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November 1-17, 1996

1996-97

80th Season

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616 St. Peter St.

80TH SEASON
New Orleans, LA 70116

568TH PRODUCTION
Tel.: 522-2081

PRESENTS

Neil Simon's **LAUGHTER ON THE 23RD FLOOR**

COSTUMES
Kellie L. Grengs

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER
Shava Christina

LIGHTING DESIGN
Daniel Zimmer

COMPANY STAGE MANAGER
Kathy Riess

SOUND DESIGN
Don McDonald

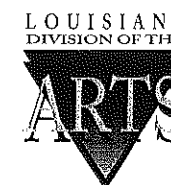
**DIRECTED AND DESIGNED BY
Keith Briggs**

Produced by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc.

NOTICE:

Photographing, videotaping or sound recording of this production is strictly prohibited.

Le Petit Théâtre du Vieux Carré is supported in part by a City of New Orleans Municipal Endowment Grant for the Arts from annual payments stipulated in the franchise of Cox Cable, New Orleans, and administered by the Arts Council of New Orleans, and by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Louisiana Division of the Arts, Office of Cultural Development, Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism.



A Letter from the Chairman

Dear Members and Friends:

What a way to start our 80th Season at Le Petit Théâtre du Vieux Carré!

From all reports, *Sophisticated Ladies* was a resounding success. Opening night was indeed a thrilling experience, and as the reviews kept coming in during the run, I knew we had a hit. Special praise and thanks to Sonny Borey, Karen Hebert, Debby Simeon, Derek Franklin, Jay Haydel and a most talented cast and crew. The orchestra was indeed worthy of the Duke himself.



Robert J. Landry
Chairman

It was a very ambitious task that Marda Burton, Maryflyn Thomas and Linda Maher undertook this summer to set a goal of 300 Patron Members. It is with pleasure that I report that the response was outstanding. We now have 330 Patron Club Members. There is still time to upgrade to Patron Membership as we have five more plays (after tonight) and many more benefits in store for you.

The Patron Party, held opening night, was a tremendous success. Le Petit Théâtre's Board of Governors wishes to express its sincere appreciation to Patron Co-Chairmen, Maryflyn and Redding Thomas and Linda and Tom Maher for a job well done. Our Honored Guest, Delta Burke, contributed much to making the party and night a huge success.

Space does not allow me to acknowledge all of the Patron Party Committee, but I would be remiss if I did not mention Victor Chisesi, Marguerita Bergen, Sheila Davlin, Gayle Batt, Mary Katherine Lonatro, Michael Theis, Rosie Bloom, Jude Swenson, Archie Bland, Juanita Pradel, Michael Mays, Allain Andry and Ginger Hitt. We need good workers like you to survive and grow. Please continue your excellent work.

Now, sit back and enjoy Neil Simon's *Laughter on the 23rd Floor*. Neil Simon has been a Broadway phenomenon since his first full length play in 1961. He has the uncanny ability to take a seemingly insignificant "slice of life" and make it a successful and usually hilarious audience pleaser. Director, Keith Briggs has indeed assembled a very talented cast and I hope you will enjoy this second production of our 80th Season.

Please note that *A Christmas Carol* will only be presented December 5th through December 15th. If you are a third week subscriber, Please call Sonya (522-2081) to select the performance of your choice.

Sincerely,
Robert J. Landry, Chairman

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Roy Tagliavore, Helm Paint and Supply, Dionne Butler, Rhonda Joyce, Brigitte Pallet, Al Shea, Tulane University Theatre Department and Tulane Summer Lyric Theatre, all area news media, and all those who helped to make "Laughter" a success.



