lasted through the run up till now; there may be additional ones by now, or some of these may have been changed still further.

In no particular order:

"Jack Dempsey of the Orphanage" line out, most of Molly ferryboat dream sequence out
Annie is no longer paddled by Miss Hannigan in the beginning
First base, wedding night lines now "Where are you going on your vacation?" "The Riviera!"
Later on, these lines became "Hey, Aggie, what are you getting me for Christmas this year?" "Same as I got you last year, nothing!"
"Got more dough-re-mi than Tommy Manville" changed to "...Shirley Temple"
Grace's first cheese line is now "flowers, caviar, champagne" with her last "yes, sir" from off-stage
The second cheese line was changed to: "...and mistletoe! Not for you and me--for Drake and Mrs. Pugh!" (this extremely bizarre line has since been removed)
A lot more lines about Lily's being stupid about the \$50,000 were added to the "Easy Street" scene when the show opened, but all that has since been taken out (an improvement!)
"We'd Like To Thank You, Herbert Hoover" song is out of the Overture
The whole Hooverville scene/song are gone (this unfortunate change now deprives the children in the audience of *half* of Sandy's onstage time, and kids love watching Sandy!)
The appleseller is in the "Tomorrow" scene; in that scene Annie asks two passers-by if they left her at the Orphanage 9 (not 11) years ago
Probably because of Brittny's small size, Annie's age has been changed to 9 years old instead of 11, and all year references refer back to 1924 instead of 1922
No throwing up on the Coney Island pillow, no stomp on foot
Miss Hannigan tells the Orphans "there are milk and gingersnaps in the recreation room"
Best's (warm winter coat) is now Bergdorf's
Grace's "Six weeks is a long time" out; "Leavenworth" changed to "jail"
In "Easy Street," Rooster reiterates the "Pardon me, blondie" line, reducing the revelation to the audience at the end when he says it again, thereby making it more obvious. The line is now "Who was that dame I bumped into--*you know, 'pardon me, blondie'*--it looked like she had a couple of dollars"
Radio scene cuts: no Warbucks entrance (after "your old softie, Bert Healy" is "Oliver Warbucks," I understand you have something to tell..."); no Oxydent commercial by Warbucks; no "fifty thousand smackers" joke from Wacky (there is a rumor that the entire radio show may soon go, making Act II begin with the Orphans "Fully Dressed")
No "hate that Annie so much you'd think I was her mother"
Cabinet scene reduced: Annie is no longer introduced to the Cabinet members individually
Annie's "If I can't have my real mother and father..." line out
"What a great place" and Pepper's "...this dump" lines out
"Read it again" out (Rooster reads "The Jig Is Up" on the check right away)
"No More Mush!" stamping and chanting added to this production are back out now
Hannigan exit line: "I never liked you, you little gold digger, and I never liked any of youse either" (to the Orphans), followed by Molly saying, "You--*you're* days are numbered!"

CAST CHANGES: In addition to the two Orphans who were recently fired from the show, two others have decided to leave the show voluntarily. Now only Annie (Brittny Kissinger), Pepper (Cassidy Ladden), and July (Casey Tuma) are left from the opening in March.

Kristen Alderson replaces Christiana Anbri as Molly
Jemini Quintos replaces Melissa O'Malley as Kate
Courtney Leigh replaces Lyndsey Watkins as Tessie
Bianca Collins replaces Mekenzie Rosen-Stone as Duffy

Reid Shelton, Actor, 72, Dies; Original Broadway Warbucks

By RALPH BLUMENTHAL

Reid Shelton, a veteran actor and singer who created the role of Daddy Warbucks in the original Broadway production of "Annie," died on Sunday in Portland, Ore. He was 72 and lived in Waldport, Ore.

Mr. Shelton underwent heart surgery at St. Vincent's Hospital in Portland on May 29 after tests for knee surgery disclosed a heart blockage. It was a bypass operation, his second in 10 years, but he suffered a series of strokes and never fully recovered, a friend, Steve Cuda, said yesterday.

