

Annie People



The Little Orphan Annie Fan Club Newsletter

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Tricia Trozzi, Editor and Publisher

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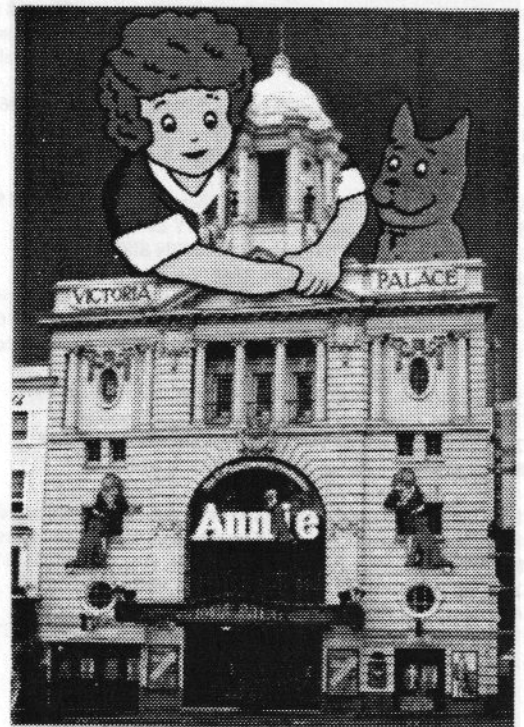
"21st Anniversary" Production opens in London

The famed Victoria Palace Theatre once again hosts our favorite show as what is being called the 21st Anniversary Production opened there on September 30th, 1998. (It was back on May 3, 1978, with Andrea McArdle reprising the role of Annie for the first month, that *Annie* first played London to great success until November 28, 1981.)

The same producers as the Broadway revival, Terri and Timothy Childs and Rodger Hess, are presenting the London edition, with direction by Martin Charnin, and Jennifer Neuland recreating the original choreography of Peter Gennaro. Kenneth Foy's set design, Theoni V. Aldredge's costumes, and Ken Billington's lighting design also made the trip across the Atlantic Ocean.

It's interesting to note that the programme of the London production lists "We'd Like to Thank You, Herbert Hoover," which was unfortunately cut from the Broadway revival soon after opening along with lots of other dialogue and has not been reinstated for the subsequent US tour. We don't know if all the rest of the material cut from Broadway edition has been restored for London. The Sunday London *Times* raved, "This is one of the most enchanting musicals I've ever seen: a golden fairytale, a shrewd, warm-hearted, generously funny entertainment for adults and children of all ages....If musicals are an oyster, this is the pearl." The *Express* was initially skeptical, but was also won over; "But this quality revival of the 1997 Broadway long-runner is superbly directed by its lyricist Martin Charnin....The show is fast, lavish and does what it does with real comic style." Heading the cast are Charlene Barton and Sophie McShera alternating as Annie, Lesley Joseph as Miss Hannigan, Kevin Colson as Warbucks, Kate Normington as Grace, Andrew Kennedy as Rooster and Gail Marie Shapter as Lily.

Thanks to Kara Gebhart of Timothy Childs Theatrical Ltd. in New York and Jane Higgins of Sue Hyman Associates Ltd. in London for supplying material.



advertising postcard for the Victoria Palace Theatre



London Production photo credit: Ivan Kyncl. Submitted by Jane Higgins.



CALENDAR OF ANNIE-VERSARIES

1999

JANUARY

- 2 The Broadway show closed at the Uris Theatre after 2,377 performances, 1983
- 3 The 1986 National Tour opened in Rochester, 1986
- 5 Sandy's first appearance in the comic strip, 1925
- 5 *Annie* at the Goodspeed finished its 20th anniversary five-month run, 1997
- 14 Broadway's fifth Annie, ALYSON KIRK, will be 29
- 15 The 3rd National's first Annie, ROSANNE SORRENTINO, will be 31
- 20 *Little Orphan Annie* comic strip creator HAROLD GRAY was born, 1894
- 20 *Annie 2: Miss Hannigan's Revenge* finished its one-month run in D.C., 1990
- 25 Annie in the 2nd National, MARISA MORELL, will be 29
- 26 Annie in the 2nd National and the 1st National, LOUANNE, will be 29
- 29 Allison Smith became Broadway's fourth Annie, 1980
- 29 *Annie Warbucks*, starring Lauren Gaffney, opened in Chicago, 1992
- 30 *Annie Warbucks* finished its seven-month run in New York, 1994

