

Annie People



Member



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The Little Orphan Annie Fan Club Newsletter

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Artwork by Tricia Trozzi, co-editor and columnist

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ANNIE WARBUCKS IN PREVIEWS; TO OPEN ON AUGUST 9TH

New Yorkers are finally having the chance to see the Charnin/Strouse/Meehan "sequel" to Annie, which has been in the making for over 10 years. Previews at the Variety Arts Theater on 14th Street began in July, and the official opening will be on August 9th.

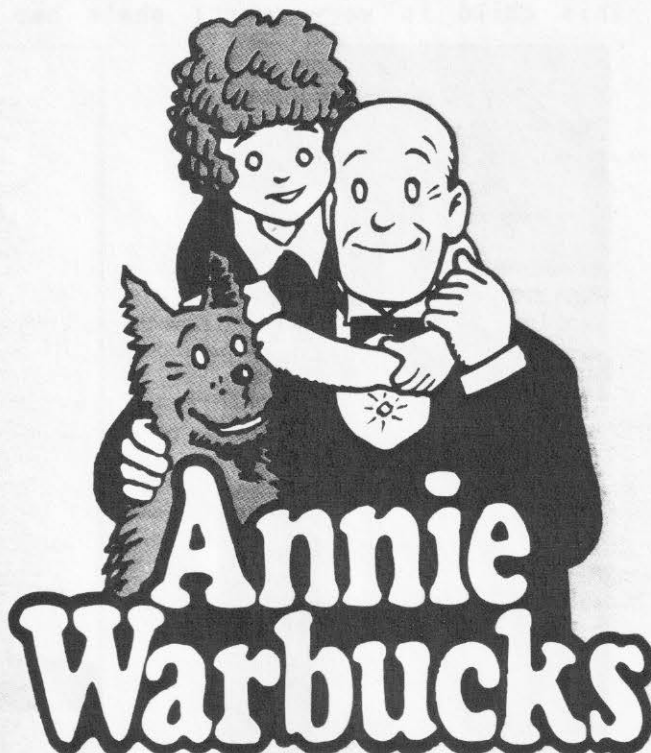
Tricia and I went to see it on the 17th of July, and Cynthia Moser flew in from Ohio for the show as well. The pictures in this issue are Cynthia's, and there were so many that we had to hold up this issue of AP a little so that they all could be processed. We will of course continue coverage of this new musical with still more pictures in the next issue.

If you live in the area, don't miss Annie Warbucks! This is a historic moment in the world of Little Orphan Annie, and you will have a great time. In the next issue of AP we will tell a lot more about what the show is about.

To all our friends at the Variety Arts: Break a leg on August 9th!

Annie Warbucks

The musical adventure
continues.



Meet KATHRYN ZAREMBA

"Annie Warbucks"

Those of us who have followed Annie for many years believe that Kathryn Zaremba, the star of Annie Warbucks, may be one of the smallest ever to play the role. Of course, next to Harve Presnell as "Daddy" Warbucks, she seems even tinier, but actually this very talented little girl is almost 10 years old.

The role of Annie Warbucks during the Goodspeed Opera House workshop in 1990 and the national tour during 1992 was played by Lauren Gaffney, who played the role brilliantly and pleased crowds nationwide but also did what so many other great Annies before her did--she outgrew the role. And so we had to say goodbye to a wonderful and personable performer and express our gratitude to Lauren for all she did to pave the way for Annie Warbucks to come to New York. Like Danielle Findley before her, Lauren will always remain a favorite Annie personality of ours, and I know we'll see both of them on stage again sometime.

But now it's Kathryn's turn. Kathryn was born on September 24, 1983 and lives in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, a city of 55,000 near Tulsa. She moved into the title role from playing Duffy late in the Annie Warbucks tour in 1992.

