The American Century Theater presents

Edna Ferber and George S. Kaufman’s

STAGE DOOR

ON STAGE

The American Century THEATER
About The American Century Theater
The American Century Theater was founded in 1994. We are a professional nonprofit theater company dedicated to presenting great, important, and worthy American plays of the twentieth century—what Henry Luce called “the American Century.”

The company’s mission is one of rediscovery, enlightenment, and perspective, not nostalgia or preservation. Americans must not lose the extraordinary vision and wisdom of past playwrights, nor can we afford to surrender the moorings to our shared cultural heritage.

Our mission is also driven by a conviction that communities need theater, and theater needs audiences. To those ends, this company is committed to producing plays that challenge and move all Americans, of all ages, origins, and points of view. In particular, we strive to create theatrical experiences that entire families can watch, enjoy, and discuss long afterward.

The American Century Theater presents

Stage Door
by Edna Ferber and George S. Kaufman

April 8–May 7, 2011
Gunston Theatre Two
2700 South Lang Street, Arlington VA

Director
Marie Sproul
Producer
Eleanor Gomberg
Stage Manager
Lindsey Moore
Set Design
Sarah Kendrick
Costume Design
Christiane Markus
Lighting Design
Dave Walden
Sound Design
Zoë Jackson
Properties Design
Avery Burns and Rebecca Christy

Act I
Scene I The Footlights Club (main room), somewhere in the West Fifties, New York
Scene II One of the bedrooms, a month later

Act II
Scene I Again in the main room, a year later
Scene II Two months later

Act III
Scene I The following season, a Sunday morning
Scene II About two weeks later, midnight

There will be two intermissions.

Please—Silence and stow cell phones and other distracting devices. The use of recording equipment and taking of photographs during the performance are strictly prohibited.

Stage Door is presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York.
Artistic Director’s Notes

Stage Door (1936), by Edna Ferber and George S. Kaufman

You like that 1937 film version of Stage Door, do you? The one with Katharine Hepburn, Ginger Rogers, Lucille Ball, and almost every other famous actress then alive? The one in which Hepburn delivered the line that became the staple of two generations of impressionists, “The calla lilies are in bloom again . . .”? Well, that’s great, but the movie has absolutely nothing to do with the Broadway play’s story or dialogue. George S. Kaufman, who wrote most of the lines to the plot choreography of novelist Edna Ferber, joked that they should have called the movie “Screen Door.” You see, Stage Door was Kaufman’s love letter to the theater—and also a thumb in the eye of Hollywood. Making a movie out of Stage Door is like having a military band play Joan Baez songs.

This is a play that could be the official script of The American Century Theater. Written during the Golden Age of the American stage at the very moment that popularity and talent were beginning to shift to motion pictures, Stage Door asserts that the magic of a live cast performing to an audience just across the footlights carries passion and value that the silver screen could never equal. Of course, the play was written before Gone with the Wind, The Wizard of Oz, and Stagecoach, not to mention The Matrix. And in the 1936–1937 season, when Stage Door premiered, nearly 200 shows opened on Broadway: Kaufman thought he was backing a winner.

His own play certainly was. Stage Door is one of the finest of the large-ensemble, three-new-plots-a-minute comedies that he and his various collaborators, especially Moss Hart, excelled at bringing to the stage—glorious confusions of interlocking love stories, rivalries, break ups, breakdowns, misunderstandings, jokes, and eccentrics like The Man Who Came to Dinner and You Can’t Take It with You. Stage Door is different though because, unlike those shows, it closely resembles reality, the genuine tragic—comic lives of aspiring New York actresses during the Great Depression. That was Edna Ferber’s doing. Her novels were always grounded in reality in a way the puckish Moss Hart’s plots were not. Stage Door was a romp with a purpose—an ode to artistic integrity, the courage of the theater professional, and the innate moral, intellectual, and aesthetic superiority of Broadway over Hollywood.

continued
Sadly, the fate of Stage Door the play demonstrates the futility of Kaufman’s quest, for he was trying to sweep back the tide. Hollywood offered more money for his show than he or his Algonquin Roundtable colleague Ferber could resist, then turned it into a star-stuffed soap opera. Far more people saw the movie than saw the original; soon, most of the public didn’t remember that there had even been a play called Stage Door that was a Broadway hit.

