

The Observer

From the Files of Project Quantum Leap

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Donna Overhauls Our Website

Please take a look at the fantastic new look at <www.projectquantumleap.com> that Donna has created. Light and airy, easy to navigate and order from, it includes a new Shopping Cart that accepts PAYPAL, ready to use for renewals and back issues. We've even made the complete Index—including color covers—available to save on your computer as a handy reference. Of course you will always find the latest news, including a page just for snippets of all of the wonderful reviews that *Shenandoah* garnered.

Thanks Donna. We're glad to have you back.

The New Adventures of Old Christine

Back in his hometown of St. Louis, Missouri, Scott was in the announcer's booth at the August 6 Cardinals' game and mentioned that he will be appearing in a couple of episodes of the new season of *The New Adventures with Old Christine*, starring Julia Louis Dreyfuss. Leapers might remember Kari Lizer, one of the executive producers on the show, as having played Tess in *QL*'s first season episode, "How the Tess Was Won."

The sitcom is taped before a live audience, and enthusiastic Scott-fans quickly lined up for tickets. For those of us unable to attend the tapings, we're simply looking forward to seeing Scott on the small screen once again. Check our website for airdates.

SCOTT AT LAS VEGAS STAR TREK CONVENTION

From August 16 to 20, Las Vegas truly became the site of a Star Trek experience. Creation Entertainment celebrated the 40th Anniversary of Star Trek by what must have been one of the largest conventions ever attempted. Over the five day period, over 10,000 attendees gathered to party and meet friends, buy merchandise, and of course, see four Star Trek Captains take the stage. (Patrick Stewart had other obligations.)

This was the first Star Trek convention for Scott and when he appeared onstage on Sunday, August 20 he was welcomed with a standing ovation. After his opening remarks, Scott immediately began taking questions. He talked about *Enterprise* and working with Dean again, his voiceover work for the Star Trek *Legacy* videogame due out in October, and his past and future projects—especially *Shenandoah* and his guest role on *The New Adventures of Old Christine*, which had just begun taping.

Startrek.com has a complete two-part write-up of Scott's appearance. You can see photos and read the account at <www.startrek.com/startrek/view/news/article/22935.html>. If you'd rather not bother with all that typing, just go to <www.projectquantumleap.com> where Donna has provided us with links, plus her own personal report.

DON IS A 'MOST WANTED' MAN

• **NCIS** Executive producer Don Bellisario is a wanted man—at



TV Guide (July 24, 2006) revealed an on-set secret, namely that "Don Bellisario is a wanted man—...his photo hangs in the squad room as part of *NCIS*' Most Wanted."

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AN INTERVIEW WITH JAMES WHITMORE, JR.

By Sharon Major

April 22, 2006

Screen captures by Maret Johnson

James Whitmore, Jr. is an accomplished actor, director and family man who has been extremely busy but generously gave PQL a telephone interview earlier this year. Not only has James appeared in several *Quantum Leap* episodes (8½ Months; Trilogy, Part 1; Mirror Image), he has become a much-sought-after director for one-hour dramas. His résumé includes sixteen hours of *QL*, a *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* episode, two *Star Trek: Enterprise* episodes (Acquisition; Future Tense), and numerous episodes of Don Bellisario's other shows, including *Magnum, P.I.*, *JAG* and *NCIS*. Having worked on many other tv series, both acting and directing, his most recent television credits include directing for *Cold Case*, *Bones*, *CSI:NY* and *NCIS*.

Sharon: It's taken us a month or so to finally arrange this call. Does a director ever have a hiatus?

James: The last few years have been pretty busy because they have been doing a lot of cable shows in the off-season. If I wanted to, I could work pretty much straight through, and I have. Up until last year, I (usually) took a month off. But this year I'm taking a couple of months off. I'm going to go out and act in a play with my dad in June and July. Last year we did *Inherit the Wind* together at the Peterborough Players which is a theatre in New Hampshire where my mother and father met and fell in love in 1947. I was born a year later.



James, Jr. and Sr. in *Inherit the Wind* in 2005

Photo courtesy of Peterborough Players

This year we are going to do *Tuesdays with Morrie* together. I get a chance to be with my dad and work with him, hang out in beautiful surroundings and it's going to be cool. It is one of a few really classical summer stock theaters. It's an old barn, they've fixed it up (inside) to be very modern, and it's a wonderful place. The show opens June 18 and goes thru mid-July.

Sharon: It does sound wonderful. We know that the average shoot for a one-hour tv show is about eight working days. How much in advance do you usually get a script?

James: In a show like *Quantum Leap*, the scripts were in gestation when I arrived to prep. If there was a script, it was pretty certain it was going to change a lot before shooting started. I usually show up about eight days before filming begins to start prepping: scouting locations, casting and to work with the art department. With *Quantum*, every week was a different movie with a different time period, so there was a lot of work to be done.

Sharon: With *QL* you got to know the characters pretty well, but sometimes you're asked to do a show—such as *Bones*—and not be familiar with the show. How much do you rely on the cast members themselves for character development, or do you go by what is strictly written on the page?

James: What I do with a new show, I ask the (production) guys for some film—something representative of the show. I look at it, digest it and take the script they give me. It's sort of meditative—letting it sink in and take form within—from all of the input.

A lot of time the pilot is one thing but the show becomes something else. If they didn't quite get it with the pilot, but they're starting to get it now that the shows are shooting, they'll show me the episodes they like and feel are representative. I take that and go on the set.

Then there is the delicate element of the actors. Actors are notoriously fragile creatures and I have to find a way to get what is needed from them, without blowing them out of the water.

Sharon: As an actor, are you fragile too?

James: Not really anymore. When I was young, I was very aggressive because I was insecure. The theater is different because you have time to rehearse and get to know everybody, but on a tv show, you walk on the set like a visitor. When I walked into a show or a film, I would sort of stomp my feet and the first scene I would do would be with all horns blaring. Everyone would sort of back off, and I would be sort of at home. I wasn't subtle about my arrival.

Sharon: How much input do you have in post-production?

James: As much as I want really. The guys I work for pretty much nowadays—especially since I've been around for a few years—are guys I've known and worked with over the years in some capacity or another.

The problem is that I'm so busy going on to something else, that I usually get a couple of passes at my cut and I turn it over to those guys and let them run with it. I defer to the producers to finish the product. Generally at this point what I give them stays pretty much the same when it's finished.