CAST

(in order of their appearance)

Lucas	LEON CONTAVESPRIE
Milt	BUTCH BENIT
Val	ROY DUMONT
Brian	MICHAEL SULLIVAN
Kenny	GARTH CURRIE
Carol	JAN CHAMBERLAIN
Max Prince	ROBERT PAVLOVICH
Helen	LAURA NORTH
Ira	MARC BELLONI

SCENE

An office on the 23rd floor of a building on 57th Street, New York City

ACT I

March 1953

ACT II

Scene 1: Seven months later Scene 2: Christmas Eve



THEATRE STAFF

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR	Bill Walker
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT/	
BOX OFFICE MANAGER	Sonya Swain
ASSISTANT TECHNICAL DIRECTOR	Neil Ingles
RESIDENT STAGE MANAGER	Amy Embry
PHOTOGRAPHER/HOUSE MANAGER	Arthur Tong
CUSTODIAN	Andrew Carmen

PRODUCTION STAFF AND CREW

Director	Keith Briggs
Costumer	Kellie L. Grengs
Scenic Design	Keith Briggs
Lighting Design	Daniel Zimmer
Resident Stage Manager	Amy Embry
Company Stage Manager	Kathy Riess
Assistant Stage Manager	Shava Christina
Publicity	Vatican Lokey
Production Art Work	Edward R. Cox
Technical Director	Bill Walker
Assistant Technical Director	Neil Ingles
Master Carpenter	Robbie Guillot
Carpenter	Alyssa Robbins
Master Electrician	Neil Ingles
Electrician	Bob Pavlovich
Light Board Operators	Kelly Keegan, Jaime Ardoyno
Sound Engineer	Don McDonald
Sound Operator	Gabriela Fernandez
Properties	Keith Briggs, Kathy Riess, Shava Christina
House Manager	Arthur Tong
Programs	Vatican Lokey, Bill Walker, Amy Embry

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Dr. John Franklyn Dunn Jim Garza Gerald McRaney

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Dr. William R. Procell Ann Schroeder Frank Sciacca Mrs. Robert Senter
Mr. and Mrs. Hugo Wedemeyer

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R. Clyde Abercrombie	Henry J. Bryer Jr.	Lois Winter Crandell
Robert Abramson	Marda Burton	Kathleen Cresson
Mr. and Mrs. Deryl Ackley	Mr. and Mrs. Charles Cabibi Jr.	Barbara Cribbs
Dr. J. B. Anderson	Margaret Campbell	Patrick Cullen
Ann Adair Anderson	Vincent Cannata (2)	Mrs. George M. Daigle
Janet Baum Anderson (2)	Mr. and Mrs. Robert Carey	Mrs. W. J. Daly
Mr. and Mrs. Allain Andry	Connie Causey	Sheila Davlin
Mrs. Herman M. Baginsky	Mr. and Mrs. Bob Carr	Mr. and Mrs. David L. Dean
Luis Q. Barroso	Robert Carrow	Evelyn Dillon
Mr. and Mrs. Louis Bartels	Flora P. Cherry	Dr. Charlotte Ducote (2)
Margaret Beaver	Mr. and Mrs. Nathaniel J. Chesnut Jr.	Marlene R. Duronlet
Berry P. Becnel	Stephen N. Chesnut Law Firm	Betty Ellis
Adrian C. Benjamin Jr. (2)	Rose Annette Chisesi	Dr. Ahmed Fawzy (2)
Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Bennett	Frances Ciaravella	Richard Fiske
Margarita Bergen	Mrs. Eldred Cleutat	Dr. and Mrs. Robert Flurry
Pat Bertucci (2)	Ben Cimini	Mrs. Ivan M. Foley
Dr. and Mrs. Robert Bloom	Anthony J. Ciesi Jr.	J. Robert Fortenberry (2)
Mr. and Mrs. R. W. Boebel	Martin Coady (2)	Dr. Edward Foulks (2)
Dana and Ginny Burgess	Louise Coleman (2)	Knowles French Jr.
Corinne "Lindy" Boggs	Zilphia Colombo	Linda Fried
Mr. and Mrs. Salvatore Bordlee	Mr. and Mrs. Cliff Collins	Edwin Friedrich
Walter Bost	Leon Contavespie	Cheryl B. Frischhertz
Rosemary Bresette	James J. Cooke Jr.	Stewart J. Gahn Jr.
Karen Burger	Ralph E. Council	Patricia Garcia
Dr. and Mrs. David J. Bush		William H. Garrett

