

Annie People



The Little Orphan Annie Fan Club Newsletter

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MANY ANNIE/AW KIDS PERFORM IN N.Y.C. KIDS WITH HEART BENEFIT

On Sunday, April 30, over two dozen professional kids from Broadway and films gathered at the TriBeCa Performing Arts Center in downtown New York City to perform in *Kids With Heart* to a packed house. This showcase was put together as a benefit to raise money for AIDS research and to help children with AIDS or who are HIV positive.

Show tunes, both old and new, were sung and danced to by these talented performers. There were a number of familiar faces on stage, as both *Annie* and *Annie Warbucks* were well represented by young talent from both shows. From the Variety Arts *Annie Warbucks* show of 1993-94 were **Kathryn Zaremba** (in on an airplane from Los Angeles), **Ashley Pettet**, and **Larissa Auble**, performing on the same stage together for the first time since *AW*. Kathryn, now 11 and fresh from her TV appearances this year on *Full House* and *Sisters*, sang "Why Am I Me" with Laura Bundy from *Ruthless*. Kathryn also sang as part of a trio on "That's Entertainment" with Jennifer Greenman who was in *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, and 12-year-old **Heather Soroka**, whom we remembered from seeing her in Cleveland in the title role in the 1992-93 national tour of *Annie*. Heather also sang "The Music And The Mirror" from *A Chorus Line* with Eden Riegel from *The Will Rogers Follies*.

Ashley, 10, who just finished with *The Sound Of Music* national tour, performed a solo of "Born To Entertain" from *Ruthless*, as well as a duet with Kelly Mady (*Tommy* national tour) of "Get Happy." As for Larissa, also 10, since this show started at 6:00 p.m., there were no current Broadway kids in the first act, since none of them could get there in time, so all seven of them, including Larissa from *Show Boat*, sang and danced one number all together ("Just One Person" from *Snoopy*) in the second act. Larissa and her mom had to tear out of the Gershwin Theatre after curtain call at the Sunday matinee, jump on a subway, and get downtown just in time to make Larissa's number in *Kids With Heart*. Such energy these kids have!

We were pleased to see **Blaze Berdahl**, 14, for the first time since the *Annie 2* workshop she did with Lauren Gaffney way back in the summer of 1990. Blaze has been seen regularly on the *Ghostwriters* TV series, and she sang Irving Berlin's song "Always" in *Kids With Heart*.

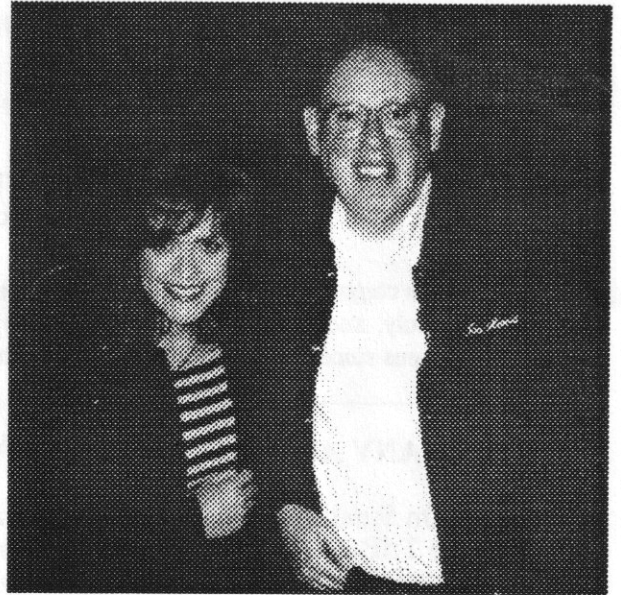
It seemed appropriate that **Andrea McArdle** was the guest host at this occasion; after all, this show was done by the cream of young talent in the New York area, and think how many performing kids have been influenced and inspired by Andrea all these years! Andrea spoke to the audience about the cause and sang a couple of numbers herself in her distinctive and unforgettable voice. She was the perfect choice to fill this role tonight. It was also very nice to see and chat with *Annie/AW* writer Thomas Meehan, who was in the audience.

This was a wonderful show for an extremely worthy cause (it was announced that \$28,540 was raised for AIDS research by this group) and brought together young talented kids too numerous to mention. Pictures of some of them are on the next two pages. Also, check out the review of the marvelous Broadway Kids album on pages 7 and 8. Many of the kids in *Kids With Heart* tonight also perform on the album.