There isn't any show now that doesn't get better with the work the post-people do on it. But there was a time in the old days when I worked for Stephen Cannell and I would give them a good show, and they would change it and it wouldn't be as good—in my

opinion. In their opinion of course, it was better. But in my opinion, it wasn't.

Nowadays, I'm amazed at what they do in post and how they sweeten shows and make them better. There is an energy and intelligence to most of these guys that's quite extraordinary and the shows get better.

But to answer your question, I can have as much input as I want, but I end up going off to do something else and defer to the people I'm working for.

Sharon: Does the director end up deciding on the shooting schedule?

James: Yes, along with my first assistant director, definitely. There is a lot of input from the unit manager and line producer, especially on these shows nowadays, which are so big.

And the shows are getting bigger and bigger. When I first was acting in tv series in the old days like *The Rockford Files* and *Baa, Baa Black Sheep*, we had six-day schedules. Somewhere along the line, they turned into seven-day schedules for an hour tv show, then it became eight-day schedules. They basically wanted to shoot more and more and get more stuff in the movie and it starts slipping over into seven or eight days. The schedules are now (generally) eight days.

But what we are doing now is we're slipping over into nine days, slipping over into ten days. We're slipping over into second units almost every show I do—*NCIS*, it's true of *Bones*, *Cold Case*, but not as often—I end up having a second unit day or a splitter-unit day, which is a bookkeeping phrase that allows them to save a little money. But shows are taking nine or ten days at least.

I did a *CSI:NY* that was an eight-day show, which became a nine-day show. It was the first nine-day show they had done since the show started.

Sharon: I guess I'm not too sure of what "second unit" means; does that arise because there is an A-plot and a separate B-plot?

James: No, it's due to the way they want to handle it. They want so much coverage. They want a cut every couple of seconds, like a rock video. They don't trust the audience to sit and look at a shot and understand the story.

Sharon: When I saw "second unit" in the credits, I thought it meant there were two units filming at the same time.

James: No, the second unit is a dishonest way of saying that you continue shooting the show for two more days. While the new director starts his episode, the first director is out shooting with another group with whatever is left over.

Sharon: So there aren't actually two units going at the same time for one episode?

James: No, and it's much better that way. Because of scheduling problems I've had to leave some work over to other directors to do for me. They are great guys, but you'd rather finish your own show.

Sharon: I've had a burning question for a very long time. Since the director has some discretion over the shooting schedule, I wonder why it is that I've frequently heard actors say that they are

placed in love scenes together, sometimes without even having had the opportunity to get acquainted first. This isn't just from *QL*—although it did happen there—but I've also heard this from movie stars. So why are the love scenes scheduled first?

James: It's not intentional. For some weird quirk of fate, a lot of time you end up shooting the end of the movie first. It can become a scheduling situation where you can't get into a location at a certain time, or the actors aren't available at a certain time. There are a lot of things that go into scheduling a picture and quite often, nowadays, we try awfully hard not to do it this way.

The most fun I ever had as an actor was on a picture, *The Boys of Company C*. We shot in the Philippines and we shot the movie in continuity. So from the first moment of the film to the last moment, it was shot in continuity. (From the actor's standpoint) it was the perfect way to shoot a picture.

One of the reasons you don't want to do that is because you don't want to have to go back to a location three or four times. So when you are there, you have to shoot all of the scenes in that location. What happens—as crazy as it is—sometimes it works out that the most important scene or the most intimate scene—the culmination of a relationship that hasn't even been experienced yet, would be shot first.

Sharon: Has this happened to you as an actor?

James: Oh yeah.

Sharon: (teasing) Did you question it at the time?

James: Sure, but part of the job is grumbling, you know. It is just the way it goes. You're just glad to be there.

Sharon: You've directed sixteen hours of *QL* and most are my favorites. Do you have any favorites?



James as Sam's father in "8½ Months"

James: The final episode [Mirror Image]. I loved that episode. I loved the Lee Harvey Oswald episode and the one where Scott was the pregnant girl and I played his dad. I loved the three-parter we did—the crazy Louisiana three-parter. [Trilogy]

Sharon: Was that actually filmed as three episodes or was it more like a mini-series?

James: No, I think we shot those as three different episodes. If you shoot the different parts together, you end up paying actors for a long spread of time. This is another consideration in scheduling. You don't want to carry the actors longer than you absolutely have to, because they make money. As an actor, you want to get one of those jobs where you don't act again for four weeks and get paid for all the time in between.

I think we may have shot each of those episodes relatively separately with a little bit of overlap between the two that bumped up together.

Sharon: Scott and Dean have a reputation for some practical jokes. Do you recall anything in particular or some other funny anecdote?

James: Not that I remember. They were fantastic guys. We did so many crazy things on that show.

Sharon: How about working on musical episodes, like "Piano Man" and "Memphis Melody"? Does working on a musical entail other challenges or aspects not encountered on episodes where background music is added afterward?

James: Musical episodes are the most exquisite of all. To participate in the pre-recording of the music, and figure out your instrumentation, as was the case in the Elvis picture. This is what I personally live for. The energy on the set is so different for a musical. To make only musicals would be a dream come true.



"Memphis Melody"

Sharon: Directors are usually known for a particular style or genre, whether it be action, suspense, comedy, drama or a certain time period. But your credits include just about everything, and your work cannot really be categorized. What do you think producers are looking for when they offer you a script?

James: They want a guy who has some experience and some energy, and a passion about what he does. I've been really lucky.

I was the same as an actor; I've had a chance to play a lot of different kinds of parts. In the beginning all I shot were guys crashing cars, shooting each other with guns, and then all of a sudden—a few years later, I was working for Warner Bros. doing *Dawson's Creek* and some of that stuff. People started saying, "Jim can't do action." I like doing action! It's a weird town. Everyday there is a new 14-year-old kid who takes over the business and they don't remember a lot of stuff, so that's a bit of a problem if you've been around for a while. I love doing ALL the

different kinds of stuff like *Cold Case* to *Bones*—which are completely different universes, and both of them are fun.

Sharon: How about your *Enterprise* episode "Acquisition?" That was hilarious.

James: That was the one with the Ferengi. I thought that was funnier than hell too. It was so much fun to do. They just hired me and I loved working with those guys. Comedy is probably the most fun of all. I did a two-hour movie a few years ago—the first *Rockford Files* movie. [*I Love L.A.*] When I shot that movie, it was the most fun as I've ever had in this business as a director. I was laughing every night as I was driving home.

Sharon: You've said that you never read a tv script before accepting a job, so I guess you have never turned any down.

James: No, I never really have.