*deceased

SUPPORTING PLAYERS

continued

Mr. and Mrs. Chester Gelpi	Mr. and Mrs. Bob McCalla	Cecilia Slatten (2)
Mr. and Mrs. James W. George	Mr. and Mrs. Robert J. McDowell	Alvin Smith
Mr. and Mrs. William Gershuny	Gordon Hobson Maginnis	Elizabeth Smith
Bob Goggin	Mr. and Mrs. Tom Maher	Leslie Snadowsky (2)
Lynette A. Greene	S. Ann Mahorner	Starlady
Dr. and Mrs. Douglas W. Greve	Dr. Jamie M. Manders (2)	Dr. R. L. Stjernholm (2)
Dr. Robert Guyton	Dr. Irwin Marcus	Michael D. Stoeher
Del Hall	Dr. Kathleen McMahan	Leslie S. Stokes
Donna Hamsher	Mr. and Mrs. Julian Meister	Gina A. Stewart
Susan Hanemann (2)	Sandra Miller	Adrian Suarez
Deborah Harkins (2)	Dr. Monica L. Monica	Mr. and Mrs. Mike Sutton
Mr. and Mrs. Tom Harris	Karen Ann Bechel Moore	Stephen Swain
Mrs. Joseph Haspel Jr.	Waldemar S. Nelson (2)	James W. Swenson (2)
Mr. and Mrs. Paul Hassell	Betty Sue Nemec	Lauren Swinney
Harold J. Haydel	Michael Newell (2)	Denise Sypsteyn
Greather Heathcock	Gail Noel	Dr. Saroj Tampira
and Son Inc.	Neil Nolan	Marylynn Thomas
William D. Hebeisen	Dee Nunez	Redding W. Thomas
T. M. Hendrix Jr. (2)	Francis deT. Oddo	Bill R. Tillet
Mr. and Mrs. Numa C. Hero Jr.	Mr. and Mrs. Richard O'Krepki	Isabel Touns
Louise C. Hiers	Sarah Lee O'Neil	Dr. and Mrs. Joseph S. Trapani
Angela Hill	Judy Connor Palmer	Lillian Trent-Cohen
Ginger Hitt	Mrs. M. N. Pergament	Sandra Trout
Mr. and Mrs. Warum Holbrook	Inez Phillips	Mrs. A. J. Valentino
Jules Hubert	Mary Lee Pittman	Mr. and Mrs. Robert Valkovick
Leon Impastato	Mrs. Leon A. Pradel	Dr. Kim E. Van Geffen
Dr. Bernard Jaffe	Dr. Michael S. Prejean	Mr. and Mrs. John Van Vranken
Tommye H. James	Dr. William Procell (3)	Barbara Dykes Vaughn
Melvin Jones (2)	Sally Quinlan	Frank Vonderhaar Jr.
John Kelly	Dr. and Mrs. Ronald Rabin	Mary Ellen Wade
Dr. and Mrs. Wright Kemmerly	Brucie Rafferty	Mr. and Mrs. Wesley Wahlig
Mrs. Morris Klinger	Irma Reinike	Mr. and Mrs. Nathan Wallfisch
Dorothy Kokoshis.	W. Hardy Richardson II (2)	Boyd T. Westbrook
Ted A. Kraft Jr.	Barbara Richmond	Mr. and Mrs. Robert Whitmore
Mr. and Mrs. Fred Krass Jr.	Warren Ringham	Bob Whittington
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph J. Krebs Jr.	Daniel Robson	Bruce Wiley
Mrs. Robert F. Krejeu	Juan Rodriguez	Michael Wilkinson (2)
Mr. and Mrs. John P. Labouisse	Mrs. Dennis Rosenberg	Joseph Vita Windhorst
Victor C. Leglise Jr.	Dr. and Mrs. John Salvaggio	Annette Wood
Rosemary Lamousin	Martha Ann Samuel	Jack Wood
Patricia Lanson	Sarah L. Schrieber	Mr. and Mrs. Paul Wood
Jane Lawton	Delores Schwilling	William D. Workman
Jean Mae T. Leon	Mr. and Mrs. Mackie E. Shilstone	Ida Zachary
Theresa Lufostansky	Fred Shulman (2)	Vivian Zeltman
Florence Lyons	Dr. and Mrs. Mark Silady	
James C. Marks (2)	George Simino (2)	
Mr. and Mrs. John C. Martin	Laura Sitges	
M. Vivian Martinez	Mrs. Evald Skau	
Michael Mays		
Betty MacConnell		