FEBRUARY

- 7 The Broadway show's 2,000th performance, 1982
- 28 Shelley Bruce became Broadway's second Annie, 1978

MARCH

- 1 The Broadway preview opened at the Kennedy Center in Washington, 1977
- 1 The 5 Broadway Annies had a reunion at an Englewood, NJ *Annie* show, 1986
- 4 Annie in the 1st National, THEDA STEMLER, will be 32
- 6 Sarah Jessica Parker became Broadway's third Annie, 1979
- 14 Previews began in New York for the 20th ann. Broadway revival of *Annie*, 1997
- 23 The 1st National Tour opened in Toronto, 1978
- 25 Broadway's third Annie, SARAH JESSICA PARKER, will be 34
- 26 The *Annie* 20th ann. revival, starring Brittny Kissinger, opened on Broadway, 1997
- late The 20th ann. Broadway revival tour will close in Detroit after 2-1/2 years, 1999

APRIL

- 11 The 1984 National Tour's Annie, LISA LYNNE, will be 26
- 21 The Broadway show opened at the Alvin Theatre, 1977
- 21 Andrea McArdle became Broadway's first Annie, 1977

MAY

- 3 The London show opened at the Victoria Palace Theatre, 1978
- 5 Broadway's second Annie, SHELLEY BRUCE, will be 34
- 6 Annie in the 4th National, KATHLEEN SISK, will be 27
- 9 Harold Gray died at age 74, 1968
- 17 *Annie 2*, starring Lauren Gaffney, opened at Goodspeed-at-Chester, 1990
- 19 Bill Berloni found Sandy in the pound in Connecticut, 1976
- 21 The movie premiered in New York, Los Angeles, and Toronto, 1982

JUNE

- 5 *Annie* won 7 Tony Awards, including Best Musical, 1977
- 7 *Annie*'s composer, CHARLES STROUSE, will be 71
- 22 The 2nd National Tour opened in San Francisco, 1978
- 28 The movie's Annie, AILEEN QUINN, will be 28

JULY

- 8 *Annie 2* finished its two-month workshop run at Goodspeed-at-Chester, 1990
- 8 *Annie Warbucks*, starring Kathryn Zaremba, opened in New York, 1993
- 18 Annie in *Annie 2: Miss Hannigan's Revenge*, DANIELLE FINDLEY, will be 21
- 22 Allison Smith's 1,000th performance on Broadway, 1982
- 24 The 1984 National Tour opened in Atlanta, 1984
- 27 The 1986 National Tour's Annie, SARAH BETHANY REYNOLDS, will be 26
- 31 The 2nd National's first Annie, PATRICIA ANN PATTS, will be 32

AUGUST

- 5 Harold Gray's *Little Orphan Annie* comic strip began, 1924
- 5 The movie's director, JOHN HUSTON, was born, 1906
- 10 *Annie*, starring Kristen Vigard, opened at the Goodspeed Opera House, 1976
- 14 *Annie*'s writer, THOMAS MEEHAN, will be 70
- 28 John Huston died at age 81, 1987
- 29 Broadway's Sandy died at age 16, 1990

SEPTEMBER

- 4 Principal filming of the movie ended, 1981
- 7 Annie in the 1991-92 National Tour, SARA ZELLE, will be 18
- 8 The 4th National's first Annie, MOLLIE HALL, will be 29
- 8 Alyson Kirk became Broadway's fifth Annie, 1982
- 11 The 4th National Tour opened in West Point, 1981
- 18 The Goodspeed's 20th ann. *Annie*, starring Cassandra Kubinski, opened, 1996
- 12 The Broadway show's 1,000th performance, 1979
- 24 Annie in *Annie Warbucks*, KATHRYN ZAREMBA, will be 16
- 27 Annie meets "Daddy" Warbucks in the comic strip, 1924
- 30 The 21st ann. production opened in London, 1998

OCTOBER

- 3 The 3rd National Tour opened in Dallas, 1979
- 6 The 1996-97 Pre-Broadway Tour Annie, JOANNA PACITTI, will be 15
- 16 Annie in *Annie 2* and *Annie Warbucks*, LAUREN GAFFNEY, will be 20
- 18 Ann Marie Mudge Warbucks was born, 1922 (movie version)
- 19 The 20th ann. Broadway revival closed and went out on tour, 1997
- 20 The 1992-93 National Tour opened in Bloomington, Indiana, 1992
- 27 The comic strip was dropped from the Chicago Tribune, 1925
- 28 The comic strip was reinstated in the Chicago Tribune, 1925
- 28 Ann Elizabeth Mudge Bennett Warbucks was born, 1922 (play version)
- 29 The *Annie* 20th ann. tour, starring Joanna Pacitti, opened in Houston, 1996
- 31 The 1991-92 National Tour opened in Rochester, 1991