Sharon: Is that because you are always familiar with the people working on the show?

James: I've taken a couple of shows where I haven't seen the material. A few years ago, I didn't read the material and the guys called me up and offered me the job, which I took. Then I saw the show and said, "Whoa. I'm not sure I want to do this." But it turned out to be okay. It was called *Dead Like Me*, which is now one of my favorite shows that I ever worked on.

After taking the job, my wife and I were sitting and watching the pilot and saying, "Ew, this is pretty dark." It was about a little girl who died and was running around taking people's souls. The pilot was **really** bleak and dark. Then I got to work on it and I found it to be an absolutely joyful experience. Great actors: Mandy Patinkin, Jasmine Guy and Callum Blue, and it was very funny.

Sharon: (laughing) Probably better that you hadn't seen the pilot.

James: I guess so. I probably wouldn't have taken the job. I might have turned down a lot of stuff based on their pilots.

My biggest decision of all was a few years ago when I was down in Baltimore working on a tv series. My agent sent me two pilots for the new season. One was called *Freakylinks*, about some guys who searched out psychic phenomena, and the other was *CSI*. I looked at *CSI* and said, "This is crap. I don't want to do this!" And now *CSI* is one of the most popular shows in tv history and *Freakylinks* didn't even last more than three shows.

Sharon: Some of your earliest acting credits were as a regular on *Baa, Baa, Black Sheep*, followed by a few episodes of *Battlestar Galactica* and *Magnum, P.I.* At what point did you first get acquainted with Don Bellisario?

James: I didn't meet Don on *Black Sheep*. He wasn't there the first year when I did the show. The show had been cancelled, so I then went off and did the film in the Philippines, came back and looked for another job. They wanted to hire me on the *Lou Grant* show to play the character Robert Walden ended up playing [Joe Rossi].

But Universal wouldn't let me out of the contract early. I was under contract until June 6, but *Lou Grant* was going to start shooting on May 28. So I was forced to stay on *Black Sheep* in case it was picked up.

At first I was glad for that because the people at Universal were going to pay me more money. But when they finally picked up *Black Sheep* for six more shows, they decided they weren't going to pay me more. I told them I wasn't going to do the job because they made a promise to me, and I quit the show. That was the season that Bellisario worked on the show.

But Don had watched the first year of *Black Sheep* and become a fan of mine. So for his next show, *Battlestar Galactica*, he hired me for an acting job, and then when he did *Magnum*, I did a bunch of those for him. So I've known Don a long time and I'm still working for him on *NCIS*. He is a very interesting character.

Sharon: You cited Don as one of your mentors. Do you ever socialize?

James: My wife, Salesha, and I don't socialize too much with folks in the business anyway. We have a bunch of kids and grandkids and a pretty large extended family so we're kind of doing that all the time. We've been over to Don's quite a few times. Don has been very kind to me, been a really great friend, and we've known each other for a long time. He's a good buddy.

Sharon: Your work is so intensely technical and creative, what do you do to relax?

James: Like I said, we have a bunch of kids and grandkids. Salesha and I just took a month off and went to India. Her background is East Indian, although she is really from Trinidad in the West Indies because her grandfather emigrated there from India in 1875. So we decided to go to India with no specific thing in mind to do there. We ended up going on a great trip in which we actually met her family—her lineal descendents—two second-cousins who are still living in the same village that her grandfather left.

We're big fans of Indian movies too and we met a bunch of guys from Bollywood—the Indian movie industry. So we had an extraordinary month in India. We do goofy stuff like that sometimes, but mostly it's going to Disneyland with the grandkids, have them all go swimming in the pool at our house and barbeque some chicken and that kind of stuff.

Sharon: Great. Did you end up getting out to Washington, D.C. to see your dad in *Trying* earlier this year at Ford's Theatre?

James: I couldn't go because I was shooting, and then we went to India for a month.

Sharon: Scott is there now, starring in *Shenandoah*.

James: One of my last days on *NCIS*, I talked with him. Diamond Farnsworth called me over and I got a chance to talk to Scott. I guess I hadn't seen Scott since I did the last *Enterprise* [Future Shock] with him, and I hadn't talked to him since about a year ago. So it was good to hear his voice.

Sharon: The whole company was fantastic.

James: I heard he was really inspired and was having a great time and (that the show is) very applicable to what is going on in the world today.

Sharon: And it's getting great reviews.

James: That's wonderful.

He's maybe the most completely talented actor I've ever worked with. *QL* was the most challenging role ever written, certainly for television—for any actor ever—and he did it with such grace and gentlemanliness and incredible skill and artistry. It was a real inspiration to work for the guy. Like I said, I don't really hang around with too many people in the business because I have a family, but I count him as one of my two or three best friends in the world.

Sharon: Wow, that was certainly nice. Do you have any burning ambitions yet to accomplish? Your website says you want to make a film.

James: Yeah, I'd love to make a couple of films. I have a bunch of ideas—like everyone in the world. I don't know if I truly have the ambition. I get called up every April or May and get booked up to do a season of tv as a director, and I have this acting stuff in the theater every year, and it's a **lot** of stuff to do. It's great and I'd love to make a film, but you have to motivate yourself and get going. When I'm not working I like to just hang around and read the newspaper.

Sharon: I'm the same way. You mentioned on your website that you didn't know if you have a fan club. Well, I want to tell you that PQL is a fan club for all of the people who ever worked on *QL*, so in essence you can consider us your fan club.

James: It's one of my favorite shows that I've ever worked on for tv.

Sharon: And you are one of our favorite people. Thank you so much for devoting so much time to answering my questions.



Then & Now

As an actor in 1976 on
Baa, Baa, Black Sheep
(aka *Black Sheep Squadron*)
playing Capt. James W.
"Jim" Gutterman



And as a director on the set of *Young Americans* in 2000

Photos courtesy of www.JamesWhitmoreJr.com

The *Shenandoah* Experience

A Comparative Study

By Jo Fox

I knew the story of Shenandoah before I saw the play in Washington, DC, because I had seen the movie with James Stewart when it first came out in 1965. This, however, was my first time seeing the play. My reaction, both opening weekend and Scott Bakula's final weekend, is that this Ford's Theatre production blew my socks off and it can hold its own with any play currently on Broadway.

Friday, March 17, was the first performance of Shenandoah and this wasn't even opening night. That would come on Wednesday the 22nd. This night, there were still costumes to get, glitches to fix, numbers to tweak. Still, almost everything worked well and the glitches were easily overshadowed by the performances and the power of the story. There wasn't a weak member of the cast. By Saturday night, several of the glitches—like a rifle that didn't fire until several seconds after the trigger was pulled—were fixed.

