

Annie People

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A Newsletter for Annie Fans

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LEAPIN' LIZARDS! Annie People?? What in the world is Annie People, I hear you ask. Well, it is a newsletter for Annie People. Annie People are simply those who hold a special affection for the little red-haired orphan in the red dress and what goes with her--the movie, the stage musical, the Little Orphan Annie comic strip, and the myriad of Annie collectibles, old and new. This newsletter is meant to be a means for all of us Annie fanatics to get together with other Annie fanatics. I guess that up until a few weeks ago I thought I was the only one. How wrong I was. The first inkling I had was to see the picture in Life magazine in December of Melissa Sowers' wonderful Annie room. Next came the closing of the Broadway show of Annie, at which occasion I happened to meet several other Annie nuts with room-filling collections that closely resemble mine. After that, a newsletter seemed to be in order for as many Annie People as I can locate out there. So, if you're a lover of the movie, a devotee of the Broadway show and its touring company productions, or if you're a full-scale gone-bananas collector with more Aileen than wallpaper on your walls, join us in Annie People. After all, I never thought there were any other Little Lulu comic fans either, until I cast out with a fan magazine last year, which has grown into having a following all across the country.

So, if you're a fan of Annie and loved the stage show, or the movie, or both, how about hearing from you? How about your feelings about why you call yourself an Annie Person? Maybe you are a reader or collector of the comic strips by Harold Gray or Leonard Starr and have a special affection for the Little Orphan Annie of the funny papers. Even if you are just an Ovaltine drinker, that would classify you at least somewhat as an Annie Person. In any event, pass this copy on to a friend who likes Annie and let me know what you think of the idea of an Annie newsletter. Possibly if there are enough of us out there, it could become a regular thing, with letters and thoughts from you Annie People published in future issues of the newsletter. Let's see what happens. Anyway, the next issue will be sent out at the same low price. YIKE!



THE YEAR OF ANNIE ENDS

1982 was certainly the Year of Annie, with that magnificent movie coming out in the spring, opening up a field day for us collectors. As for me, I cannot remember a movie I have enjoyed so much, even after countless viewings; I never thought I'd ever see anything as good as The Sound Of Music again. But it happened!! I of course saw Annie as a musical on the stage first and loved it, but when the movie version of Annie came out I loved it just as much as I did the stage show. It was unquestionably the best movie of the year 1982. Unfortunately, I am a relative newcomer to Annie fandom, having seen Annie on the stage for the first time (in London) only as recently as September 1981. I wish I had discovered her a whole lot earlier. But here she is, and it looks as if I'm really hooked. Now I'm beginning to collect every reprint of the old Little Orphan Annie comic strip I can get my hands on and devour them by the hour. One thing I've noticed since I've begun to become familiar with the strip is that it makes me appreciate the stage show and the movie even more. What they both did succeed in doing, even with their differing ways of handling the plot, was to capture the essence of the spirit of Annie herself, which is really what the whole idea is about.

ANNIE PUZZLERS

Does anyone know the answers to these questions? Chances are, some of you have the same puzzling questions about various aspects of Annie. They have been on my mind for quite some time, and maybe some Annie People out there can help out. How about it?

1. In Bruce Smith's book, The History of Little Orphan Annie, he states that there were three finalists for the role of Annie. One was Aileen, of course; another was Robin Ignico (Duffy), and the third was named Angela Lee. Which girl in the movie was Angela Lee??? I have an idea that she must have been the pretty long-haired blonde girl in dark blue who sang the line "...Rover, when you think it over..." in "Sandy" in the Orphanage. She is also seen in the beginning of "It's The Hard-Knock Life" kicking the pail at the top of the stairs. Anybody know for sure?

2. Does anyone know the names of the girls who played Annie in the various touring companies? I know Rosanne Sorrentino (Pepper in the movie) was one.

3. Since I am new to Annie fandom, I am not aware of Andrea's career after she left Annie on Broadway. Has she done anything else in the theatrical vein or been in any movies or on TV?

4. Anybody know what else ended up on the cutting room floor after Annie was edited, besides the entire outdoor portion of "Easy Street" and the elephant's roller skates at the end, which were shown only on the documentary on PBS TV, "Lights, Camera, Annie!"?

5. Are there any other reprints in book form of LOA strips besides: Arf! The Life and Hard Times of Little Orphan Annie, the three Dover Publications books (LOA, LOA in Cosmic City, and LOA in the Great Depression), and the annual Cupples and Leon hardbacks of the late '20s and early '30s? Of course, there were some comic books and giveaways in the '40s too, but they contained only small bits of the strips.

ANNIE CLOSES ON BROADWAY ON JANUARY 2 AFTER 2,377 PERFORMANCES

(For those of you who were fortunate enough to be there for this incredible event, I hope this will bring back some fine memories for you. For those Annie fans who were not with us, we know that each one of you was with us in spirit.)