Patron memberships received after October 1996, will be included in next program.



THE CAST

MARC E. BELLONI (Ira Stone) - Over the past 15 years, Marc has performed in theatres all over New Orleans, including the Beverly Dinner Theatre, CAC, Rivertown Repertory, Movie Pitchers, Toulouse Theatre, Loyola University (where he received a B.A. in drama), the True Brew Theatre and tonight marks his debut on the Le Petit stage. Marc's credits include *Pseudolus* in *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, *Closer Than Ever*, *Wonder Years*, *Search and Destroy*, *Love Letters*, *Where the Girls Were*, and *Saints for a Day*. Besides a career as a lawyer, Marc sings and plays rhythm guitar with local alternative rock band, CL10, and folk-rock duet, White Toast Dry. If you're ever driving down Tchoupitoulas, check out his 90 ft. mural on the corner of Celeste Street.

BUTCH BENIT (Milt Fields) - Mr. Benit is making his first appearance in a play at Le Petit in over thirty years. "They must have liked me because they asked me back," he says. Butch was last seen as the Frenchman Val du Val in Rivertown Repertory's production of *Little Me*. He has done shows at almost every theatre in the area, winning both the Big Easy and Storer Boone Awards as Best Actor of the Year for his portrayal as John Barrymore in the Bayou Theatre's production of *I Hate Hamlet*. However, he may be best remembered as co-creator, head writer, and member of the original cast of the satirical revue *Nobody Likes A Smart Ass* which was a fixture on Bourbon Street for 17 years. Butch has worked as a stand-up comic nationally including Las Vegas and Los Angeles and has appeared in featured roles in over a dozen movies. He is also the recipient of the Mayoralty Certificate of Merit in New Orleans as well as the Key to the City and is an answer in the New Orleans Trivial Pursuit Game.

JAN CHAMBERLAIN (Carol Wyman) - Jan (a.k.a. Chimento) is thrilled to be on Le Petit's stage for the first time — and to be working with such a brilliant cast, crew, and director at that! Jan was last seen in the original cast of the award winning comedy ...*And the Ball and All* as Verna and her "summa furs". By day she still "acts" as a sales rep for Medical Specialties. This one's for you Matt!

LEON CONTAVESPRIE (Lucas Brickman) - This is Leon's second show at Le Petit. He was last seen as the young actor in *The Woman in Black* and more recently he appeared in *George M!* at Rivertown Repertory. A few of his favorite roles include *Love Letters*, *Noises Off*, *The Musical Comedy Murders of 1940*, *American Sunset*, and *Lone Star*. Special thanks to Keith and Kat; and he dedicates this performance to his grandfather, the late "Tony" Contavesprie.

GARTH CURRIE (Kenny Franks) - *Laughter...* marks Garth's debut at Le Petit. He appeared as the waiter in *The Edible Complex* by Lisa Stansky in Drama

Rama '95 and held the title role in *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* with the Dog and Pony Theatre Company. Other roles on his resume include Hamm in Beckett's *Endgame*, Warwick in *The Lark* by Jean Anhouille, and Essex in Maxwell Anderson's *Elizabeth, The Queen*. Originally from Gulfport, MS, Garth works in film and video production and has resided in New Orleans since October '87.