Every performance of a play is a unique experience. Because it is live, anything can happen, and how the performers respond to these variations becomes part of the performance. When I returned to DC at the end of April, the drifter could not get his knife out of his boot for the Sunday matinee and pantomimed the scene with his finger. I know. I was sitting in the first row. Did that take away from the drama of the moment? Not in the least. If anything, performances were more intense and the audience was even more involved with the production.

The following description applies to Jeff Calhoun's production of *Shenandoah* with italics indicating commentary and comparisons to the original Broadway version.

Set in Virginia, *Shenandoah* is the story of a widower trying to hold his family of six sons and a daughter together while the War Between the States rages around him. Charlie Anderson is father to oldest son, Jacob, married son James, Nathan, John, Jenny, Henry, and youngest, twelve-year-old Robert (the Boy).

Act I

The first act is lively, full of wonderful song and dance numbers, but the staging brings the audience into the war early on. Robert (Boy) and his friend, 12-year-old slave, Gabriel find a confederate cap lying beside the spring. Boy puts it on, setting off a chain of events that are an integral part of the story.

The opening number is a rousing song, Raise the Flag of Dixie, with Union and Confederate troops taunting each other inside a huge picture frame. The Shenandoah hills roll beyond the framework, and like the war itself, cannot be contained. At the bottom of the frame, the words, "The Nation Mourns," constantly reminds us that these are difficult times.

The Broadway production of this number called for a large chorus of men—some Union, some Confederate—to sing to each other from opposite sides of the stage. With a smaller stage and cast, director Jeff Calhoun, accomplished this beautifully by having half of each costume grey and half blue as the actors turned their left or right sides toward the audience. This ploy also served to emphasize the concept of brother fighting brother and father fighting son.

The music fades and the soldiers leave the stage as Charlie enters from over the hills to speak to Martha, his dead wife. He removes his hat to place flowers atop a gravestone that rises from the floor. Charlie tells Martha the world is not like she left it. He remembers her quoting from the bible that "a house divided against itself cannot stand." "Well," Charlie tells her, "we've got some disagreement in our own house now, our own family." Despite this Charlie promises he will keep the family together. He returns his hat to his head and slowly walks back upstage across the hill, disappearing behind the rise. The gravestone retreats into the floor.

The soldiers return to continue the opening song. Guns and cannons are now heard as soldier shoots soldier and bayonets stab, all in slow motion as the song continues. While this is going on, the Anderson clan is getting ready for Sunday morning breakfast, setting up the table and benches and food, as dead bodies scatter on the stage.

As the Andersons sit down for the meal, the dead bodies remain on the stage, a constant reminder that this Sunday meal is anything but normal. Charlie says the blessing and they begin to eat but there's an abnormal silence to the meal and Charlie notes, "I seem to detect something at this table today that's not being said." This opens the way for James to argue that what concerns Virginia concerns him. James tells Charlie it's just a matter of time before the fighting reaches the farm.

"If those fools want to slaughter one another, that's their business, but it's got nothing to do with us. Not one damn thing has it got to do with us," Charlie tells him angrily. "Stand and show your colors," Charlie sings. "Let's all go to war. The Lord will surly bless us, I've Heard It All Before."

In the 1975 production, the song went all the way through without interruption. In Jeff Calhoun's staging at Ford's Theatre, when Charlie sings, "The dream has turned to ashes; the wheat has turned to straw. And someone asks the question, what was the dyin' for? The livin' can't remember," the dead soldiers rise from the stage and exit to, "the dead no longer care."

The song returns to the refrain with James stalking away from the table. He turns to argue but Charlie stops him. "Don't tell me 'it's different now.' I've heard it all before."

In the Broadway production, the scene faded to black, as most scenes did then, to set up for the next scene. Under Jeff Calhoun's direction, Boy and Gabriel are center stage talking about what church is like while the scene sets up for the inside of the church behind them. In 1975, the Sunday service is played out inside the church with Reverend Byrd giving his sermon from start to finish. In Jeff's staging, parts of the Reverend's sermon are spliced inside the dialogue between Boy and Gabriel about church.

Boy tells Gabriel that preachers are no fun and the way they talk about Hell, it makes him think that maybe they've been there. The spotlights come off the Boy and Gabriel and highlight the Reverend as he tells what his sermon could be about, but isn't, while the cast stands motionless. When Boy and Gabriel resume talking, so does the church setup.

During the church scene, it is apparent that Charlie is there only to fulfill Martha's wishes. The parishioners sing Pass the Cross to Me. Charlie sings only one line of the hymn, at Jenny's urging. The service is over and the Andersons begin to file out as the hymn continues. Boy runs off after services to join Gabriel for fishing. The final two verses of the hymn, included in 1975, are omitted.

Pass the Cross continues to play in the background as Sam, a Confederate soldier sitting in the back of the church, stops Jenny after service to ask if he can court her. Nathan and the boys listen in and Nathan teases Jenny with an exaggerated moaning noise, as Sam tells Jenny he will be leaving soon. The scene ends with Jenny chasing her brothers off the stage.

Boy and Gabriel are at their favorite fishing hole when the conversation comes up again about church. Boy describes what church is like and, for him, how boring it is. "If I thought I didn't have to go to church, I might change places with you." Gabriel responds, "I don't think you'd be much good at bein' a slave. It takes practice." In a duet, Boy and Gabriel wonder, Why Am I Me? At the end of this song, Boy runs home with the fish he caught. Gabriel returns to his massa.



**Kevin Clay (l.) as the Boy,
and
Mike Mainwaring as Gabriel
singing "Why Am I Me?"**

photo by T. Charles Erickson
for Ford's Theatre

All through the Ford's Theatre production of *Shenandoah*, small changes were made to the script and the characters that added measurably to the overall enjoyment of the performance. For instance, there is a line in Why Am I Me? in which the Boy sang "somebody puts the who into folks like droppin' a stone in a lake." The music accommodates with a falling inflection that ends with the sound of a rock hitting water. This idea wasn't written in the script, but little touches like this heightened the performance.

Charlie Anderson is standing by the well near the barn when Sergeant Johnson and his patrol come by to recruit the Anderson boys for service. Charlie refuses, but when the Sergeant wants to see the boys, Charlie calls them out one at a time. They all show up—including Boy—holding rifles aimed at Johnson's group. Outnumbered and outgunned, Johnson leaves without a fight. In this production, the Boy gets the last word with "Don't be a stranger!" Added by Calhoun, this line always got a huge laugh from the audience. Charlie admonishes him with a look and leaves to tend to the crops.