SCENES FROM THE "KIDS WITH HEART" BENEFIT • THE TRIBECA



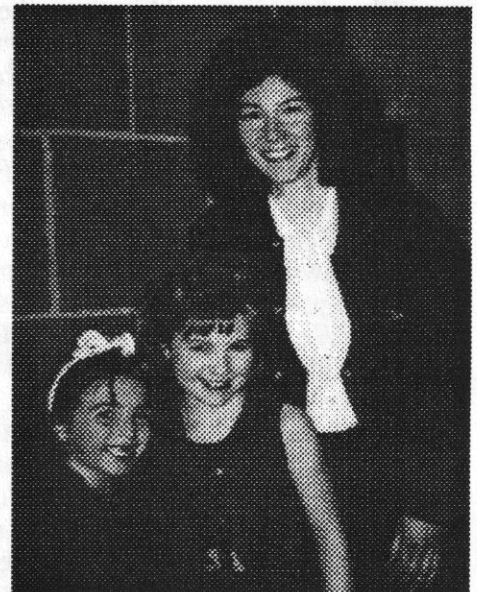
Reunion of **Annie Warbucks** performers: Larissa Auble (swing Orphan), Kathryn Zaremba (Annie), and Ashley Pettet (Molly).



The evening's lovely mistress of ceremonies, Andrea McArdle, and Jon socialize at the post-show party.



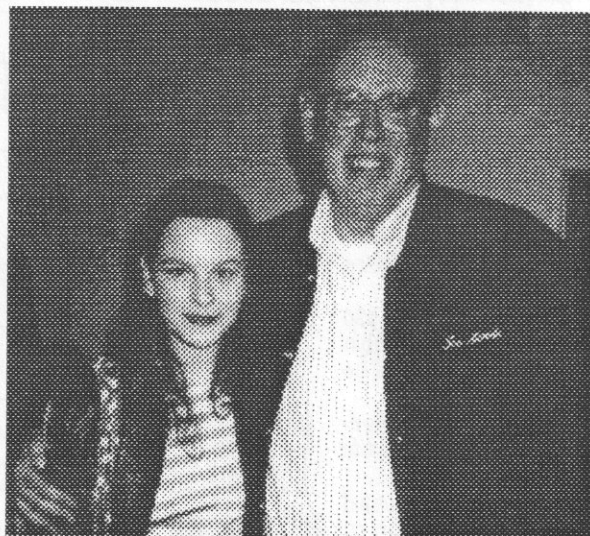
A whole gang of Annie People: top row: Tricia, Larissa, Kathryn, Ashley, and Jon. Bottom row: Elizabeth Campanelli and Lauren Lenza, both 12-year-old **Annie Warbucks** fans from Staten Island.



Andrea McArdle's 6-year-old daughter Alexis with Kathryn and Tricia.

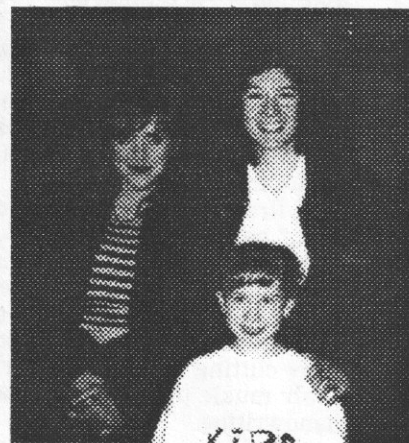


Annie in the 1992-93 National Tour, Heather Soroka, with a more recent Annie!



Jon with Blaze Berdahl, who was in **Annie 2** at Goodspeed-at-Chester in 1990.

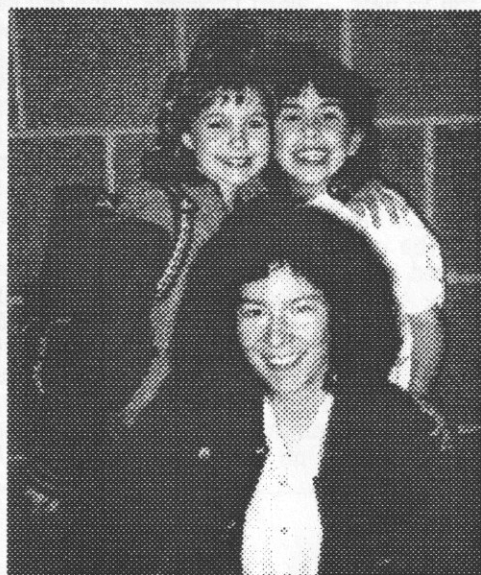
KIDS WITH HEART



Andrea, Tricia, and Larissa.