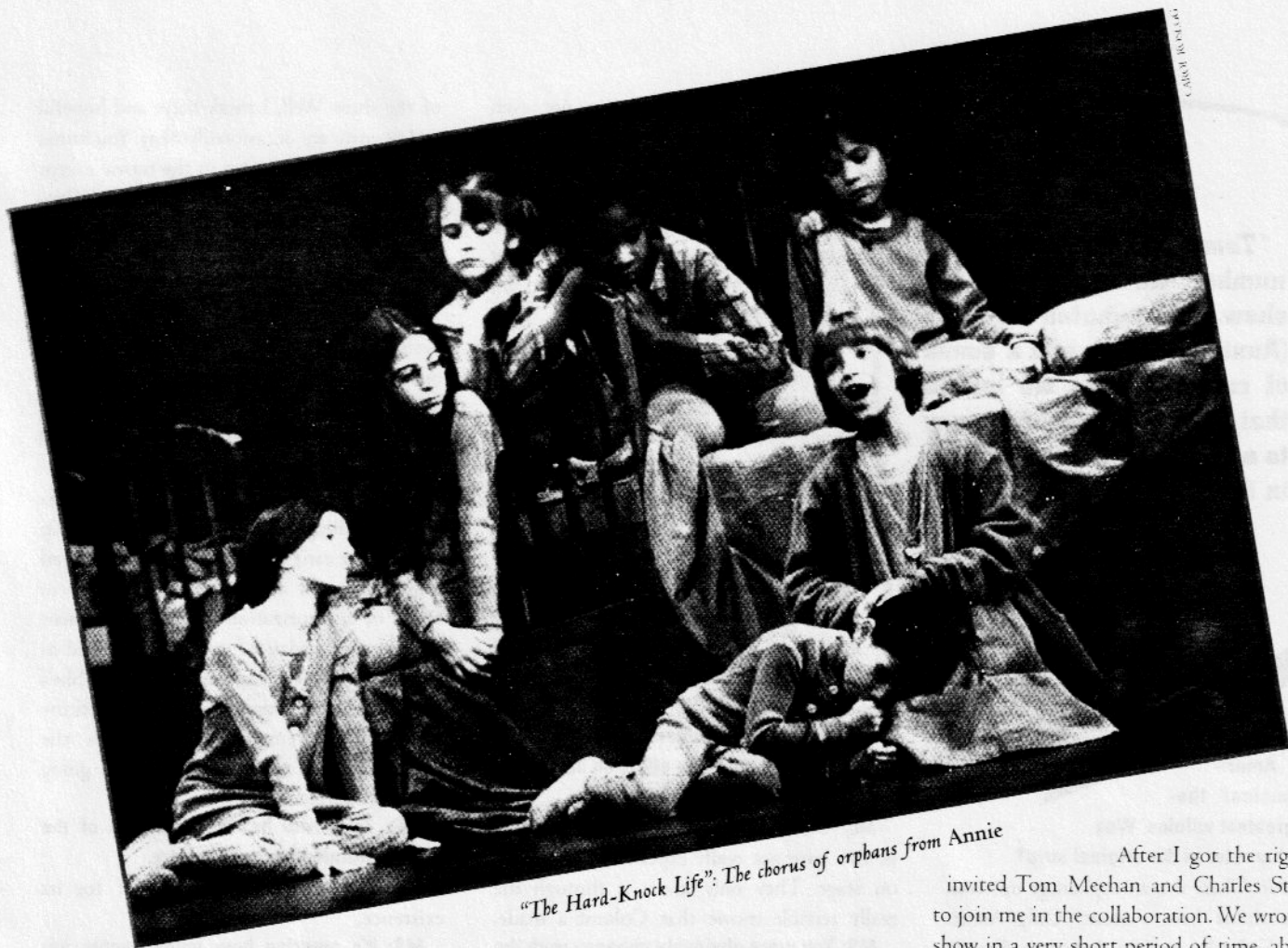
NOVEMBER

- 2 *Little Orphan Annie* Sunday comic strip began, 1924
- 5 Broadway's first Annie, ANDREA McARDLE, will be 36
- 11 Annie in the 1992-93 National Tour, HEATHER SOROKA, will be 18
- 15 The 20th ann. Broadway Annie, BRITTNY KISSINGER, will be 11
- 18 *Annie: A Royal Adventure*, starring Ashley Johnson, aired on ABC-TV, 1995
- 24 Annie's lyricist and director, MARTIN CHARNIN, will be 65
- 29 Annie's 20th ann. pre-B'way tour, starring Joanna Pacitti, opened in Houston, 1996
- 30 The second *Little Orphan Annie* movie, starring Ann Gillis, premiered, 1938