A conversation between Nathan and John immediately follows:

John: "You know...something just occurred to me."

Nathan: "What's that?"

John: Well, I understand Pa and all that but...I'll bet if we did get into this war, we'd be hell!"

In Jeff Calhoun's staging of this conversation, the parts were switched with Nathan saying John's lines and the word *Hell* emphasized with slamming a crate onto the stage. It played better this way because Nathan leads off the song, Next to Lovin' (I Like Fightin'), a rollicking, high-spirited song-and-dance number performed by the brothers.

During this number the sons, full of mischief, tease Boy by grabbing his cap and tossing it from one to another. (An interesting scene has been added by Jeff Calhoun. Instead of the song being sung straight through, the boys interrupt their high jinks as Charlie is spotted coming from the field with a wheelbarrow. The boys pretend that they are out of breath from all the hard work and need to take a break. They add two heavy sacks and a saddle to the barrow. With another admonishing look at each son, the audience knows Charlie isn't fooled as he staggers offstage with his load in silence.

The song resumes with Jacob and John singing "easy going, that's my style. Never frown when I can smile." The audience is so captivated by the Anderson boys' dance downstage, they are oblivious to the porch scene being erected in full view behind.

As the music fades and lighting changes to twilight, Charlie sits down in his rocker and Boy leans against the fence post. They are discussing the day's work and play-wrestling, when Sam and Jenny appear beyond the porch stage left. By now, Charlie and Boy are lying on the porch; Charlie points to the stars as he cradles Boy's head on his left arm, and the young couple doesn't know other ears are listening to their conversation.

Jenny tells Sam he hasn't said a word in a long time. Sam explains that nothing's wrong but he doesn't know what to say. Actually, he knows what to say—he rehearsed it to the moon, and it sounded fine; he said it to the trees, and it sounded even better; he even practiced to his horse—but now he can't remember the words. Jenny tells Sam in song, "Try your poetry on me, I can be wooed and won." Shy Sam still doesn't respond and she sings, "willin' or not, I'll Be Over the Hill."

During the song, Charlie, not really standing up, slides from the ground into his rocking chair. Boy slides over to the fence to see more. Sam tells Jenny he has something he really wants to say to her, but as he stumbles for the words, Charlie strikes a match and lights his cigar, alerting the couple that they are being watched. Sam, staring at Charlie, asks Jenny if they can walk somewhere else and exits. Charlie flutters his fingers in a goodbye gesture. Jenny turns on her Pa with an angry, "Willin' or not I'll be over the hill," and stalks off after Sam.

Boy wonders what Sam was going to say. Charlie tells him that he's going to miss Jenny. The Boy asks, "Is Jenny going somewhere?" Charlie tells him to get used to the idea because his sister's ripe. "You mean like a peach?" the Boy asks. "Just like a peach," Charlie replies and sings, The Pickers Are Comin'.

Charlie sends Boy to bed. Boy wishes Charlie good night. Charlie then puts out his cigar, rolls up his sleeves and removes his vest. As the music continues from Pickers, a rooster crows and horses neigh, the color of the far-off hills changes from night to dawn, and Charlie turns upstage to greet the morning. *The same backdrop was used throughout the play with the lighting creating the different time of the day, or representing the mood (as when the sky was red during battle).*

The sons come on stage, and a Confederate Lieutenant approaches the porch. He asks after Sgt. Johnson, learns that the Sergeant and his patrol left the farm without a fight, even though there could have been one. The Lieutenant informs Charlie that the patrol was killed next to their south boundary, and with the parting words, "Welcome to the war, gentlemen," they leave.

James pursues his argument with Charlie about what he intends to do. Charlie yells at him that James is "on the verge of vexin' me awful bad" when Boy yells "Pa" for the second time. Charlie's anger turns toward his youngest until Boy tells him that a group of men are coming from the horse pasture. The group is led by Tinkham—a horse thief, and Mr. Carol—a Federal purchasing agent seeking horses for the Cavalry. James tells them the horses are not for sale.

Things reach a boil when Mr. Carol calls the Andersons 'yeller' and Charlie stops James from throwing a punch. Charlie throws the punch instead and Mr. Carol draws his gun, which is quickly confiscated and passed along to Jenny, standing on the porch. Mr. Carol charges Charlie and a fight ensues. At one point, Charlie pulls Boy from on top of a man who is on top of John. He hoists Boy up with one arm around the youngster's waist. With his foot, he pushes the man off

John, who is gasping for breath. Charlie sets Boy on his feet and straightens John's glasses. Mr. Carol calls Charlie a coward and the fight resumes until Jenny fires Carol's gun into the air. With an earnest tone (and a deadly grin), Jenny tells Mr. Carol that, "If you animals don't leave this farm this minute, I'm going to shoot you stone dead."

Charlie gingerly takes the gun from Jenny and sticks it back in Mr. Carol's belt and they leave. The Boy is sitting on the fencepost with his legs wrapped around Tinkham's throat. Tinkham is still struggling to break free of the hold, when Charlie calls to the Boy. Reluctantly, he lets go. Charlie tells Tinkham, "You are the only man I know who started at the bottom and came down in the world."

This scene in the Broadway production was just like the movie—Jenny and Anne stand on the porch with rifles and after Jenny fires hers, she switches rifles with Anne, the empty rifle for the loaded one.

James begins his argument with Charlie again. Charlie storms off the stage telling James he'll fight any man who gives him provocation but he's not about to declare open season on strangers. Once gone, James tells the others Pa isn't fooling him—he and Pa are like two peas in a pod. James breaks into the refrain of Next to Lovin' with Jenny and the boys joining in. *The Broadway production had the beginning of this refrain sung by John instead of James.*

Charlie returns to Martha's grave. He sings in Meditation that sooner or later they will be calling him a traitor, her friends and his. As he speaks, he comes downstage and the grave is no longer visible. He remembers "how it used to be when it was only you and me, Martha." The song names all the children as they were born. As Charlie sings, the children come on stage with parts of the bed that they assemble behind the picture frame, 'upstairs' in the house. *The bed will be part of the next scene.* First there's "Jacob and James," who assemble the bed frame. "Nathan and John" bring in the struts. "Got a Jenny and a Henry now" who bring in the mattress. "A lovin' wife with child again" and Charlie thinks he "should sleep in the barn." The last child, Robert, slides in the steps to the 'house.' Charlie then leads them all downstage singing,

"This land here is Anderson land,
by the strength of my hand
and the sweat of my brow,
for as long as the Lord will allow."