The author of both **Annie** and **Annie Warbucks**, Thomas Meehan, poses with Larissa Auble.



Kathryn (wearing her **Annie Warbucks** company jacket), Ashley, and Tricia smile for the camera.

'Annie': He'll love her forever

By Ed Blank

THEATER CRITIC

And you thought there were shows you liked a lot.

Jon Merrill has seen *Annie* 130 times, he says, not counting John Huston's movie version, which he now has on video.

And he has seen various versions of the continuation, *Annie Warbucks*, "about 30 times."

He'll be here for the weekend seeing Jude Pohl's production of *Annie Warbucks*, as well as the two other Pohl productions playing in rotating rep at Station Square Playhouse, *Nonsense* and *Forever Plaid*.

Catching the first Pittsburgh *Annie Warbucks* is relatively convenient for Merrill. It's merely at the opposite end of the state. He lives in Allentown and works for AT&T in Morristown, N.J.

"I first saw *Annie* in London in 1981," he says. "I was in the Army, stationed in Heidelberg, Germany. I had been an elementary school teacher in Vermont with a degree in music education. Lots of school were cutting back, particularly in their music programs. I saw the handwriting.

"I had been in the reserves so I went onto active duty for four years to get computer training, which is what I'm in now — word processing, and I was sent to Germany.

"A friend of mine who was stationed at Heidelberg with me had seen *Annie* in London and recommended it. I went. The singing, dancing children is what I fell in love with.

"By 1982 when I got out (of the service), the movie had come out, and I loved that, too. I began collecting the *Annie* memorabilia that flooded the market."

The movie *Annie* was a major box-office disappointment. Merrill thinks it was hurt by being released the same summer as *E.T.*

Meanwhile, back on Broadway,

'A friend of mine... recommended it. I went. The singing, dancing children is what I fell in love with.'

— Jon Merrill

ANNIE MEMORABILIA COLLECTOR

"I got to see the show *Annie* three times there before it closed. I was at the final performance Jan. 2, 1983. All the former stars were on stage, and everyone went to a party at a disco afterwards.

"That's when I discovered there were a lot of *Annie* followers. That's where I met my partner, Tricia Trozzi. She's a graphic artist. She's 30. I'm 49. We both had rooms full of *Annie* stuff.

"We started an *Annie* newsletter. About 150 get it now (including Pohl). We don't charge anything for it, but we do ask people to renew once a year, just saying they want to continue to receive it." (The address is 517 North Fenwick St., Allentown, Pa., 18103.)

The newsletter answers the question: Is there life after *Annie*?

Merrill and Trozzi use it to chronicle the careers of people they've seen in the show, particularly girls who have played the title role.

"Aidan Quinn (the movie's *Annie*) is 23 now and just out of Drew University," Merrill says. "She's an immense talent. I hope she gets the recognition she deserves. But when you peak at 10, what do you do?"

"I have kept up with many of the people I've seen in *Annie* productions. Andrea McArdle is 31 now and doing *Les Miserables* on Broadway."

Merrill also chronicled the development of *Annie Warbucks*, which evolved over several years, beginning with a version called *Annie II: Miss Hannegan's Revenge*

that was heading for Broadway when it premiered in Washington, D.C., to scathing notices and bad audience reaction.

"It was much too long and complicated and too focused on Miss Hannegan," says Merrill, who was there. "The creators had written a sophisticated musical about Miss Hannegan. People loved Dorothy Loudon and Harve Presnell, but they just didn't like the show. I think most of the audience wanted to see *Annie* and her dog Sandy, but they were very secondary in that version."

By the time the sequel finished evolving and wound up as *Annie Warbucks*, only two of the *Revenge* songs were left ("A Younger Man" and "When You Smile"), and the character of Miss Hannegan was gone, replaced by someone reminiscent of her.

"*Annie Warbucks* is not a true sequel," Merrill says. "A sequel is basically something that happens much later. *Annie Warbucks* is a continuation. It picks up where the first one leaves off."

Merrill has seen most of his *Annies* on the East Coast, but caught one in Salt Lake City.

"If I happen to be somewhere and it's playing, I'll go ... it's just a hobby.