ROY DUMONT (Val Skolsky) - Mr. Dumont is happy to be back at Le Petit on their Big 80th year, and to be reunited with Keith again since *Inherit the Wind* at Rivertown Repertory. It is impossible to call this work, being with the finest writing staff and crew - Let's Enjoy!

LAURA NORTH (Helen) - Ms. North makes her New Orleans debut on Le Petit's Mainstage, honored to be a part of it's 80th season. Hailing from Sarasota, Florida, Laura acknowledges the variety of opportunities available here for performing artists. Theme park experience includes the Disney/MGM Studios in Orlando, Universal Studios in Hollywood, CA, and Hersheypark in Hershey, PA. Laura admits to have paid several dues in the course of having performed in a Children's Musical Theatre Tour... yet, she perseveres, knowing that if your legs don't hurt by the time you've climbed your way to the top - perhaps you don't deserve to be there at all.

ROBERT PAVLOVICH (Max Prince) - Mr. Pavlovich feels fortunate to have played a number of wonderful roles in the past year including Petruchio in the Dog and Pony Theatre Company's Shakespeare in the Park Production of *Taming of the Shrew*, Oscar in *The Little Foxes*, Bradley in *4 Dogs & A Bone* at Southern Rep, and Lenny in Conner & Associates' production of *Of Mice and Men* at J.P.A.S. Bob received the 1994 Big Easy Award for Best Actor in a Drama for his multiple roles in Dog & Pony's production of *Search and Destroy*. He also received the 1995 Big Easy Award for Best Actor in *Search and Destroy*. He also received the 1995 Big Easy Award in a Drama for his portrayal of Lenny in *Of Mice and Men*. His peers honored him with the 1994 Storer Boone Award for Best Supporting Actor for *Search and Destroy* and the 1995 Storer Boone Award for Best Actor in a Drama for *Of Mice and Men*. Bob is a board member of The American Federation of Television and Radio Artists-New Orleans and an Equity Membership Candidate. He is the proud father of two fine boys, Bobby and Brett. Bob also thanks his wife, Diane Lala, for her understanding, support and love —just three of the many ingredients found in the crazy life they share.

MICHAEL SULLIVAN (Brian Doyle) - Mr. Sullivan is thrilled to be making his debut at Le Petit in such a great show. Michael has most recently been seen as the butler in Masquerade Production's *The Philadelphia Story*. Favorite roles include Mr. DePinna in *You Can't Take It With You* and Mr. Martin in *Hotel Paradiso* (both at Rivertown Repertory Theatre) and Camille in *A Flea in Her Ear* at Starcastle Dinner Theatre. Michael can also currently be heard as the

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Laughter on the 23rd Floor was the first presented by Emanuel Azenberg at Duke University's R. J. Reynolds Industries Theatre in Durham, North Carolina, on October 19, 1993, and subsequently opened in New York City on November 22, 1993. Since 1960, a New York season without a NEIL SIMON comedy or musical has been a rare one. His first play was *Come Blow Your Horn*, followed by the musical *Little Me*. During the 1966-67 season, *Barefoot in the Park*, *The Odd Couple*, *Sweet Charity*, and *The Star Spangled Girl* were all running simultaneously; in the 1970-1971 season, Broadway theatre goers had their choice of *Plaza Suite*, *Last of the Red Hot Lovers*, and *Promises, Promises*. Next came *The Gingerbread Lady*, *The Prisoner of Second Avenue*, *The Sunshine Boys*, *The Good Doctor*, *God's Favorite*, *California Suite*, *Chapter Two*, *They're Playing Our Song*, *I Ought to Be in Pictures*, *Fools*, a revival of *Little Me*, the trilogy comprised of *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, *Biloxi Blues* (which won the Tony Award for Best Play), and *Broadway Bound*, the female version of *The Odd Couple*, and *Rumors*.