DECEMBER

- 3 Leonard Starr's *Annie* comic strip began, 1979
- 9 Broadway's fourth Annie, ALLISON SMITH, will be 30
- 22 *Annie 2: MHR*, starring Danielle Findley, opened in Washington, D.C., 1989
- 24 The first *Little Orphan Annie* movie, starring Mitzi Green, premiered, 1932
- 27 Annie in the 2nd National, KRISTI COOMBS, will be 28
- 31 Annie was left on the Orphanage steps, 1922

Annie received an unusual bit of publicity--not to mention a lot of unexpected royalties for Martin Charnin and Charles Strouse--in the latter part of 1998 when gangsta rapper Jay-Z recorded an album titled "Hard-Knock Life, Vol. 2," which used part of the original 1977 Broadway cast album version of "It's The Hard-Knock Life." The multi-platinum album spent a month at the #1 position in the USA. In the song the artist sped up the *Annie* voices and added a drum beat, but it is unmistakably Andrea McArdle and her Orphans being heard in discos all over the country. Jay-Z explained that he was very moved after seeing the song performed in the *Annie* movie, saying that it displayed the "true ghetto spirit." Warning: Despite its significance as an *Annie* collectible, do not buy this album for your kids, as it is filled with--as is typical of rap music--four-letter words and racial slurs.



"The Hard-Knock Life": The chorus of orphans from Annie

We present the conclusion of the interview with Martin Charnin which appeared in the program for the 20th Anniversary Tour on its engagement at the Newark, New Jersey Performing Arts Center in June 1998. The first part of this article was printed in the October 1998 issue. The article was reprinted with the permission of the author Michael Scasserra and the NJPAC.

eleven-and-a-half-year-old persona and attitude and spirit and spunk. The world changed around her. Annie was eleven-and-a-half when Gray invented the strip in 1925, she was eleven-and-a-half in 1944 when everyone was dealing with World War II, and she's eleven-and-a-half in 1998. I found it fascinating dramaturgically that what Annie represented was eternal and could transcend time. She never got older, she never got younger. She just stayed. So did the dog. Sandy was the world's oldest dog by the time I came around.

MS: How did you go about getting the rights to the strip?

MC: I remember calling my attorney and asking for him to find out if the rights were available. When you're in the business of making musicals, you look for subject matter anywhere. A bubble gum wrapper, if it has a plot and a good character, can send you in the direction of trying to make a show out of it. So we negotiated with *The Chicago Tribune*, the owners of the material.

After I got the rights, I invited Tom Meehan and Charles Strouse to join me in the collaboration. We wrote the show in a very short period of time, about a year and a couple of months.

MS: But you didn't get the show on right away.

MC: It took us six years to get it on because people didn't believe that it could work. They didn't believe we could invest this two-dimensional character with a third, fourth and fifth dimension. The reluctance, I think, came from this perception that it was a campy show, or that we were doing satire. We had to persuade producers that we could turn these characters into flesh-and-blood people and invest them with honest-to-god emotions

MS: Did potential producers fear the show would only appeal to children?

MC: No. That was never a problem. In fact, the great discovery was that there was a lot of adult material here. This show is about the depression and FDR and Herbert Hoover and the New Deal. It's about child abuse and political activism. Those are the qualities that make it so Dickensian.

MS: Did you take a lot of liberties when you adapted the material?

MC: Certainly.

MS: Since Dorothy Loudon first played the character on Broadway, Miss Hannigan has

"I've seen a lot of children in the history of the show who have never done anything professionally and have just tugged at their mothers' sleeves and said they want to go in to audition."

— Martin Charnin

"Tomorrow is the first number we wrote for the show. We wanted to give (Annie) strength and a sense of courage. Once we locked that moment in, we had a way to approach the other writing in the show."

—Martin Charnin

become one of the American musical theater's greatest villains. Was she a character in the original strip?