"I first met Jude Pohl when I came to Pittsburgh in 1987 to see (Jeannette native) Monica Lee Gradischek do his production of *Annie*. It was Monica's third production, but the first I'd seen of hers. I've been back to see her in other shows since. Now she's in *Grease* on Broadway, and I'm going up to see her in that April 8."

He doesn't think *Annie Warbucks* is likely to be filmed, but he thinks we may yet get a non-musical movie based on the adventures of Little Orphan Annie.

Merrill won't choose a favorite between *Annie* and *Annie Warbucks*. He sees them as two halves of one story. His next favorite?

The Sound of Music.

This appeared in the *Tribune-Review* while I was out in Pittsburgh seeing Jude Pohl's *Annie Warbucks*. The writer got just a bit mixed up when he was talking about the star of the *Annie* movie, who, incidentally, is no relation to the adult male actor with the same last name.



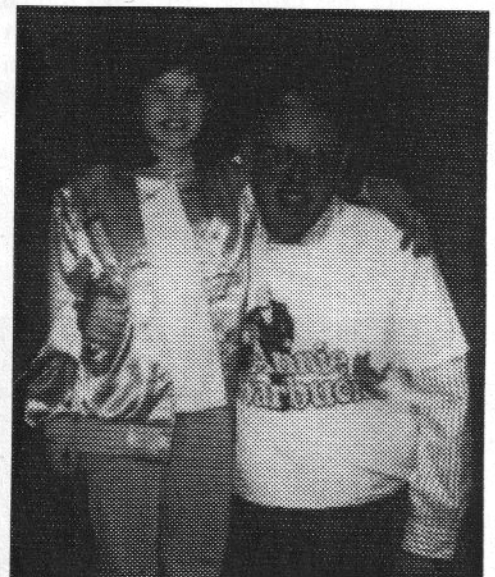
Annie at NORTH HUNTINGDON, PA - Clockwise from bottom left, Megan Welsch, Brandy Hanyak, Louise Carr (Miss Hannigan) Hilary Renda, Adrienne Welsch (Annie), Diane Walter, Lisa Walter, Joanne Walter.



Adrienne Welsch with co-star Ginger (looks like another dog we all remember?)



Annie Warbucks at PITTSBURGH, PA - Jon with, top row, Abby Harper, Megan Welsch, Rebecca Nance (Annie), Adrienne Welsch, Elizabeth Schaldenbrand; bottom row, Catherine Murray, Eliza Chetlin, Stephanie Burns.



Jon with Rebecca Nance (*Annie*). Jude Pohl produced this show; he also was the producer of *Annie* in 1987 which featured Monica Lee Gradischek (see next page) in the title role.

IF YOU HAVEN'T YET HEARD



"GREASE"

is the word

Monica Lee Gradischek

STARS

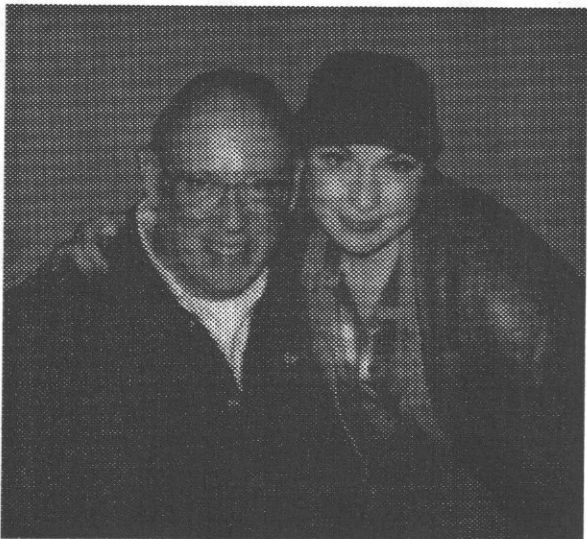
LIVE ON STAGE

AS

'THE BEAUTY SCHOOL DROPOUT'

Broadway Debut: February 6 at The Eugene O'Neill

MONICA LEE GRADISCHEK opened on Broadway in *Grease* in the role of Frenchy in February. She won much acclaim in her native Pittsburgh with her three portrayals of Annie at age 10, 12, and 15. The 23-year-old natural redhead remains an enthusiastic fan of *Annie* and is thrilled to finally be on Broadway. Below is Monica with Jon who likes to think of himself as her biggest and oldest fan (50 on May 25).



Another big fan of the character got to fulfill her dream to play the title role in *Annie* last year. LISA EKSTROM, 12, was Annie in Ogden, Utah.