But how Kathryn got into that role is what makes her story interesting. According to a letter to AP from her grandmother, Gerry Dunbar, here is what happened: "Kathryn just played like all little girls do. We had noticed her voice was very strong and different from the norm, and her mom decided to put her and (her older sister) Elisabeth into musical theater, and they really connected. Kate's second grade teacher suggested she audition for the high school production of Annie. She got Molly. Then her musical theater teacher suggested both girls audition at Oklahoma City at the Lyric. Kate was Molly, and Elisabeth was Tessie."

Enter Bill Berloni, who happened to be at the Lyric looking for a dog for Sandy. He didn't find one there, but he did find Kathryn. Kathryn was sent to Houston to audition for Martin Charnin, and the next thing she knew, she was Duffy in Annie Warbucks. Now in 1993 in New York, Kathryn is in the title role, and sister Elisabeth has joined the cast as Tessie.

Veteran performer Donna McKechnie--Mrs. Kelly in the show--calls Kathryn "a genius. She hears something, and it's like a computer. Then she makes it connect. A lot of kids don't know how to do that. Kids can mimic, but this girl acts. This child is very smart; she's her own person, but still a kid."



KATHRYN ZAREMBA as Annie Warbucks



Top row, Alexis Dale Fabricant, Elisabeth Zaremba, Natalia Harris; middle row, Missy Goldberg, Jackie Angelescu, Kathryn Zaremba (Annie Warbucks), bottom, Ashley Pettet

*After a string of disasters,
tomorrow dawns off-Broadway*

Annie's hard knocks



DANIELLE P. RICHARDS/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

By **ROBERT FELDBERG**
Drama Critic

As "Annie Warbucks" previews at off-Broadway's Variety Arts Theater, the first music the audience hears is "A New Deal for Christmas" from "Annie," the enormous hit that opened on Broadway in April 1977 and ran for 2,377 performances.

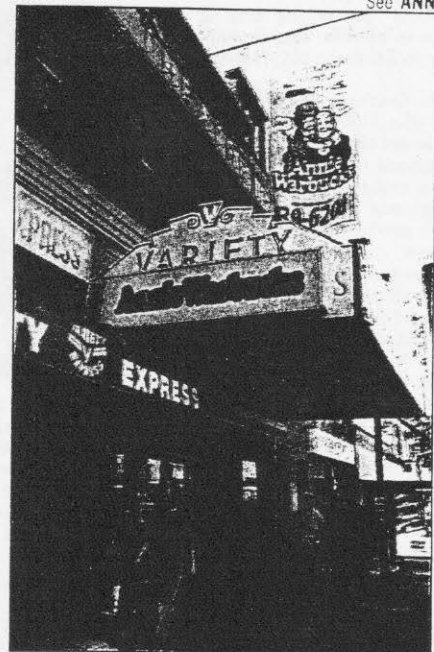
The song serves as a bridge, because the story of "Warbucks" begins just 30 seconds after "Annie" ended. In real life, however, the struggle to follow "Annie," to bring the sequel to New York, took almost as long as the original's entire run, and encountered more horrors than even little orphan Annie could imagine.

Given the popularity of the original, getting a second "Annie" to Broadway would seem to have been a piece of cake, and, after basking in their royalties for a while, the creative team of lyricist-director Martin Charnin, composer Charles Strouse, and book writer Thomas Meehan set to work.

The result, the \$7-million "Annie 2," was set to open at Broadway's Marquis Theater Feb. 6, 1990. But first there was the usual out-of-town shakedown cruise, at the Kennedy Center in Washington. That's where "Annie 2" sank, on Jan. 4. It happened about three minutes into that first performance, according to Charnin.

The non-reactions of the 700 children in the audience — and their parents — told him that he and his col-

See **ANNIE** Page E 2



STEVE HOCKSTEIN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

During rehearsals of "Annie Warbucks," a younger Annie, 9-year-old Kathryn Zaremba, sits on the lap of Harve Presnell, who reprises the role of Daddy Warbucks. The ill-fated follow-up to the Broadway hit, "Annie," opens off-Broadway Aug. 9 at the Variety Arts Theater, above.