The Anderson Clan (l to r)

Henry, Robert (the Boy), Nathan, Jenny, Charlie, Jacob, John, Anne & James

As Jenny exits the lights reveal the parlor around them. It is now evening in the Anderson house and everyone takes a seat in a chair or on the floor. Nathan and Robert are playing checkers, Anne is knitting and instructing James on the stitches, and Charlie is reading a newspaper and John a book.

Jenny enters with Sam and tells Charlie that Sam would like a word with him. Giddily she announces, "I'll be going upstairs now. Good

night," and climbs the steps to plop on the bed. Sam stands awkwardly looking around and finally asks Charlie if he could have a private word with him.

Anne is first to realize Sam's intention and tells James it's bedtime. James replies a bit densely that it is only seven o'clock. Anne kicks him and James understands it is time to leave the parlor. With Anne's shooing, the rest of the family also leaves. Robert is the last one out and as he passes Charlie's chair, he states, "The pickers are here, Pa." Charlie has difficulty hiding his laughter and lifts the newspaper.

The scene that follows is a comedic exchange between Sam and Charlie as Sam asks for Jenny's hand. Charlie asks him why. "Sir?" Sam frowns. "Why do you want to marry her?" Charlie asks. "Because I love her, Mr. Anderson," says Sam. "That's not good enough," Charlie tells him, and then tries to explain what taking care of a woman means, but Sam just doesn't understand. Charlie finally tells Sam to be good to Jenny or he'll come after him. Sam asks, "Then you have no objections, sir?" Charlie tells him, "I didn't say that." It's enough that Sam has permission to marry Jenny as he charges out of the house with a loud whoop of joy.

Toward the end of Act I, Sam and Jenny are about to be married. Anne is helping Jenny dress. When Jenny asks about fights, Anne tells her they are about the little things, but she explains to Jenny that it's the differences that make people right for each other. Anne sings, "He is the left hand, I am the right, he is the full moon, I am the night." The song continues with Jenny joining into the ballad, We Make a Beautiful Pair.

Down in the front yard, Sam continues the song, but he is so flustered, the words just won't come out and the Andersons wonder if he will make it through the ceremony. Charlie shakes his head in dismay. Then Jenny comes through the front door and Charlie goes to help her down the steps. When Sam sees Jenny, he's finally able to sing with her the last refrain of the song. *This is a departure from the Broadway production. In the 1975 version, the bride and groom sang "Violets and Silverbells" as they were married, but the number was entirely omitted from the Ford's Theatre production.*

At the end of the service, as Reverend Byrd pronounces them man and wife, a corporal interrupts the congratulations with orders for Sam. Sam tells Charlie he will return as soon as he can and leads Jenny off for a private goodbye upstage.

Charlie asks Reverend Byrd how he feels about the war. The Reverend tells Charlie his oldest son is buried somewhere in Pennsylvania at a place called Little Round Top near Gettysburg. His youngest came home with consumption and won't live to see Christmas. A third son rides with General Forrest, but the Reverend doesn't know where. He tells Charlie this is the best he can answer.

This scene also departs from the 1975 production. Originally Charlie's conversation with Reverend Byrd took place before the wedding. With the omission of blackouts for the scene changes and the elimination of Violets and Silverbells as the wedding song, Calhoun managed to trim 15 minutes from the script with no loss of substance. For modern-day audiences accustomed to watching films with quick intercuts, the tightening improved the flow immensely.

As Sam leaves and Jenny returns to the group, Anne comforts her. But Anne's labor begins and James carries her into the house. Charlie tells Jacob to take their fastest horse and ride for Doc Witherspoon. As Jacob starts to run off, he turns and asks what to tell the Doc. "Tell him?" Charlie shouts, coming back down off the front steps to push his son in the right direction, "Tell him nothin'! When I send for him, he knows!"

Everyone runs into the house, leaving Robert and Gabriel in the yard talking about babies. Boy doesn't see anything special in this event.

It's just a baby, as he and Gabriel take off to check their rabbit traps. Jenny shoos the rest of the mob out of the house for being in the way, and Charlie sings, "What'll ya wager he'll wear britches, I'm gonna holler It's a Boy." Again, a difference between the two productions is that in the original, Charlie sang the song alone. At Ford's it became a duet, with Charlie singing, "figures to be like me," and James exclaiming, "Lord, help him!" James also sings the second stanza, "I'm about to be born again, to see my very first day."

Jenny interrupts the song to announce, "It's a girl!" All the boys rush inside to see, with James tossing Charlie a flask on the run. Charlie is stunned. He continues the song, more softly at first, "pour me a drink my head is spinnin'." He takes a swig from the flask and ecstatically exclaims, "I gotta celebrate a girl!"

His joy is short-lived however when Gabriel rushes in shouting, "Mr. Anderson! They done took the Boy." Charlie doesn't comprehend Gabriel's shouting at first and tells him to slow down. Gabriel stammers again that "they done took the Boy." Charlie rushes to stage left to look for Boy, beginning to realize that something is dreadfully wrong. Returning to Gabriel, Charlie grabs the child asking, "Gabriel, where's the Boy?" Charlie asks him three times, each time stronger. Gabriel pulls back in fear, finally stammering that Yankees told the Boy, "You come along with us, Rebel." "But why?" Charlie asks. "Because he's wearin' that little gray cap," Gabriel tells him.

"Now it concerns me," Charlie tells his family. Shouting orders to his sons, Charlie sends them to get the horses and gear ready. Jenny tells Charlie she's coming too. Charlie tries to say no, because she's a girl. He doesn't win the argument when Jenny informs him she can outride and outshoot anyone.

James tries to apologize to Charlie for their arguments. Charlie tells him he understands. If he wasn't like himself, he'd be like James, Charlie says. He climbs the stairs to the bedroom to see his new grandchild before leaving.

"I sure hate to be rushed when I'm looking at something that pleases me," Charlie tells Anne, and he asks if they've picked a name yet.

"Her name is Martha," Anne tells Charlie. Charlie is deeply moved by this. He tells Anne he's proud to have her in the family. She's a good woman. Charlie heads back downstairs, grabs his sleeping roll and rifle and leads the family over the hill shouting, "Let's Ride" just as James returns with a canteen of water for him. James is left behind to care for his wife and daughter.