REVIEW: THE BROADWAY KIDS SING BROADWAY

This recently-released CD is a great idea: young performers who have been in Broadway shows getting to sing songs that have been sung by child characters in other Broadway shows. And there is not a "dud" song in the bunch; all the songs, whether famous or obscure, were very well chosen to suit the young singers. It's much more appropriate to have a kid sing a song that was originally done by a child character rather than singing an "adult" song which can be about a mature topic that sounds awkward when done by a kid. This album is significant to us because it features two **Annie Warbucks** performers: Kathryn Zaremba and Ashley Pettet. As a bonus, "Sandy" Cindy Lou appears in the cover photo with the kids! The other Broadway Kids are also very talented and deserve to be mentioned by name: Lacey Chabert (from **Les Miserables** and now on **Party of Five** on tv), Eden Riegel (from **The Will Rogers Follies**), Sivan Cotel and Jeffrey Landman (both from **Falsettos**), Michael Shulman (from **Les Miserables**), and Buddy Smith (from **Tommy**). Buddy has an **Annie** connection—his older sisters Alexandra and Jessica were in many community and professional productions of **Annie** several years ago.

As noted, the choice of songs is excellent, and there is a nice balance of ballads and up-tempo numbers. The arrangements are great because for the most part they seem to be exactly what one would hear in a production of these musicals. By having the real arrangements, the songs can accurately convey the spirit of each show. The arrangements are also well-done by being heavy on real instruments and light on synthesizers. A specially written song called "The Broadway Kids" opens the album. An upbeat and catchy tune, it expresses part of what these kids' lives are like: "3:00 a singing lesson/4:00 a coaching session/4:45 an audition/I guess my homework will have to wait/I'll do that at intermission."

The first show featured is our favorite—a medley of **Annie** tunes. It's easy to pick out Ashley and Kathryn in the solo lines of "It's the Hard-Knock Life," which is slightly abridged from the show version (the "yank the whiskers from her chin" section is missing) and done in the key of A Flat, which is a lower key than in the stage version. Kathryn solos on "Maybe" in the key of A and does an excellent job, giving a hint of what it would be like if she got the chance to play the role in the original **Annie**. Lacey and Eden join Ashley and Kathryn for "Tomorrow" (key of F, a half-step lower than in the show) and it's a fine rendition including some really nice harmony on the chorus. **Annie** is well-represented by this medley and you'll probably want to play this track twice before moving on to the other selections. "The Kite" from **You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown** follows, and it's a cute song, with Kathryn getting to say Lucy's line at the end. The **Les Miz** Medley begins with "Castle on A Cloud" expertly sung by former Young Cosette Lacey, paired with the humorous "Little People" with the four boys taking turns at solo lines.

Kathryn is featured in a duet with Buddy on the delightful song from **Shenandoah** called "Why Am I Me?" and they harmonize nicely on the song. "Mama A Rainbow" from **Minnie's Boys** (a musical about the Marx Brothers) is a heartfelt song sung beautifully by Michael. The "Newsboys" from **Gypsy** leads into a swiny song from the show **Ruthless** called "Born to Entertain," sung with all the stops pulled out by Eden. Lacey sings the delicate "The Girl I Mean To Be" from **The Secret Garden** and it's arranged with a repeat of the bridge and last verse to make the song a little longer than in the original show. An **Oliver!** Medley starts with "Food, Glorious Food," followed by "Who Will Buy?" nicely sung by Buddy. Michael handles "Where Is Love?" and all the boys get together for a rousing "Consider Yourself."

"I Always Knew" from our other favorite show, **Annie Warbucks**, gives Kathryn a chance to recreate the original performance (in the same key of G) but with the added bonus of a repeat. When the verse ends the first time, the melody goes differently than we're used to, so you might be surprised at not hearing that "big note" that ends the song. But fear not, after an instrumental break Kathryn comes back and ends the song with that soaring final note, making this recording a nice variation to the Cast Album version. The lively "The Big Time" from **The Will Rogers Follies** follows, with solos for each of the kids. The touching "My Best Girl" from **Mame** is paired with a very obscure song called "My Pa" from the unsuccessful show **The Yearling**, and both are nicely done.