ANNIE: Bet your bottom dollar, there really is a tomorrow

From Page E-1

leagues had made a terrible mistake. "The audience wanted to see a show about Annie's spunk and spirit and optimism," he said, "not about the villain's attempt to gain revenge."

Rival composer Jule Styne had dismissed the original "Annie" as "Oliver" in drag, but the show had heart, a kid and a dog, and the triumph of goodness over adversity. For the sequel, the creative team decided for some reason to do a satirical musical featuring Annie's nemesis, the evil Miss Hannigan, who was scheming to marry Annie's adoptive father, Daddy Warbucks. Meanwhile, instead of being underkid and underdog, Annie and Sandy were living in the lap of luxury.

(Ray Stark, who produced the lavish 1982 "Annie" movie, which did better in the hype department than at the box office, periodically announces plans to film his own sequel, most recently with Annie as a Nazi-fighter and Patrick Stewart of "Star Trek: The Next Generation" as Daddy Warbucks.)

In "Annie Warbucks," which opens officially Aug. 9, the emphasis is still on matrimony, but this time, the focus is on Annie and Daddy Warbucks, who searches for a wife after being told by a social-service agency that he must be married if he is to keep his adopted daughter. Harve Presnell, who played Daddy Warbucks in "Annie," repeats that role, with Donna McKechnie of "A Chorus Line" portraying one of the ladies in his life, and 9-year-old Kathryn Zaremba playing Annie.

Lauren Gaffney of Berkeley Heights, who had portrayed Annie for almost three years in the show's various incarnations, had gotten too mature, at the age of 13, to continue in the role, said the show's producers. Annie is 11 in the show.

The show's excited trio of new producers think that this time, Charmin and company have got it right, and that "Annie Warbucks" will prove to be the true family show that everyone is said to be looking for (if families are willing to go for the \$47.50 top ticket price, the highest in off-Broadway history, although less than the \$65 the show would have commanded on Broadway).

"It doesn't talk down to kids, and it doesn't insult adults," said Dennis J. Grimaldi, who is producing the show with Ben Sprecher and Bill Miller, owners of the Variety Arts.

If "Annie Warbucks" does make it — even in a 499-seat house on Third Avenue in lower Manhattan, rather than in a 1,400-seat theater on Broadway — it will be a happy ending to a tale that's been equal parts farce and tragedy.



After the original "Annie 2" was lambasted by the critics — "preposterous," "dull," and "irritating" were some of their thoughts — Charnin's first inclination was to hire more orphans. But he soon realized that that wouldn't be enough.

So he hatched a bizarre double-decker plan to try to save the day. The sets, costumes, and most of the cast would be used for a revival of "Annie," which would arrive on Broadway in the spring. Meanwhile, "Annie 2" would be reworked over the summer at the Goodspeed Opera House in Connecticut for a later shot at Broadway.

An upbeat Charnin joked during the disaster that he foresaw both "Annies" running simultaneously on Broadway some day, as a kind of American equivalent

The part of Annie has kept many young actresses busy, including, clockwise from top left: Andrea McCardle, Shelley Bruce, Sarah Jessica Parker, Allison Smith, Danielle Findley, Lauren Gaffney, and Kathryn Zaremba.



of the Wagner "Ring" cycle.

The glibly charming lyricist and director, it should be noted, has survived more major flops and disappointments than anyone else in the history of musical theater.

His rap sheet includes the following: "Hot Spot" (1963) ran on Broadway for 43 performances; "Softly" (1964), with music by Harold Arlen and intended for Fred Astaire, never got produced; "Mata Hari" (1967), produced by David Merrick, died, like "Annie 2," in Washington; "La Strada" (1969) closed after one performance on Broadway; "I Remember Mama" (1979), with music by Richard Rodgers and starring a singing Liv Ullman, had 108 performances on Broadway; and "The First" (1981) lasted for 37 performances.