Among his many Broadway and

television roles, Mr. Shelton was perhaps best known for his stage portrayal of the softhearted, baldheaded comic-strip billionaire who adopts Little Orphan Annie in the hit musical by Martin Charnin, Charles Strouse and Thomas Meehan. He modeled Warbucks, Mr. Shelton later said, after the producer Roger Stevens, who became a friend and mentor after casting Mr. Shelton in the musical "1600 Pennsylvania Avenue." Mr. Shelton's Warbucks, alternately gruff and gentle, was also likened to an avuncular Otto Preminger.

Blessed with a thick head of hair, he was willingly shorn for the part (once the show hit Broadway) and shaved his pate daily with an electric razor.

Starting in 1976 at the Goodspeed Opera House in East Haddam, Conn., he went on to play Warbucks for three years on Broadway, where he was nominated for a Tony, and two years on the road, racking up more than 2,300 performances. With his success, life imitated art: after five years of playing the Depression moneybags, he was able to buy not only his four-room Hell's Kitchen apartment but the entire five-story building.

Mr. Shelton was born in Salem, Ore., studied music at Williamette University and the University of Michigan and served in the Pacific during World War II. He got his New York start as a singer at Radio City Music Hall, and appeared in shows like "Wish You Were Here," "By the Beautiful Sea," "The Saint of Bleecker Street" and "Oh What a Lovely War."

He spent eight years in Broadway and touring companies of "My Fair



Reid Shelton with Andrea McArdle, his co-star in the original Broadway production of "Annie," shortly before the show's 1977 opening.

United Press International

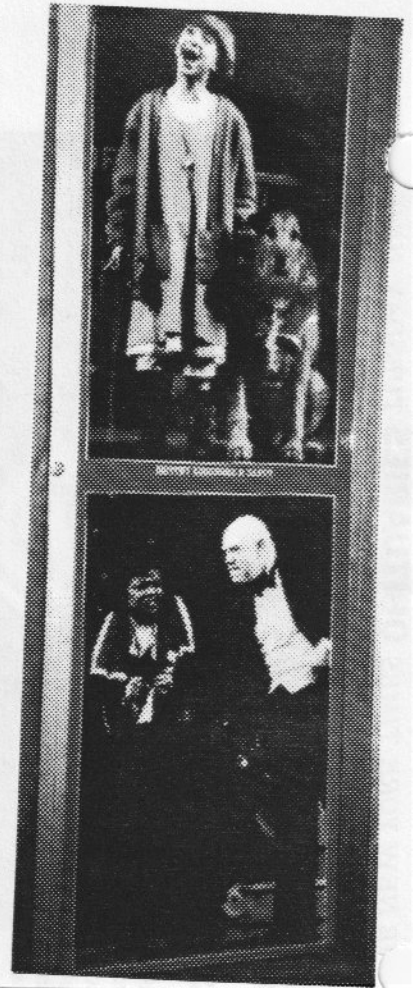
Lady," for much of the time in the role of Freddy Eynsford-Hill, singing "On the Street Where You Live." In 1966 he appeared in Off Broadway productions of the classical Chinese comedy "The Butterfly Dream" and "Man With a Load of Mischief," and in the 70's he was seen in "The Beggar's Opera" and, on Broadway, in "The Rothschilds," in which he played four roles. He also performed on Broadway in "Wonderful Town" and "Canterbury Tales."

In his television career, Mr. Shelton appeared in David Storey's drama "The Contractor" and an ABC comedy show, "Too Good to Be True." He also acted in soap operas and sitcoms. His last major televi-

sion role was as the coach Ernie Donardo in the HBO series "First and Ten," which ran for six seasons.

Mr. Shelton was married in 1960 to an actress, Mari McMinn. The marriage ended in divorce four years later. He is survived by his companion of 24 years, Donovan Baker, and two nieces.

Mr. Charnin, who wrote the lyrics for "Annie," said yesterday that the Actors' Fund benefit performance of the musical's revival on June 17 at the Martin Beck Theater would be dedicated to Mr. Shelton. The benefit will include the current Broadway Warbucks, Conrad John Schuck, who replaced Mr. Shelton in the original Broadway production.



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

E-mail: JonMerrill@aol.com
Web site: <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/jamerrill>

****Up-to-the-minute Annie news is at Web site****

**Little Orphan
Annie**