MC: No. There was an orphanage mistress, but she didn't have a name. Only Annie, Daddy Warbucks and the dog came directly from the strip. Everything else came out of our imaginations. Over the thirty-year history of the original strip, there were a lot of heroes and villains, but the one specific story that was never told was how Daddy Warbucks first met Little Orphan Annie. We felt there was a lot of potential in that story, so that was the story we decided to tell.

MS: It's interesting that audiences don't seem to know anything about the original strip to enjoy the show.

MC: That's absolutely right. You don't need to know a thing about the strip. One interesting bit, though, is that when Gray went to *The Chicago Tribune* way back in 1924, he went with his original strip and it was called *Little Orphan Andy*. The character was a boy. The newspaper said they would only print it if Gray turned the title character into a little girl. So Gray changed it.

MS: When did you realize you'd created a show that would become so enormously successful?

MC: You never know that, to be honest, until after it happens. Our goal was to create a Broadway musical and to find a venue where we could try it out. When an audience stands up and cheers and invests something

you do with qualities you're not even aware of, that's when you realize, "Hey, this is a lot bigger than I ever anticipated it would be."

MS: To what do you attribute the monumental success of the show once it originally opened on Broadway in 1977?

MC: We obviously tapped into a feeling, a need on the part of audiences. The world was going through a really grisly period. Vietnam and riots and assassinations and the Nixon debacle in the White House. Little Orphan Annie represented everything one could hope for in terms of the promise of the future and the fact that things could get better. Those things invariably end up being universal, as constant and representative in 1998 as they were in the mid-1970s.

MS: So the 20th anniversary revival of the show is having the same effect on audiences as the original production?

MC: Yes. And remember that a generation or two have not really experienced the show on stage. They only know it through the really terrible movie that Columbia made.

MS: You were obviously unhappy with the screen adaptation.

MC: It was a disaster. God only knows what debts were being paid. I can never figure out Hollywood.

MS: No one would argue that John Huston wasn't a great film director, but he did seem an extremely odd choice to direct *Annie*.

MC: I can't even pretend to know why or how any of those choices were made. Economics dictated that the producers couldn't recreate the New York City streets in 1934 during the winter, so they turned it into summer and turned this Christmas musical into a Fourth of July musical. We were not involved, unfortunately, in any of the creative decisions. Even though Charles and I wrote four new songs for the movie, we never saw the end result pieced together until the opening night at Radio City Music Hall. There's a mentality that whatever Broadway does Hollywood can do better. Ray Stark (the producer of the film) decided he didn't like the sentimental aspects

of the show. Well, I think naïve and hopeful and positive are occasionally okay. You know, *Tomorrow* isn't even sung in the movie except over the titles and as a reprise in the White House.

MS: Well, it is hard to compete with Andrea McArdle's rendition in the original.

MC: There's absolutely nothing like her performance of that song. We really lucked out with Andrea. She has one of the most glorious sounds in Broadway history.

MS: So when you cast the role now, what do you look for in an *Annie*?

MC: She's got to have street smarts, she's got to be tough and have a stiff upper lip quality. She can't be too vulnerable. You need a kid who's got a mind like a steel trap in terms of memorization capabilities because she has the burden of an entire two-and-a-half-hour musical on her shoulders. She's rarely off-stage. Our current *Annie*, Brittny Kissinger, is remarkable, and she's the youngest *Annie* we've ever had. She's going on ten-years-old.

MS: *Tomorrow* has become one of the most performed songs in history.

MC: I'm grateful beyond belief for its existence.

MS: It's amazing how many people are able to sing that song on demand.

MC: And we didn't write that song as



"The World's Oldest Dog": Cindy Lou as Sandy

a national anthem. Remember, that's Annie singing to the stray dog she's just found. That's the first number we wrote for the show. We wanted to give the character strength and a sense of courage. Once we locked that moment in, we had a way to approach the other writing in the show.

MS: What do you think of Streisand's version of *Tomorrow*?

MC: (Laughs) Barbra is an old friend and I love the way she sings. She did it as a semi-bossa nova. It's a really peculiar arrangement. I love the sound that she makes doing it, but I'm sorry that she didn't address it as...

MS: ...as a Broadway number?

MC: Yes. I wish she'd done it as the end of a nightclub act, rather than as a throw-away number in the middle.

MS: Her version can grow on you, though.

MC: It does, there's no question about it, but it's a little too much like elevator music for me. She could have done the definitive version of *Tomorrow* that would have wiped every other performance of it out of the box. But, for whatever reason, she didn't.

MS: Are you accosted on the street by parents sure that their child is ideal for the role of Annie?