As the theater community expected, his talk about the "Annie" revival was just that. It never happened. "Annie 2," whose blackened name was changed along the way to "Annie Warbucks," was rewritten and performed that summer in Connecticut, after which it began touring the country. It got promising reviews, but the bad taste left by the Washington debacle made it hard to find money for a New York production.

A novice producer, Karen Walter Goodwin, obtained the rights, and finally announced that the show would make it to Broadway, in a \$5.5 million production, in the winter of 1992-93. That was canceled when she couldn't complete the financing. A spring 1993 Broadway opening was then announced. That was also withdrawn for lack of money.

At that point, the hard-knock life of the "Annie" sequel seemed to be facing a dead end, but Sprecher persuaded the creative team to bring the show downscale and downtown.

The budget was slashed to \$1 million, although the production



will be sumptuous by off-Broadway standards, with a cast of 21 and a six-piece orchestra. The original design team came along, although, as an example of the budget-cutting, scenery designer Ming Cho Lee had only \$90,000, instead of \$700,000, with which to create a Staten Island ferry, the Starlight Room of the Waldorf-Astoria, and other locations.

Nevertheless, Sprecher, Miller, and Grimaldi hope to sell "Annie Warbucks" as, in Sprecher's words, "a Broadway show, only a little bit smaller."

Grimaldi declared that its failure to make it to Broadway shouldn't be held against "Annie

Warbucks." "There was never anything wrong with the show," he said. "The economics of theater was the problem."

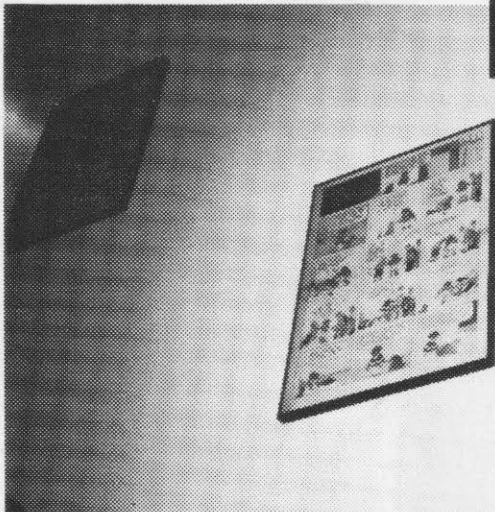
Time will tell, of course, whether "Annie Warbucks" becomes an off-Broadway phenomenon like "Little Shop of Horrors," proves the old theatrical saw that sequels are poison, or lands somewhere in-between. If you go, don't expect to hear "Tomorrow." It's not in the show. Miller promised, however, that the new score contains "another 'Tomorrow,'" which, considering everything the musical has been through, wins him an Annie Optimism Award.



This logo is spray-painted on the side door of the theater



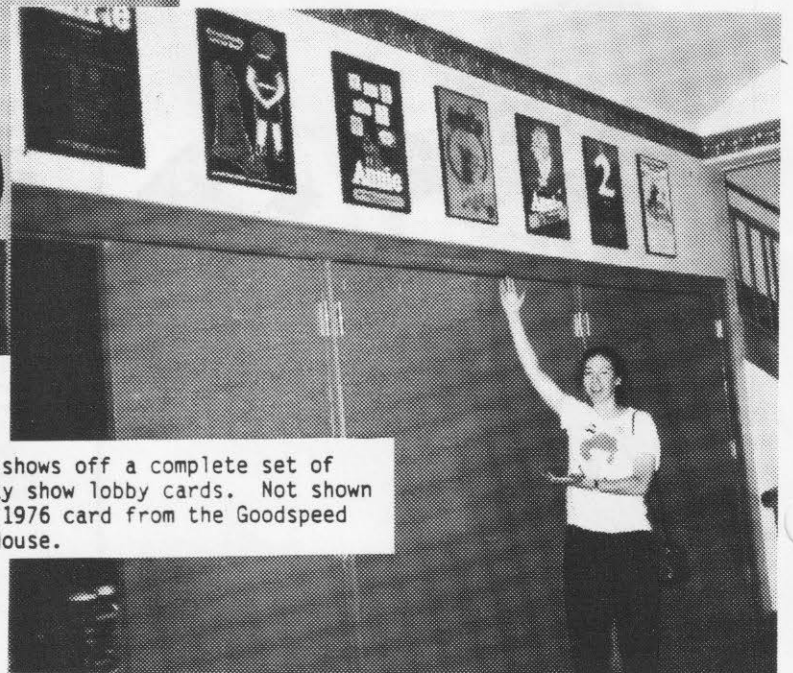
The far side over the door reads, "The Wait Is Finally Over"