Before the final performance of Annie on Broadway on Sunday, January 2, 1983, a small group of us gathered at the stage door of the Uris Theater in the hope of meeting some of the Annie cast as they entered for the final time. None of us had known each other before, but we all immediately felt a common bond in our love for Annie, and we rattled off a lot of Annie talk over the two hours or so before the show began. Meeting together at this monumental, albeit sad, event turned out to be an unforgettable experience. Among others there at the stage door were Tricia Trozzi, West Caldwell, New Jersey; Larry Skrdla, Lambertville, Michigan; Lynne Gerber, New Hyde Park, New York; and myself, Jon Merrill, Cedar Knolls, New Jersey. We spent much time comparing notes on our Annie collections and discussing all our favorite aspects of the Annie musical and the Annie movie. We had heard that all of the four former Broadway Annies (Andrea McArdle, Shelley Bruce, Sarah Jessica Parker, and Allison Smith) were going to join Alyson Kirk and Sandy on the stage that day for the final bow, and excitement grew within our little group as we began to see past Annies enter the stage door. Yes, even Sandy came right past us to enter the Uris for his one last show. We wondered--did Sandy have any idea that it was all over? How do you tell a dog--"This is it!"?

The actual show was a case of experiencing Annie on Broadway as it had never been experienced before. This particular audience was no doubt partly made up of people who were here specifically because this was the last performance of Annie on Broadway. It seemed that this audience seemed more enthusiastic, did more clapping, more cheering, and shed more tears than any previous Annie audiences. As the show went on, if seeing each song and scene in the show end, this time for good, was not enough to reduce hundreds of people to blubbering, the grand finale concocted by director Martin Charnin certainly was.

He first talked about the statistics and great triumphs of Annie since its days at the Goodspeed Opera House in Connecticut in 1976 and then called up onto the stage all previous Broadway Annie cast members present. The Christmas party set filled up with old friends embracing old friends--former Warbuckses with regrown hair, former Servants who had not seen each other in years, and lovely, bright-eyed former Orphans, many of whom have grown into beautiful young women since their old Annie days on the Orphanage set. Of course, the big moment was when Mr. Charnin brought up, one by one, each former Annie in reverse chronological order, ending with the greatest moment of all, when Andrea McArdle joined her four successors on the stage. We cheered ourselves hoarse.

Mr. Charnin then introduced each member of the most recent cast, right from the first Servant to the last Orphan. It was a touching moment when only he and Alyson Kirk and Sandy were left on the stage. He told of how Sandy had been with the show ever since Goodspeed before the show came to Broadway, and then finally he introduced Alyson as the fifth and final Annie, amid a frenzy of applause from the audience, as we let ourselves go with frenetic cheering through our copious tears. As Alyson and Sandy left the stage, we knew that

the real end had come at last, not that any of us were at all ready for Annie to become only a memory. Martin Charnin then asked Drake the butler to "close the house." Drake turned off the Christmas tree lights and almost all of the remaining stage lights and then left the stage leaving Mr. Charnin alone in semi-darkness on the famous Annie mansion Christmas set. A hush fell over the tearful audience. This really was the end.

However, in true Annie fashion, the end was to come on a note of optimism, anticipation, and hope. After all, isn't that what Annie is all about? Martin Charnin beckoned to writer Thomas Meehan to join him on the stairs next to the Christmas tree. "Tom! TOM!" he called. "WHAT IF...we did Annie...TWO!!!!!" The audience went berserk with clapping and cheering as all of the casts of Annie came out of the wings for one final rousing rendition of the last verse of "Tomorrow"--the casts and audience alike. Together. THAT'S what Annie is all about.

Our little fan contingent again gathered at the stage door after the curtain had come down for the very last time. We looked around at each other's tear-stained faces and began to fully absorb what we had just experienced. It was really wonderful that we all got to meet Martin Charnin outside later on, because of course he was the one who started it all. As I shook his hand I told him, "I'm really looking forward to Annie II," and he replied, "So am I!" So it seemed that although it was a day of endings, we still had "tomorrow" to look forward to when Annie II comes out. And Tricia, Larry, Lynne, and I, along with lots of others, will be there at the opening. Would we miss that?

In each Playbill at this final performance of Annie was an invitation to each person in the audience to come join the cast at their party at the Magique disco beginning at 10:00 PM. (That's the kind of thing that made the Annie producers different from other Broadway producers!) And what an event it was. By the time the fans were let in, many of the cast had already left, but I did meet several as they were leaving, like Andrea, Shelley, and Allison Smith. Unfortunately, I arrived at the Magique disco ten minutes too late to meet Aileen Quinn as she left, but Larry did see and talk to her. As you all know, after she had initially tried out in 1980 for the part of Annie in the movie, Aileen became the swing Orphan on Broadway and remained so until the filming of Annie began in 1981. Sarah Jessica was still inside, as was Alyson Kirk. What was particularly interesting to see inside was the reunion idea--there were many former Orphans from the second and third national touring companies there who had not seen each another in several years. They were full of hugs and reminiscing with one another, and I really enjoyed talking to them while I was there; having fun meeting all those Annie Orphans took away a little of the sadness of the whole occasion for me. It was also a great pleasure to chat with Alyson for a while at the disco also, since she will always be very special, being the Broadway Annie that is most fresh in our minds. It was at that time that she told me that all five Annies would be on "Good Morning, America" with David Hartman the next morning. As I watched the program, it felt strange seeing Alyson on TV knowing that I was talking to her in person less than nine hours before.

For us die-hard Annie fans, the closing of Annie on Broadway was truly the end of an era. But, as Annie herself has been telling us for almost fifty-nine years through the comic strip, the radio show, the musical, and the movie, there is always, even in sad times, something good ahead to look forward to.

See you at Annie II.