Act II

Act II opens with Gabriel at the Anderson farm trying to fly like a bird. Anne, who is gathering laundry from the clothes line, asks if Gabriel is feeling all right. Gabriel tells Anne he's free. Yankees have burned his plantation and the slave quarters, and he's no longer property. Gabriel is soaring but Anne is worried, though she tries to hide it from the boy. He says that the "Yankee mens" told him he could fly like a bird if he wants to, now that he's free, but he tells Anne he still hasn't left the ground. She tells Gabriel there are lots of ways to fly without ever leaving the ground. "Freedom is a state of mind." Gabriel will be heading south to find his parents, asking her to tell the Boy goodbye for him, when they find him.

James comes out to Anne to help bring in the laundry. Anne asks him to get some extra water because Reverend Byrd is coming for dinner. She asks James to move little Martha's crib, but he informs her that he already moved her to Robert's room where it's cooler. Anne takes the laundry inside and James goes to the well for water, as a drifter comes over the hill shouting a greeting. He asks James for water and James obliges. But when the drifter learns James is alone with his wife, the drifter slits James' throat, then heads for the house and Anne.

After Gabriel leaves, but before the arrival of the drifter, James and Anne discuss getting a place of their own. While this dialog appears in both productions, the Broadway original had Anne and James reprise Violets and Silverbells at the end of the scene. But just as in Act I, this song was eliminated from Ford's production.

The original script calls for three marauders to approach the farm. In the death scene, the only marauder who speaks spins James around and stabs him. James then sinks to the ground. Jeff Calhoun staged this scene with only one drifter. The drifter slams James's head against the hoist rail of the well, stunning him. Then pulling a knife from his boot the drifter slits James's throat.

The setting has now completely changed; it's dark, a train whistle is heard in the distance and crickets are chirping. Charlie and the family are setting a log trap on the tracks to stop a Union train. They've spent almost two months on the road looking for Robert. Everyone is tired, including Jenny. She has a bad feeling that maybe Robert is dead and this war will kill them all. "No!" Charlie yells. "Don't you think that way!" He tells her Papa's Gonna Make it Alright in a tender ballad that ends with the arrival of the train. Once the cars are opened and all the prisoners are freed, they discover Robert isn't there, finding Sam instead. Charlie tells his sons to burn the train, much to the dismay of the engineer. Charlie tells the man he runs a sad train.

The impressive staging of this scene was indeed a Broadway-worthy special effect. The original production never attempted to show an actual train. Although logs were carried across, the train and tracks, as well as the burning, were all suggested to be taking place offstage. Here at Ford's, the tracks were painted in muted tones at the bottom of a silk scrim hanging just inside the frame, as if they were running directly toward the audience from upstage. The log trap was brought on and situated center stage in front of the frame and tracks. The train, with its one single headlight growing larger and brighter as we hear the train approach, was a projection on the silk scrim. As brakes screeched and steam hissed from under the "wheels," the "train" stopped and the sons carried real torches behind the scrim. Smoke rolled onto the stage and with additional lighting the train actually appeared to be on fire.

One shell-shocked corporal asks Sam, "Is the war really lost?" Sam answers by telling him to go home—"Go home and live." The corporal, an Irish tenor, laments The Only Home I Know, a hauntingly beautiful ballad that wrenches at the heart strings. The other freed prisoners join in the song.

As the corporal's song continues stage right, Charlie and the boys are setting up a tent by lantern light stage left. Once erected, Charlie enters with the lantern and his shadow can be seen on the tent wall as he moves about.

The sons are puzzled by all the activity in the tent, commenting that Pa has been moving about a lot. Charlie comes out and calls Sam to him. "You too, Jenny," he adds. He tells Sam that it's customary for a gentleman to carry his bride across the threshold. As Sam and Jenny enter the tent, the boys try to sneak peeks under the sides of the tent wall until Charlie says, "What are you all lookin' at?" and they scatter to their bedrolls.

Jacob pleads with Charlie, "Let's go home, Pa." But Charlie tells him they found Sam, they'll find the Boy. Jacob offers to stand first watch while the family sleeps on the stage right rise, far from the tent.

All is quiet while Jacob stands guard until a voice in the distance calls out. Jacob raises his gun in that direction and a shot is heard. Yelling "Pa!" Jacob collapses to the ground. Charlie rushes to him, cradling him in his arms and rocking him, telling him to hold on. Jenny sobs that Jacob is dead, as she kneels by Jacob's head. The Confederate sniper realizes his mistake, that Jacob isn't a 'blue belly,' "he's just a

man.” Charlie doesn’t accept the sniper’s apology. He rises, grabs the rifle and hip fires killing the soldier. After he shoots, he runs toward the soldier, the butt of the rifle raised to strike again. Nathan blocks him, grabbing the rifle as he and Charlie struggle. Nathan yells at him that the soldier is already dead, “you already killed him, Pa.”

Still enraged, Charlie screams, “Yes I killed him! What did you expect me to do? Why’re you all staring at me like that?”

Nathan explains to Charlie that the sniper thought Jacob was a soldier and that he said he was sorry. Charlie cries that sorry won’t help Jacob, and Jenny sobs, “Papa, killing him hasn’t helped Jacob.”

His anger spent, Charlie tells the family they are going home—so he can bury Jacob next to Martha. Charlie pulls Jacob to his feet with Sam pushing from the back, and Charlie lays Jacob across his right shoulder. Slowly, Charlie carries Jacob off stage right. One of the released prisoners crosses behind Charlie, slowly carrying the fallen sniper off in the other direction.

Martha’s grave rises from the stage just behind the frame. Nearby Reverend Byrd hammers two rustic crosses for James and Anne into the ‘ground’ as the corporal reprises [The Only Home I Know](#).

A baby is heard crying as the family returns to their home. Now holding little Martha, Reverend Byrd approaches Charlie and places the baby in his arms. Jenny leaves Sam’s side to seek comfort in Reverend Byrd’s arms. Tearfully, Charlie tells baby Martha it’s been a long time since he’s held a baby and one day he’ll tell her why he left—why he had to—or at least thought he had to.

Jeff Calhoun staged this scene in the front yard of the Anderson home, but in the 1975 production Charlie is in the bedroom holding baby Martha in his arms as Sam and Jenny look on. In a portion of the speech omitted from the DC production, Charlie tells the baby he keeps thinking that if he hadn’t left, everyone might still be alive.

Jenny takes Martha from him and sings from [Papa’s Gonna Make it All Right](#). “Papa’s gonna scare off the summer storms, no rain will fall on your head. Baby’s gonna be all safe and warm, tucked in your very own bed.”