MC: Accosted is not exactly the right word, but the mailbox gets pretty filled with tapes of kids, some obviously being pressured into showing off. But every now and again, a kid will do it without being pushed and will be fantastic. I've seen a lot of children in the history of the show who have never done anything professionally and have just tugged at their mother's sleeves and said they want to go in to audition.

MS: Sarah Jessica Parker played the role of Annie on Broadway. Who are some of the other actresses who have played either Annie or one of the orphans over the years?

MC: Alyssa Milano, Debbie Gibson, Molly Ringwald. I just saw Allison Smith, who was Jane Curtin's daughter on *Kate and Allie* after being in *Annie*, and she was starting in a film where she held somebody at gun point! So there have been a lot of wonderful young performers who have gone on to have careers as adults.

MS: What are some of the differences between the Broadway musical in 1977 and the Broadway musical today?

MC: *Annie*, in point of fact, was the last musical to open and be monumentally successful before the re-taking of Broadway by the English. The next thing that hap-



She won't be an orphan for long: Brittney Kissinger as Annie

pened was Andrew Lloyd Webber, then the Cameron Mackintosh-produced musicals. They've drastically changed the perception of what Broadway is about. Today, you have to give people more production bang for the buck, whether it's the falling chandelier or the helicopter landing on stage. Each individual show has its own physical tricks. What they've also done is they've taken up the major theatres on Broadway and they're in there for a long, long time. There's also a funny kind of elitism, fostered by the Broadway ticket prices, that set in during the 1980s. Because these shows need 55 people on stage and ropes for the helicopter, the budget shoots way up and the ticket prices follow. It's a vicious cycle.

MS: So what do you see as the current direction of the American musical?

MC: If you're going to write a new musical, you have to basically go back to smaller shows, chamber musicals, shows that are more char-

acter-driven and less production-driven. That's a good thing. So there's a kind of re-education process going on. We're seeing that musicals don't have to be big to be good.

MS: You're currently working on a musical based on the life of Josephine Baker. Is it safe to assume you're working toward a more intimate kind of show?

MC: It's a smaller musical, yes. It's not all feathers and glitter.

The 20th Anniversary Revival of *Annie* runs at NJPAC's Prudential Hall from June 9 through June 14. To order tickets, call 1-888-GO NJPAC.

Michael Scasserra, editor of NJPAC Performing Arts, has written for *The Village Voice*, *American Theatre* and *Theater Week*.