Or that it had a completely different plot . . . and was better than the movie.

What George S. Kaufman wrote about the unique virtues and value of the theater in Stage Door is still true, of course. It’s just that today, fewer people know it.

—Jack Marshall, Artistic Director

Cast

In the spirit of the Footlights Club, we asked our Stage Door actors to share with us the show or role each considered his or her “big break.”

**Heather Benjamin** (Ann Braddock) Big break: Cathy in Eclipsed (Louisville KY). Local credits: Valentine’s Day and The Last of the Thornton (Quotidian Theatre), Our American Cousin (New Old Theater), The Little Mermaid and the Prince (Adventure Theatre), A Midsummer Night’s Dream (Vpstart Crow), and Guys and Dolls (American Music Stage). Heather is editor of the Actors’ Center newsletter.

**Sherry Berg** (“Big Mary” Harper) Big break: Charilze in a new play Off Broadway, Grandpa Died. Other credits: Una in Blackbird, co-host of Deliteful Cooking (Cable Access TV), and Lucille Frank in Parade. www.sherryberg.com

**Allison Leigh Corke** (Jean Maitland) Big break: The Sketchbook in Scenes from an Execution (Potomac Theatre Project at Atlantic Stage 2). Other recent credits: Elizabeth in Whatever I Want (Madcap Players’ Winter Carnival of New Works), Linda in Holiday (1st Stage), Helena in A Midsummer Night’s Dream (Georgia Shakespeare), Goth/other roles in Titus Andronicus (the inaugural WillPower tour, Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival), and Audrey in As You Like It and Julia in 1984 (National Players Tour 60). Upcoming: Madeline Bassett in By Jeeves (1st Stage).

**Katie Culligan** (Olga Brandt) Big break: Helena Rubenstein in Madame (Golden Fleece Ltd., workshop). Other credits: Sister in A Christmas Carol (Ford’s Theatre, in performance at the White House, 2007), Legacy of Light (Arena Stage), Magenta in The Rocky Horror Show (Cumberland Theatre), Lena u/s in Dancing Princesses (Imagination Stage), and Oona in The Christmas Cabin of Carnaween (Creative Cauldron). Film: Mandy Lamb in Someday This Pain Will Be Useful to You. TV: The Tommy Taylor Show. Upcoming: Pam/Popo in Fat Men in Skirts (Molotov Theatre)

**Carina Czipoth** (Bobby Melrose) Big break: Debuting in professional theater in the DC area in Stage Door with The American Century Theatre. Other credits: Mildred Hook in The Fisherman and His Wife and Sally in Sally Surfer (Acting for Young People Stages, touring companies).

**Elizabeth Darby** (Louise Mitchell) Big break: Comedy of Errors and The Scarlet Letter (National Players tours). Other credits: Holiday (1st Stage), Lysistrata (Chesapeake Shakespeare Company), The Heidi Chronicles (Theatre Hopkins, and Private Eyes (Journeymen Theater).

**Joshua Dick** (Keith Burgess) Big break: Bobby Strong in Urinetown. Other local credits: Male Swing in Sweeney Todd and Eunuchs u/s in The Visit (Signature Theatre), Tom in Spot’s Birthday Party (Adventure Theatre), Ernie in A Man of No Importance (The Keegan Theatre), Charlie Cowell in The Music Man (Washington Savoyards), and Philo Farnsworth in The Farnsworth Invention (Alchemy Theater), and Burrs in The Wild Party (Irene Ryan nomination), Renato Di Rossi in Do I Hear a Waltz?, Male Modern in Thoroughly Modern Millie, and Father in The Pillowman (American University). Joshua is Production Manager of Apron Theatre Company.

