

# AMERICAN THEATRE

DECEMBER 2003

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In the Fast Lane

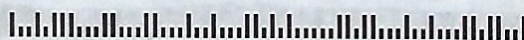
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Robin Miles and  
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Manhattan Theatre Club's  
*The Violet Hour*

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A new technique for improvising performances with scripted and memorized lines

# BOOK ON ACTING Improvisation Technique

for the Professional Actor  
in Film, Theater & Television

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## IF IT LOOKS AND WALKS LIKE A DOC

**New York City:** Everything's coming up roses for **Ghost Light Films** and **Thirteen/WNET New York**. The duo are three-quarters into the film shooting of one of its grandest projects to date. It's a six-part, six-hour television series, "Broadway: The American Musical," that, its creator **Michael Kantor** says, promises to do for Broadway what documentary filmmaker **Ken Burns** did for baseball and jazz. "There's never been an ambitious attempt to explore the history of Broadway," Kantor says. "There are CDs and books about it, but I think it's important for people to understand why the musical has become the barometer of American culture—why as an art form it reflects our willful optimism."

Kantor, who has filmed documentaries on **Charles Lindbergh**, **Margaret Sanger**, **Arthur Miller** and **David Mamet**, began the film project in Dec. 1996 when he interviewed the late **Al Hirschfeld**. Kantor went on to round up the usual (Broadway) suspects (**Hal Prince**, **Stephen Sondheim**, **Harvey Fierstein**) and charted up the late **Adolph Green**, **Brendan Gill**, **Walter Matthau**, Ziegfeld girl **Dana O'Connell** and **Frances Gershwin Godowsky**. The multimillion-dollar film, which is half the size of a Ken Burns doc, will be accompanied by a companion book, co-authored by Kantor and New York University professor **Laurence Maslon**, and may include a set of companion CD albums.



PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

**No gossip: Ethel Waters in 1933's *As Thousands Cheer*.**

"There have been so many celebrations of Broadway," Kantor adds, "so this film is more a contextual chronicle of the last 100 years. There will be no gossip, categorically. It's meant to be educational and entertaining. We dug up previously unseen clips and tell stories that have never been told. And we're following the creation of **Wicked**, the new musical by **Stephen Schwartz** and **Winnie Holzman**. What most people don't know is that Broadway invented the culture of celebrity."

## QUEER EYE ON THE GOSPELS

**Madison, Wis.:** What's a revelation to some is blasphemy to others, proves the continuing controversy over **Terrence McNally's *Corpus Christi***. Since its 1998 premiere, the play, about a gay Jesus figure, has galvanized Christian groups to protest productions across the country. The latest commotion is roiling Madison, where **StageQ** will perform the show at the Bartell Theatre in March. The Pennsylvania-based

American Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family and Property—which protested a Grand Rapids, Mich., production last January and a Cincinnati, Ohio, production in June—blanketed the Bartell and the Madison mayor's office with outraged postcards and plans to picket the show in the spring.

According to the organization's director **Robert Ritchie**, **Corpus Christi** "insults the sacred person of Jesus Christ as perfect. He could not have been homosexual, since homosexuality is a deviance and against nature." But for StageQ artistic director **Tom McClurg**, the characterization of Jesus in the play is very much in line with his representation in the Gospels. McClurg defends his decision to produce the play: "The play reminds us that in our spiritual quest we are humans aspiring for divinity, and that's a universal religious message."

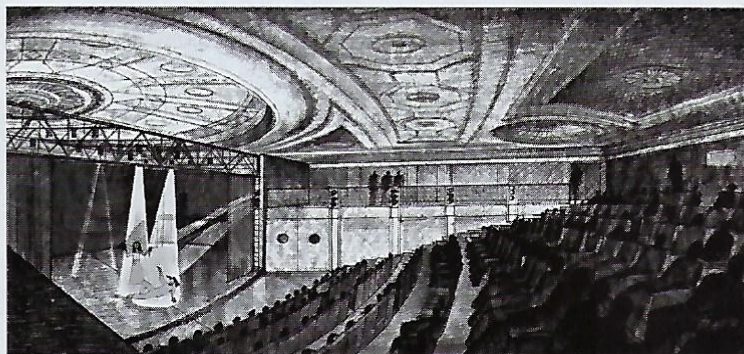
## BARD BANTER

**New York City:** To paraphrase Portia in ***The Merchant of Venice***, the quality of conversation is not strained in the **Shakespeare Guild's** **Speaking of Shakespeare** series, presented at New York City's **National Arts Club** in association with the English-Speaking Union. For the one-on-one chats, which this fall featured actors **Richard Easton** and **Dana Ivey** as well as playwright **Sir Peter Shaffer**, Guild president **John F. Andrews** interviews the evening's guest, who then takes questions from the audience.



On Dec. 15, Andrews will talk with actress **Marian Seldes** about her 20 years at the Juilliard School, her acting relationship with **Brian Murray**, and her **Shakespeare** and **Albee** roles. The following month the Guild welcomes director **Julie Taymor** and composer **Elliot Goldenthal** to the National Arts Club. Andrews anticipates discussing Taymor's film *Titus* and her Theatre for a New Audience production of *The Tempest*. In February, a few months after his performance as Falstaff in the Lincoln Center Theater production of *Henry IV*, Sir John Gielgud Award-winner **Kevin Kline** is slated for a tête-à-tête with Andrews.

**CONSTRUCTION CHIC**  
**Washington, D.C., and California:** Two ambitious capital campaigns are underway in our nation's capital. Washington, D.C.'s largest not-for-profit theatre, **Arena Stage**, plans to double its square footage with a renovation of its Southwest waterfront location. The company has set a fiscal goal of \$100 million and a construction start-date of fall 2005, and has retained Canadian architect **Bing Thom**, who designed a terrace with a dramatic 150-foot cantilevered roof. The Arena plans to add a third venue, the 200-seat Cradle, while updating the Fichandler



Capital ambitions: above, GALA Hispanic Theatre's plans for the Tivoli Theater.

Stage and Kreeger Theater. In Columbia Heights, **GALA Hispanic Theatre** will construct a 250-seat performance space in the historic Tivoli Theater. With actress **Rita Moreno** as honorary chair of the campaign team, GALA hopes to raise \$3.2 million and open the new

space, designed by architectural firm **SmithGroup**, in late 2004.

California dreams came true for Carmel's **Sunset Center Theater** and the state capital's **Sacramento Theatre Company**. At a cost of over \$21 million, the Sunset Theater (on the

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# theatre

**Recent Alumni**  
**Leigh Spofford** (2002)  
 Acting in the movie  
*Kinsey* with Liam  
 Neeson, Laura Linney,  
 and Bill Condon



**Marin Ireland** (1999)  
 Currently in *Savannah Bay* at the Classic Stage  
 Company in NYC



**Richard Barth** (2003)  
 Currently on the  
 national tour of  
*Miss Saigon* in the  
 ensemble and as the  
 understudy for the  
 role of Chris



### Audition Dates

New York City	Jan. 31 & Feb. 1
Chicago	Feb. 2, 3, & 4
Las Vegas	Feb. 5 & 8
The Hartt School	Dec. 6, Jan. 30, Feb. 20 & 21

Contact:  
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