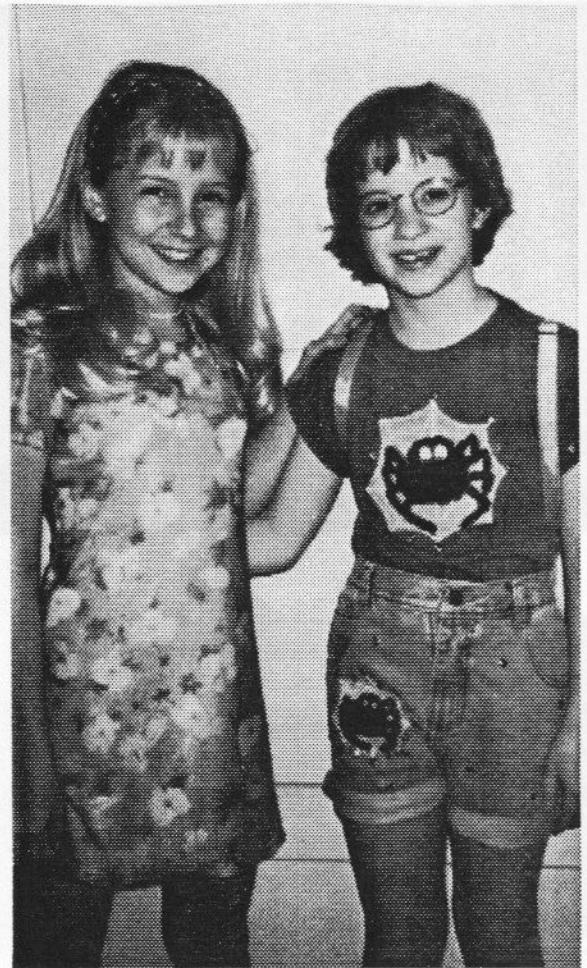
☆ Annie Stars Since Annie ☆

The *Annie* movie videocassette, the "Broadway Tribute Edition," was featured in Wal-Mart print ads during the fall on 1998 for a promotion of popular movies from the Columbia-Tristar Home Video library. A sandy-colored dog's paw was shown "holding" the *Annie* box in the photo!...Olympic Silver Medalist Nancy Kerrigan skated in a full *Annie* costume to a medley of the Overture and Andrea's "Tomorrow" as part of the *Skaters' Tribute to Broadway* broadcast on the ESPN cable network last October....Florida AP reader DAVID VANCELETTE recently played Oliver Warbucks for the 9th time, this time in Texas....LINDSAY RIDGEWAY (Molly in the pre-Broadway tour of *Annie Warbucks*) plays Morgan on the ABC series *Boy Meets World* and appeared in the Disney tv-movie *Tower of Terror*. She frequently performs the National Anthem for Los Angeles area professional sports events, and has starred in productions of *The Secret Garden* and *Ruthless! The Musical*....ALLISON SMITH, the longest-running Broadway *Annie*, co-starred in the CBS drama series *Buddy Faro* as an aspiring actress who works for a private investigator....SARA ZELLE, a former national touring *Annie*, stars as Liesl in the acclaimed Broadway revival of *The Sound of Music*, which is playing at the Martin Beck Theatre in New York City where the 20th Anniversary *Annie* revival played....ERIN TORPEY, who played *Annie* in the professional summer stock TheatreFest production in New Jersey in 1991, was featured in a major storyline about teenage pregnancy on the the soap opera *One Life to Live*....CAROL BURNETT starred with Walter Matthau in a tv-movie called *The Marriage Fool* and sang in a review called *Putting It Together* of Stephen Sondheim songs....TIM CURRY plays Gomez Addams in a new Addams Family videocassette....At last fall's Carnegie Hall event called *My Favorite Broadway—The Leading Ladies*, DOROTHY LOUDON, ANDREA McARDLE and NELL CARTER all sang as part of the star-studded performance, supposedly coming to public television....BERNADETTE PETERS stars with Tom Wopat in a revival of *Annie Get Your Gun* opening on Broadway in February, and also drew rave reviews for her numerous concert appearances in 1998....ALYSSA MILANO, July from the Second National Company, stars in the WB Network series *Charmed* as one of three sisters who are witches....news of two alumnae from *Annie 2* at the Goodspeed-At-Chester, HELEN GALLAGHER and MARY-PAT GREEN: Helen starred with Anne Meara in a dramatic comedy called *After-Play* in New Jersey, and Mary-Pat appeared on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* on the WB....DEBORAH GIBSON headlined with Betty Buckley in *Gypsy* at the Paper Mill Playhouse in New Jersey. In an article on the show, Deborah says, "For me, Broadway was always the be-all and end-all. My only regret in life is that I didn't get to play *Annie*. It was the first show I ever saw on Broadway, and I was auditioning for it from the time I was 6. I was once one of the last 10 candidates, but by then I was too tall. I knew it, too, so I wore these baggy overalls and tried to bend my knees. But they found me out." Also in the Paper Mill cast were ALEXANDRA KIESMAN (20th Anniversary Orphan swing) and DOROTHY STANLEY (Lily St. Regis on Broadway). Choreography was by Liza Gennaro, PETER GENNARO's daughter....ALLEN FITZPATRICK (Simon Whitehead in *Annie Warbucks*, Off-Broadway) stars as Norma Desmond's devoted butler Max in the current touring company of *Sunset Boulevard*.





Photo credit: Craig Schwartz. Submitted by Lynne Marr.



Submitted by Lynne Marr.

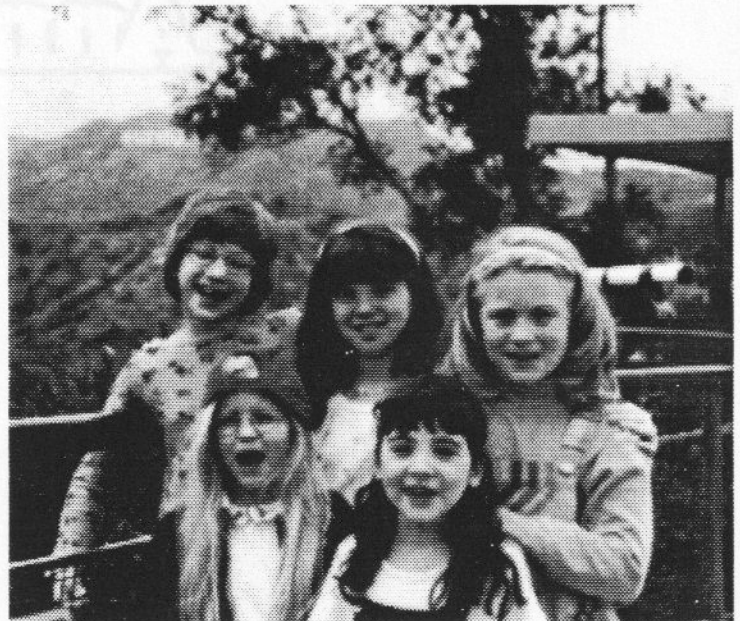
Annie Warbucks (pre-Broadway tour 1992)—Lauren Gaffney (Annie) and Lindsay Ridgeway (Molly)