3 full-page Little Orphan Annie strips by Harold Gray from the 1930s - part of Tricia's lobby display of memorabilia



Another view of the lobby showing a logo poster, a tabloid-size Leonard Starr strip, and another full-page Gray strip

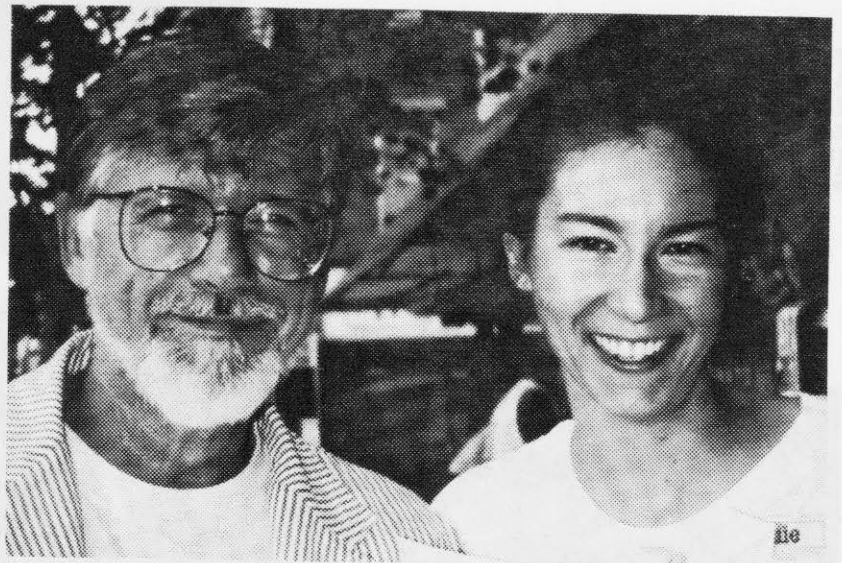


Tricia shows off a complete set of Broadway show lobby cards. Not shown is the 1976 card from the Goodspeed Opera House.

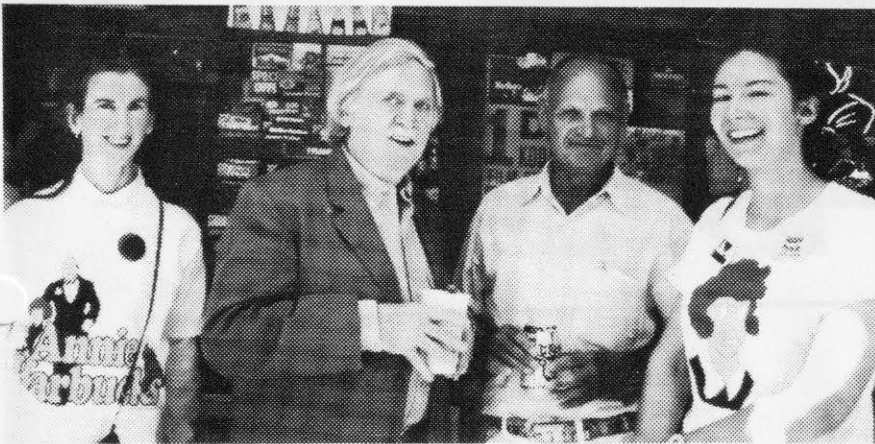
THE COMPANY

(in alphabetical order)