Lost in Yonkers, which won both the Tony Award for Best Play and the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1991, was followed by *Jake's Women*, the musical version of *The Goodbye Girl*, and *Laughter on the 23rd Floor*. Neil Simon began his writing career in television, working for The Phil Silvers Show and Sid Caesar's *Your Show of Shows*. He has also written adaptations of his own work for the screen: *Barefoot in the Park*, *The Odd Couple*, *Plaza Suite*, *Last of the Red Hot Lovers*, *The Prisoner of Second Avenue*, *The Sunshine Boys*, *California Suite*, *Chapter Two*, *I Ought To Be in Pictures*, *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, *Biloxi Blues*, and *Lost in Yonkers*. His other screenplays include *After the Fox*, *The Out-of-Towners*, *The Heartbreak Kid*, *Murder by Death*, *The Goodbye Girl*, *The Cheap Detective*, *Seems Like Old Times*, *Only When I Laugh*, and *Max Dugan Returns*.

ABOUT LAUGHTER ON THE 23RD FLOOR

From America's favorite playwright, *Laughter on the 23rd Floor* is a "screamingly funny" (Philadelphia Inquirer) Broadway hit about a team of comedy writers in television's Golden Age.

Set in 1953, neil Simon's "flat-out funniest play in years" (Dennis Cunningham, CBS-TV) re-creates the mayhem, neuroses, nonstop gags, and constant one-upmanship of a team of brilliantly funny social misfits as they write The Max Prince Show, a weekly variety program. Among the crew are Milt, played by Butch Benit, the insult artist; Ira, played by Marc Belloni, the hypochondriac whose dream is to have a virus named after him; and Val played by Roy Dumont, a Russian emigre who takes a Berlitz course so he can curse without an accent. They are devoted to their boss, Max, played by Bob Pavlovich, a comic genius, a tyrant, and a paranoiac with a heart of gold. But his penchant for tipping and popping too many pills is growing under the pressures of a rising McCarthyism, network executives, and sponsors who want him to cut back his "too-smart" show and staff so that they can chase after the *Leave It To Beaver* and *Father Knows Best* audience.

Broadway's funniest playwright writing about a team of comedy writers? It's no wonder *Laughter on the 23rd Floor* is "the funniest comedy on Broadway in years" (Variety).

CHECK OUT OUR 1996-97 SEASON

A Christmas Carol December 5-15

Director - Lyla Hay Owen

The Importance of Being Ernest ... January 10-26

Director - Stocker Fontelleu

She Loves Me February 28 - March 16

Director - Keith Briggs

The Sound of Music April 25 - May 11

Director - Brandt Blocker

Barnum June 13 - 29

Director - Sonny Borey

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STAFF BIOS

KEITH BRIGGS (Director/Scenic Designer) - Keith Briggs returns to Le Petit this season with two productions, tonight's *Laughter on the 23rd Floor*, and the local premier of the musical *She Loves Me*. At Le Petit he has directed last season's award-winning *The Heiress*, as well as *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *It's Only a Play*. He has directed many productions locally at Rivertown Repertory, the CAC, The University of New Orleans, and many others. He is the recipient of two "Big Easy" awards and the Storer Boone award. His experience also includes numerous productions in the Greenwich/Westport, Connecticut area. A graduate of Tulane and UNO, Keith holds an MA and MFA in theatrical direction.

DANIEL ZIMMER (Lighting Designer) - Mr. Zimmer received his formal training at New York's Studio and Forum of Stage Design and has designed numerous productions in both New Orleans and New York. He earned the NOSJ Award for Lighting Designer of the year in 1992, and the Storer Boone Award for Lighting Designer of the year in 1993.

KELLIE L. GRENGS (Costume Designer) - Kellie is an M.F.A. graduate from Tulane University where she studied Costume Design. Her undergraduate work at the University of Wisconsin - STOUT was a B.S. in Apparel Design. She has designed for Tulane Summer Lyric Theatre and Le Petit in the past and is currently working on costume designs for the entertainment and casino industries.

BILL WALKER (Technical Director) - This is Mr. Walker's third production at Le Petit, and first as just TD. (Sigh of relief!) He has enjoyed the opportunity to work with Keith Briggs and company for the first time. When away from the theatre, Bill enjoys playing drums for the alternative rock band, CL10, with the multi-talented Marc Belloni (Ira).