Annie (April 1998)—Lindsay Ridgeway and Brittny Kissinger



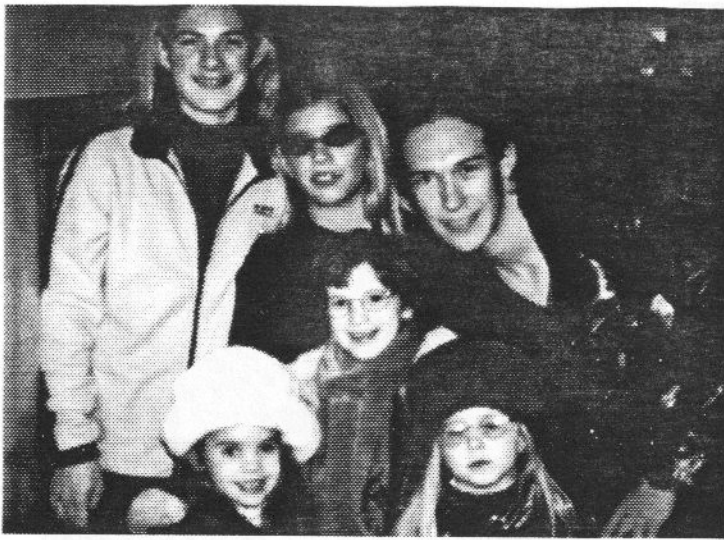
Submitted by Lynne Marr.

Annie (April 1998)—Lindsay Ridgeway and Raymond Thorne (Franklin Roosevelt)

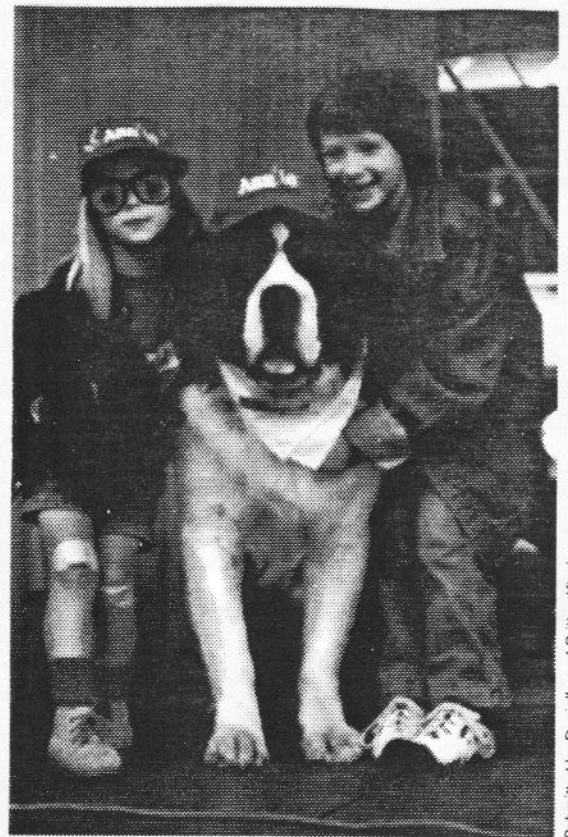


Submitted by Danielle and Brittny Kissinger.

Annie (touring in Los Angeles 1998)—front row: Chelsea Kissinger, Victoria Pontevorco. Back row: Brittny Kissinger, Courtney Leigh, Jayne Bailey Patterson.



Submitted by Danielle and Britny Kissinger.



Submitted by Danielle and Britny Kissinger.



Submitted by Danielle and Britny Kissinger.

Above: Chelsea and Britny Kissinger and Kristen Alderson meet the three brothers of the pop group Hanson.
Left: Britny tries out Judy Garland's hand-prints at the Chinese Theater in Hollywood.

Chelsea and Britny Kissinger meet another canine actor—the star of the movie *Beethoven*.

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**Little Orphan
 Annie**