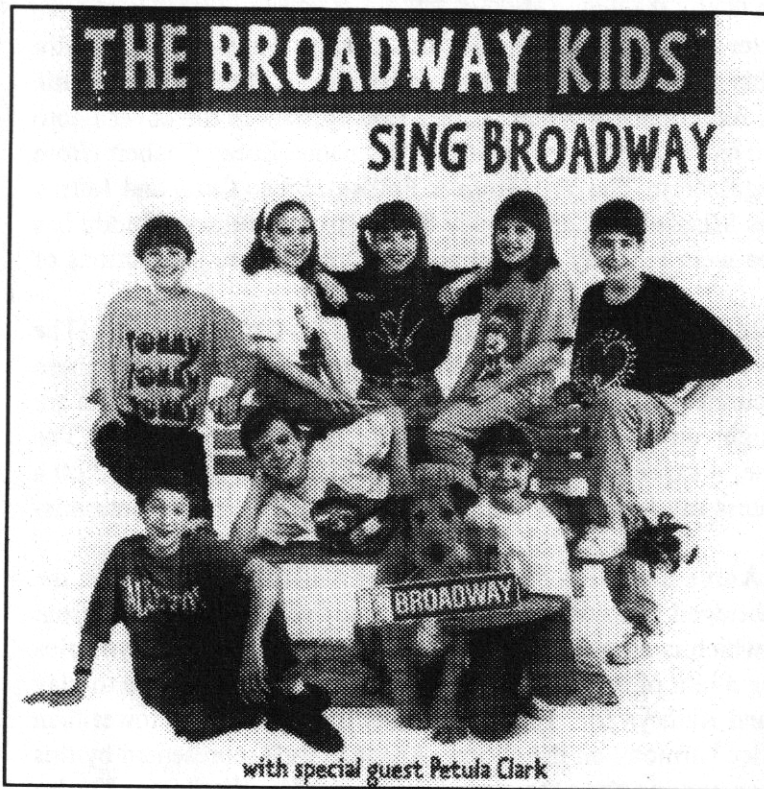
The Rodgers and Hammerstein medley alone is a highlight. The beautiful full harmony of the "The Sound of Music" song is worth the price of the album, and makes one want to hear the whole song. But it flows into "Getting to Know You" from **The King and I**. British pop singer Petula Clark guest stars on this track, and her fancy and "pop" vocal stylings contrast and don't blend with the straightforward deliveries of the kids. "The Other Generation" from **Flower Drum Song** is clever, and then we go back to **The Sound of Music** for "So Long, Farewell" and "Do Re Mi" and again. One might wish for full versions of these two songs instead of only parts of them. "Do Re Mi" is especially fun. The famous song from **The Music Man**, "Gary, Indiana," follows and then "I Won't Grow Up" from **Peter Pan**. Each kid gets a solo line in the echo parts of the latter song and you can hear the fun the kids are having singing this song.

From a show in development, **Little Lord Fauntleroy**, comes a comical waltz called "Let Kids Rule the Land" and the album concludes with the very appropriate "Happiness" from **Charlie Brown**. (continued on page 8)

The booklet that comes with the CD is excellently done and very informative. There are descriptions of each of the shows from which the songs come, and photos and bios of all the Broadway Kids (and Cindy Lou, too!). About **Annie**, the liner notes say in part, "Who could guess that a show based on Harold Gray's 'Little Orphan Annie' comic strip about a curly-headed little girl who's drawn without eyeballs could charm Broadway audiences for 2,377 performances!? It did. And the show? The unforgettable **Annie**. In this sentimental story set in New York City in the Depression of the 1930s,

Annie, the lovable redhead with a heart-of-gold, and her almost-as-lovable dog Sandy, get to spend Christmas in the mansion of the filthy rich Daddy Warbucks—who reluctantly does a good deed once in a while." The other notes begin, "**Annie Warbucks**, written by the same people who did the original **Annie**, begins with Daddy Warbucks trying to finalize his adoption of the sweet orphan Annie. To do so, however, he has to get married. On the way to true love and to making a real family for Annie, he almost gets tricked by the scheming head of the agency that approves adoptions (and who secretly would like her own daughter to become the unbelievably rich Mrs. Warbucks)."

This album is highly recommended for all fans of **Annie** and **Annie Warbucks**, especially because of the contributions of Ashley Pettet and Kathryn Zaremba. It would make a great way to introduce children (and grown-ups too!) to songs from other shows. It can be ordered directly from the producers. For the CD send a check or money order for \$17.45 (\$14.95 plus \$2.50 for postage) to IDOC Productions, Inc., 229 East 79th Street #1L, New York, NY, 10021.



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CompuServe 73677,135
Prodigy GRHD27A

Little Orphan
Annie