**Ashley Faye Dillard** (Kaye Hamilton) Big break: Slow Dancing in a Burning Room (The Keegan Theatre). Other credits: Lincolnesque (Keegan) and Have Your Cake (Warehouse Theater). www.ashleyfayedillard.com

**Rebecca Ellis** (Mattie) Big break: Breaking from the ranks of humble ushers to dance for Donny Osmond, who remembered her kick. Local credits: Hanna in A Shayna Maide (Rep Stage), She in Here We Are (Bay Theatre), Gwendolen in Travesties (Theatre Hopkins), and Ophelia in Hamlet, Margery Pinchwife in The Country Wife, and Celia in As You Like It (Chesapeake Shakespeare Company), among others.

**Jacqui Farkas** (“Little Mary” McCune) Big break: Daughter Type in Neighborhood 3: Requisition of Doom (Bricolage Theatre, Pittsburgh). Other credits: Mother/ Gypsy in the world premiere of Five Children and It, Granuale O’Malley in the world premiere of The Gift of the Pirate Queen, Ensemble in Chicago, and Christiana in Prophets and Madmen. Coming up: Tammy in Roommate Agreement and Brie in Breakfast with Johnny Depp (part of Babel Theatre’s Capital Fringe Festival production of The Magical Marriage Computer and Other Plays).

**Leigh Anna Fry** (Linda Shaw) returns to The American Century Theatre, where she was last seen as the Secretary in Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter? Recent stage credits: Slam Theater 1.0 (New Galaxy Theatre Group), The War of the Worlds (Scena Theatre), and The Imaginary Autopsee (2010 Capital Fringe Festival). Offstage: Linda Kasabian in Will You Kill for Me?: Charles Manson and His Followers and Emily Harris in Witness: The Kidnapping of Patty Hearst (MSNBC), and Who the (Bleep) Did I Marry? and Nightmare Next Door series (Investigation Discovery).

**Ty Hallmark** (Madeleine Vaclain) Big break: Roxane in Cyrano de Bergerac. As a Resident Actor at Chesapeake Shakespeare Company, Ty has played Lady Fidget in The Country Wife and Imogen in Cymbeline and will appear as Silvia in the upcoming Two Gentlemen of Verona. She has also worked with Venus Theatre, Molotov Theatre Group, Washington Shakespeare Company, Studio Theatre, and the Capital Fringe Festival. She is an Equity Membership Candidate.

**Michael Hammond** (Jimmy Devereaux, Fred Powell, Billy) Big break: Yet to come. Other credits: Young Odysseus in The Odyssey, Evan Wyler in As Bees in Honey Drown, and Rocky in The Rocky Horror Show. Michael has also worked at Studio Theatre, Williamstown Theatre Festival, and the Eugene O’Neill Theater Center.
Nicholas Hanson (David Kingsley) Since he returned to the stage in 2010, Stage Door is the second professional theatre production with which Nicholas has been involved.

K. Clare Johnson (Kendall Adams) Big break: Power of the Dog (Longacre Lea Productions). Other credits: Mary Stuart and The Cherry Orchard (Washington Shakespeare Festival), A Winter’s Tale (Baltimore Shakespeare Festival), A Dream Play (Constellation Theatre Company), The Ma (Solas Nua), and Wonderland Alice (Studio Theatre Secondstage). TV/film: America’s Most Wanted, Countdown to Ground Zero, Why We Kill, and Twice Exceptional. Up next: Fat Men in Skirts (Molotov Theatre Group).

Steve Levens (Dr. Randall, Adolph Gretz) Big break: The Entertainer (Guthrie Theater). Other credits: Babes in Arms, Stalag 17, Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?, An American Century Christmas, Hellzapoppin’, Drama Under the Influence, and Call Me Mister (The American Century Theater); Cabaret and Passion (Signature Theatre); A Clockwork Orange, Muzeka, The Virgin Molly, and Hot Fudge (Studio Theatre Secondstage); The Merchant of Venice and Playing Juliet, Casting Othello (Folger Theatre); Moscow (Ganymede Arts); War of the Worlds and The Supper (Scena Theatre), and K2, A Walk in the Woods, and Three Sisters (Theater of the Americas, Bogota, Colombia). TV: Law and Order, Criminal Intent, C-47. Film: Browncoats/Redemption.