AMY EMBRY (Resident Stage Manager) - This is Amy's third season at Le Petit as Resident Stage Manager. Amy has stage managed at many local theatres as well as in California, with the likes of Bob Newhart and Jack Kemp. Her production credits at Le Petit include the recent smash hit *Sophisticated Ladies*, *They're Playing Our Song*, *The Sisters Rosenweig*, *The Woman in Black*, and *Into The Woods* at Slidell Little Theatre. As a choreographer, Amy has staged such shows as *Nunsense*, *Nunsense II*, *A...My Name Is Still Alice*, and *Assassins* and was recently nominated for the Storer Boone Award for her work in *Jesus Christ Superstar*. Last season, Amy received the Teddy's Corner Award for excellence in Children's theatre.

KATHY RIESS (Stage Manager) - *Laughter...* marks Kathy's sixth show with Keith and her second show at Le Petit. As an actor, Ms. Riess was last seen on stage as Blanche in *Brighton Beach Memoirs*. Recently, Kathy was honored with the 1996 Storer Boone Award for Best Stage Manager. She is ecstatic to be working with Keith, Shava, Amy, and Dan again, and to finally be working with "mon prince aux yeux marron".

SHAVA CHRISTINA (Assistant Stage Manager) - This show marks Shava's second production at Le Petit. Shava's most recent production was as Assistant Stage Manager for *George M!*. He is thrilled to be back at Le Petit with Keith, Kat and the

A BRIEF HISTORY OF LE PETIT THEATRE

This 75-year-old community theatre, Le Petit Theatre du Vieux Carre, had its inception back in 1916, when a group of amateur theatre-lovers began putting on plays in the drawing room of one of the members.

The enthusiastic audiences of The Drawing Room Players, as they called themselves, soon grew to the point where a larger space was needed, so the founders decided to rent space in the lower Pontalba Building—for the sum of \$17.50 per month! When the quarters were ready, a christening was held, and "Le Petit Theatre du Vieux Carre" was inaugurated. Lord Dunsany, the eminent Irish playwright, visiting the city, formally launched the new playhouse with his commendation and good wishes.

Success and a growing audience soon made it clear that even larger quarters were needed, and the present site at the corner of St. Peter and Chartres Streets was purchased, under the guidance of Harold W. Newman, Sr., the Chairman of the Board. Three small shed-like buildings facing St. Peter St. were removed and the present theatre building was constructed in 1922. Noted architect Richard Koch designed it, in authentic Spanish Colonial style.

The original corner building was designed in 1789 by Gilberto Guillemard and built in 1794 by Jean Baptiste Orso, a wealthy citizen of New Orleans. The original building was destroyed in the great fire of 1794 and was rebuilt in 1797 for the last Spanish governor of Louisiana, Don Manuel Gayoso de Lemos.

After the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the corner building passed through many hands until the mid-19th century, when it became a bar called "Le Veau Qui Tete." As the French Quarter declined into a slum, the building fell into disrepair and remained so until its acquisition by the theatre group, an important component of the "urban pioneers" of the 1920's who revived the French Quarter by making it a center for the arts.

Many prominent Orleanians were in the founding group: civic leaders, educators, writers, businessmen; the famous New Orleans names appearing in the early programs are too many to enumerate. But three should be mentioned—the three "fairy god-mothers" who started it all: Louise (Mrs. J. Oscar) Nixon, the "mother" of the group; Helen Pitkin (Mrs. Christian) Schertz; and Rhea Loeb (Mrs. Abraham) Goldberg (later Mrs. Eberhard Deutsch), in whose house at 1527 Seventh Street the Drawing Room Players first performed.

The building complex holds a fully professionally equipped theatre seating 460. The corner building, reconstructed in 1963, holds reception rooms, offices, dressing rooms, and a Children's Corner theatre with a capacity of more than 120.