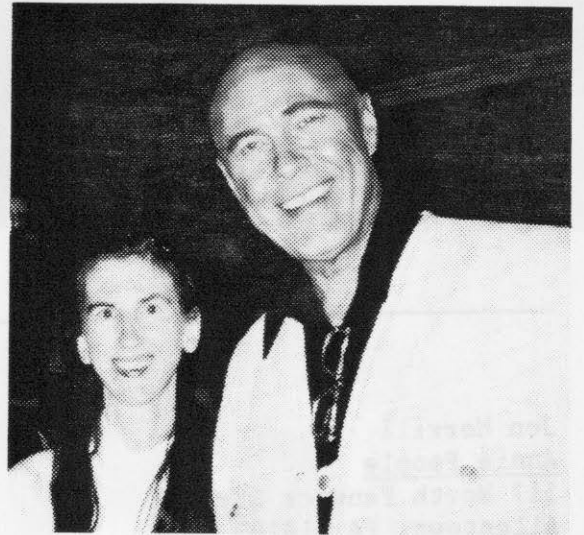
J.B. Adams	Missy Goldberg	Ashley Pettet
Brooks Almy	Natalia Harris	Harve Presnell
Jackie Angelescu	Joel Hatch	Alene Robertson
Jill Cordie	Alan Kass	Molly Scott
Harvey Evans	Marguerite Macintyre	Steve Steiner
Alexis Dale Fabricant	Jeffrey M. Markowitz	Raymond Thorne
Colleen Fitzpatrick	Donna McKechnie	Elisabeth Zaremba
Michael E. Gold	Jennifer L. Neuland	Kathryn Zaremba



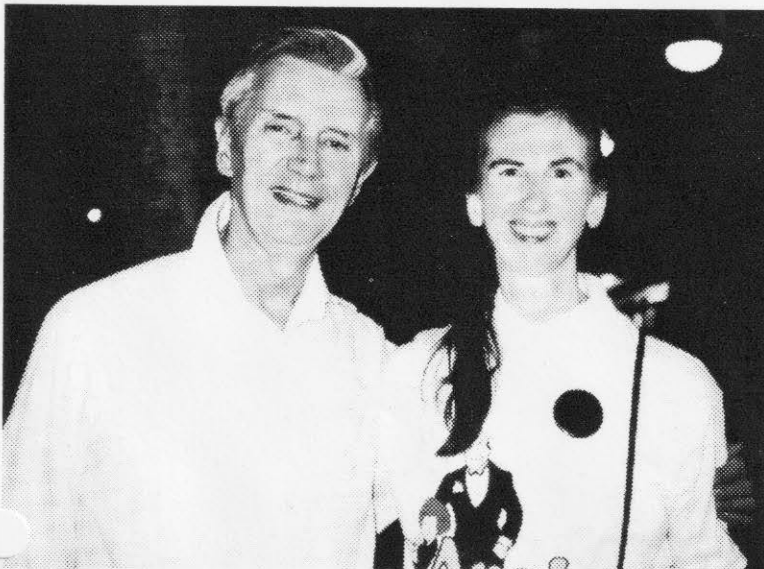
Martin Charnin (Director, Lyricist), Tricia



Cynthia Moser, Thomas Meehan (Book), Charles Strouse (Composer), Tricia



Cynthia, Harve Presnell (Oliver Warbucks)



Raymond Thorne (Franklin Roosevelt), Cynthia



Marquee of the Variety Arts Theatre, 110 Third Avenue, NYC

The kids of Annie Warbucks, clockwise from top, Alexis Dale Fabricant (Swing Orphan), Elisabeth Zaremba (Tessie), Natalia Harris (Peaches), Kathryn Zaremba (Annie Warbucks), Ashley Pettet (Molly), Jackie Angelescu (C.G. Paterson), Missy Goldberg (Pepper)



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Little Orphan
Annie