Shannon Listol (Judith Canfield) Big break: Associate Supervisor/ Dance Captain in Fever/Dream (Wolly Mammoth Theatre). Other credits: Keegan Theatre, Taffety Puny, Synetic Theater (Alumni Company Member), Chesapeake Shakespeare Company (Resident Acting Company), Forum Theatre, Imagination Stage, Rorschach Theatre, Shakespeare Lite (founding member), Theatre IV, Washington Shakespeare Company (stage read), Source Festival, and Young Playwright’s Forum (stage read). Next up: Hermia in A Midsummer Night’s Dream (Chesapeake Shakespeare Company).

Emily Morrison (Mrs. Shaw) Big break: Lena in Tennessee Williams’s Hello from Bertha (Actors Circle Theater, Los Angeles). Local credits: Chorus in War of the Worlds (Scena Theatre) and Marthy in Anna Christie (Heritage–O’Neill Theatre Company). Los Angeles: Queen Elizabeth in Richard III (Colony Theatre), Frankie in Frankie and Johnny in the Claire de Lune (Elephant Theatre), Ginger in Rosemary with Ginger and Mother in How I Learned To Drive (A.C.T), and Deanna in Lie With Me (Mutineer/Charters). TV: Who the (Bleep) Did I Marry? (Investigation Discovery) and I Didn’t Know I Was Pregnant! (Discovery). Upcoming: But Love Is My Middle Name, a one-woman show at 2011 Capital Fringe Festival. www.emilylovemorrison.com

Jane E. Petkofsky (Mrs. Orcutt) appeared most recently with The American Century Theater as Kate Mayo in Beyond the Horizon. Other credits: Mrs. Grace in A Man of No Importance, Mrs. Braddock in The Graduate, Sandra in One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest (U.S. and Ireland tour), Henslowe in Elizabeth Rex, Housekeeper/ Innkeeper’s Wife in Man of La Mancha, Miss Gilchrist in The Hostage, Ann Putnam/ Sarah Goode in The Crucible (Keegan Theatre); Edna in Thirty-seven Stones, or the Man Who Was a Quarry (Charter Theatre); and Mother in Ragtime: The Musical and Golde in Fiddler on the Roof (mainstage productions at Theatre Lab School of the Dramatic Arts).

Bradley Foster Smith (Sam Hastings, Lou Milhauser, Larry Westcott) Big break: the lovable, alcoholic cabdriver Siggie in Golden Boy (The Keegan Theatre). Born in Detroit, Bradley grew up in Johnson City TN in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains and recently moved to DC. Upcoming: The Making of a Modern Folk Hero (Source Festival).

Jennifer Speerstra (Bernice Niemeyer) Big break: Magenta in The Rocky Horror Show (Landless Theatre). Other credits: Tiffany in Spooky Dog and the Teenage Gangster Mysteries, Polly Py in Cannibal! The Musical, Monica Lewinsky in Mistress, and Star Cat in Psycho Beach Mystery (Landless), Altargracia in Icarus (Trumpet Vine Theatre), Marcy u/s in Dog Sees God (Studio Theatre Secondstage), Gov. Barracuda in Diamond Dead (Capital and NYC Fringe Festivals), and Goldfinger in The Von Pufferhutte Family Singers, title role in Carrie Potter at the Half Blood Prom, and Hazel Nutberger in I Like Nuts!: The Musical (Capital Fringe). www.jenniferspeerstra.com

Rachel Spicknall (Susan Paige) Big break: Joining Faction of Fools Theatre Company in 2009 and performing Commedia dell’Arte ever since, including The House with Two Doors and Tales of Love and Sausages. Other credits: The Miracle Worker (Synapse Theatre Company). Upcoming: U.S. premier of Accept Me If You Love Me (produced by Spotlight Comunicaciones at Theater J). In addition to acting, Rachel is a clown and a teaching artist.