The theatre is supervised by a Board of Governors, with productions staged by a professional staff. All the performers are volunteers, in accordance with the charter designating it a community theatre, though many are professionals in music, dance, TV or other performing arts. Auditions are open to all.

During its 75 years of operation, Le Petit Théâtre du Vieux Carré has been recognized as one of the leading "little" or community theatres in the nation.

"Le Petit Théâtre is not just good community theatre —it is magnificent community theatre."

HELEN HAYES



Corner building as it appeared when Le Petit purchased it for their expanded theatrical use.
Photo was made by famous French Quarter photographer Edmund Mugnier.

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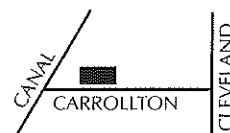
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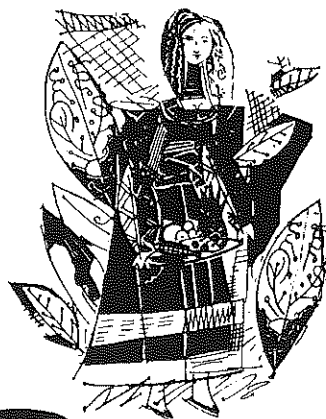
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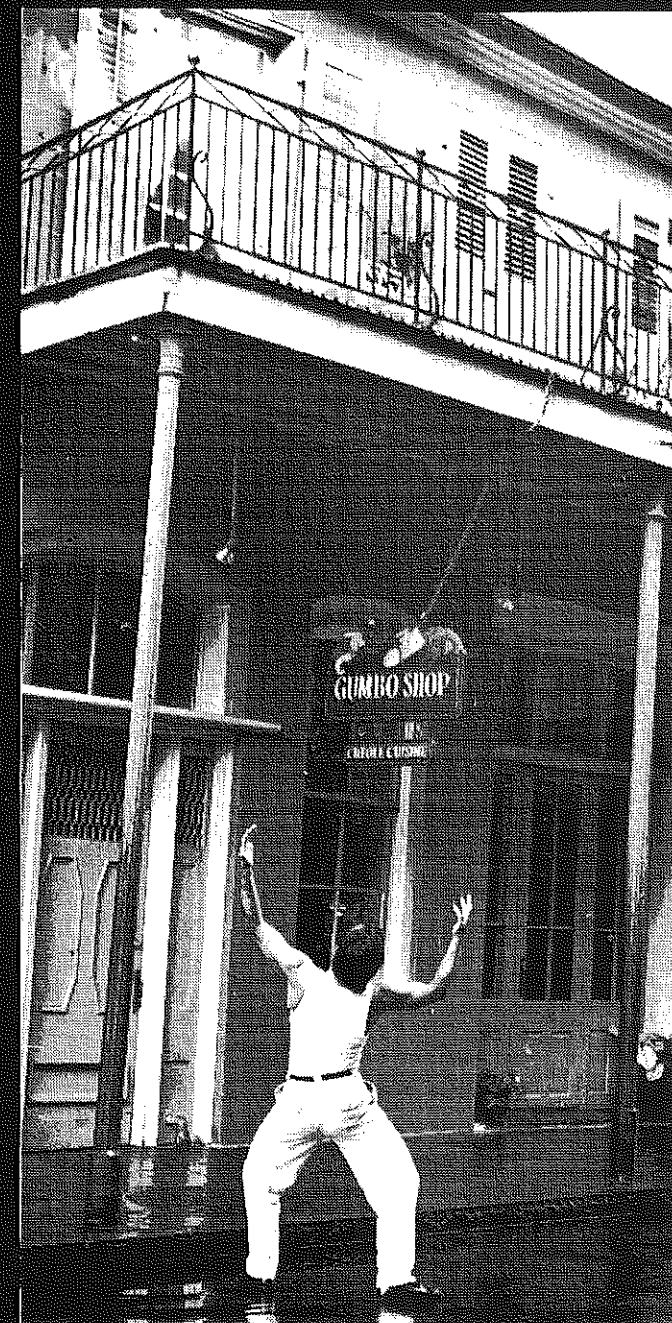
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