Kate Volpe (Terry Randall) Big break: The University of Maryland/ Baltimore Campus audition which earned her a full scholarship for acting. Baltimore and Los Angeles credits: Stella in A Streetcar Named Desire, May in Sam Shepard’s Fool for Love, Nurse Ratched in One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest, Nancy in Gaslight, and the title role in Lysistrata. Television: Boston Public on ABC Family and Nightmare Next Door on Discovery Channel/ID. Film: The Blinds, Confession, and Wasting Daylight.

Production Staff

Marie Sproul (Director) began her directing career at ShenanArts in Staunton VA, under the tutelage of Robert Graham Small and Nancy Kiracofe. There she directed The Wrestling Season, The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged), and The Why. Marie has worked as assistant director with Lee Mikeska Gardner on Tuesday (Hope Operas, Washington) and with Jeremy Cohen on Let There Be Love and KJ Sanchez on ReEntry (Centerstage, Baltimore). Marie will be Associate Director on the production of ReEntry touring this fall to regional theatres and universities. Other directing credits: Anne of Green Gables, Arsenic and Old Lace, The Philadelphia Story, The Underpants, Pillow Talk, Uh-Oh, Here Comes Christmas, The AshGirl, Heaven Can Wait, Quitters, and The American Way.

Emma Baskir (Wardrobe Mistress) is an accomplished performer who loves working behind the scenes of a favorite play. She is enjoying the period costumes she is caring for.

Eleanor Gomberg (Producer) has been associated with The American Century Theater almost since its founding, in a variety of roles. She produced The Time of Your Life, Machinal, and Hellzapoppin’, among others, and designed properties for archy & mehitabel, The Andersonville Trial, and the second production of Moby Dick Rehearsed.
Rachel Brown-Glazner (Board Operator) was Sound Designer for Little Theatre of Alexandria’s 2010 Children’s Showcase.

Avery Burns (Properties Co-designer) designed makeup for The American Century Theater productions of The Crucible and archy & mehitabel. She combined props and makeup for the creation of the masks for TACT’s Lady in the Dark. She has also designed properties for several Signature Theatre productions, as well as for regional theatre.

Rebecca Christy (Properties Co-designer) produced The Andersonville Trial and Laughter at 10 O’Clock for The American Century Theater. She designed the props for TACT’s first production of Moby Dick Rehearsed. Rebecca is a TACT board member.

G.W. Glover (Assistant Stage Manager) is backstage for his second production with The American Century Theater, his first being Spotlight Operator for One Night with Fannie Brice.

Zoë Jackson (Sound Design) has performed with a number of DC area theater companies, both on stage and as a musician, including as guitarist for the Open Circle Theatre 2004 production of Jesus Christ Superstar, which received four Helen Hayes nominations. In addition to theatrical sound design, Zoë is a musician, producer, and audio engineer. She is currently recording Dueling Muses, her first album as a solo artist.

Sarah Kendrick (Scenic Designer) is ordinarily to be found doing costume design. Her first costuming job was House of Blue Leaves at Laurel Mill Playhouse. Favorite projects: Tether (Doorway Arts), Reals (Taffety Punk Bootleg), Guillermo Gomez Pena’s Corpo/Illicto: The Posthuman Society 6.9 and The Seagull (UCD). Current projects: Two Trains Running (Prince George’s Community College), directing Oliver at Aidan Montessori School, Car Plays (Taffety Punk), and the ArtStream Silver Spring Inclusive Company Show.

Christiane Markus (Costume Design) has most recently been Costume Designer for The One, The Other, Confirmed Sighting, and Into You (University of Maryland/ Baltimore Campus). She was Assistant to the Costume Designer for On the Verge (Rep Stage) and She Stoops To Conquer (UMBC).

Lindsey Moore (Stage Manager) has been Stage Manager for productions of An Evening of Comic Variations by David Ives and The Laramie Project. Her other love in the theatre world is lighting design: favorite lighting projects include Miss Julie and What’s a Girl To Do? She was most recently Lighting Designer for a Christmas production of Scrooge: The Musical.

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Listen in as Artistic Director Jack Marshall discusses the TACT production of Stage Door with Director Marie Sproul and cast members Kate Volpe and Allison Leigh Conkle, who play Terry and Jean. Podcast available for download from www.americancentury.org.
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