As she croons to the baby, Charlie and the boys approach the small Anderson farm cemetery upstage behind the frame. Charlie takes the wooden mallet from one of the sons and hammers a third cross—for Jacob—into the ground. The boys wander off, and Jenny and Sam exit stage right with the baby. Charlie remains alone at the graveside to talk to Martha about the war ([Meditation II](#)) and why he had to search for Robert, leaving James and Anne behind. He tells Martha that, like every war, the undertakers are winning it.

“The dream has turned to ashes
The wheat has turned to straw
And someone asks the question
What was the dying for?
The graves are filled with answers
Each one just and true
For all men finally reason
What else could I do?”

Charlie asks if only he knew what Martha was thinking, and as if to answer, church bells begin to peal in the distance. “You’ll never change, will you, Martha?” he asks, shaking his head. He then calls out to the family, “Why didn’t anyone tell me it was Sunday?”

The next scene originally calls for Reverend Byrd to be in church finishing his sermon as the congregation sings [Pass the Cross to Me](#). Charlie enters with the family and the voices peter out as everyone waits for the Andersons to take their seats. The singing resumes as the Reverend welcomes the Andersons home, shaking Charlie’s hand.

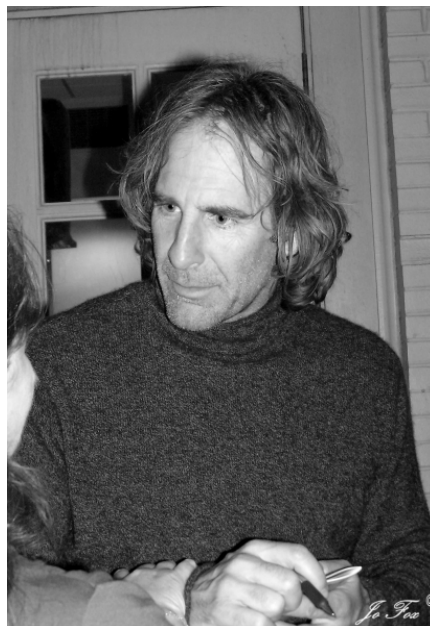
Suddenly the doors of the church open; the Boy hobbles in and announces, “I’m here, Sir.” Charlie provides a welcoming embrace as the hymn joyfully continues and the cast make their bows.

Once again, Calhoun’s tightening seems to make a more effective ending: From the graveyard, Charlie starts down toward the house to get the family ready for church when there is a call from beyond the hills. “Pa.” It sounds like the Boy, but Charlie no longer believes Robert is alive. He shakes his head as if to clear away the ghosts. Charlie continues walking as the shout comes again, but louder. Charlie turns to see a tattered youth standing on the rise. “Boy?” he questions, running up the hills toward Robert. But Charlie stops short, tentatively reaching out his hand to see if the mirage is real. “I’m home, Pa,” Robert tells him and Charlie snatches the Boy into his arms, tearfully repeating, “My God. Oh, my God.” He calls to the others, and they grab and embrace Robert, as Charlie stands apart, watching, a man forever changed.

Final note: Both Peter Udell (Lyricist) and Phillip Rose (one of the authors of the book) attended the play and according to Scott were pleased with the changes Jeff Calhoun made to the production.

The Ford’s Theatre cast:

- Charlie Anderson..... Scott Bakula
 - Jacob Anderson Aaron Ramsey
 - James Anderson..... Andrew Samonsky
 - Nathan Anderson Rick Faugno
 - John Anderson..... Bret Shuford
 - Jenny Anderson Megan Lewis
 - Henry Anderson..... Ryan Jackson
 - Robert (The Boy)..... Kevin Clay
 - Anne, wife of James Garrett Long
 - Sam, suitor to Jenny Noah Racey
 - Gabriel..... Mike Mainwaring
 - Reverend Byrd & Mr. Carol..... Christopher Bloch
 - Corporal (Irish tenor)..... Geoff Packard
 - Sergeant Johnson Peter Boyer
 - Lieutenant..... Evan Casey
 - Tinkham..... Stephen F. Schmidt
 - Drifter Richard Frederick
- (A complete song listing can be found in Issue #33, p.2)*



Scott Bakula at Ford’s Theatre Stage Door following a preview performance

Photo by Jo Fox

QUESTIONS FOR THE “ANDERSON CLAN” AN INTERVIEW WITH GARRETT LONG

By Jo Fox

Garrett Long portrayed daughter-in-law, Anne Anderson, in the Ford’s Theatre production of *Shenandoah*. An accomplished singer and actress, she has appeared in numerous regional musicals, the national tour of *Suessical*, and earned a Drama Desk nomination for her off-Broadway role in the musical *The Spitfire Grill* for Playwrights Horizons in 2001. Her website, <www.garrettlong.com>, has wonderful photos from most of the productions on her extensive résumé, including more than a dozen from *Shenandoah*.

Jo: What was it like working with Scott Bakula in *Shenandoah*?

Garrett: It was fun to meet him after listening to him all through my college years. *Romance Romance* was my favorite musical at the time. Funny because now I have worked with both him and Allison Frasier and I never dreamed that would ever happen at the time.

Jo: How did you get the part in *Shenandoah*?

Garrett: Auditioned...got down on my knees, begged and pleaded, the way I get all my jobs...(kidding)

Jo: If you had a chance to appear again with Scott, is there any particular play you’d like to do with him?

Garrett: I can’t think of anything at the moment, the age difference makes this a tricky question...*City of Angels* maybe?

Jo: How did you feel about doing *Shenandoah* under the Lincoln box at Ford’s Theatre?

Garrett: It was wonderfully spooky and brilliantly awesome.

Jo: Doing such an emotional play every night and sometimes twice in one day is taxing, both physically and emotionally. Did you joke around backstage a lot to relieve tension and did it take awhile to shed the emotions at the end of the play?

Garrett: No, it’s pretty easy for me to jump in and out of character and Anne was a bit of a cake walk compared to the other roles in the show. We played a lot of Boggle backstage, cramped in a small dressing room, or we would hang out under the hills under the stage and watch a monitor they had set up. There’s no Green room at Ford’s, being that it is so old.

Jo: Brian Sutherland took the reins as Charlie Anderson when Scott left the play. It’s unfair to compare the two actors, but in general terms, can you say something about the feel of the show under each actor? What were some of the differences in the way each approached the role?

Garrett: They were completely different. The only thing I can say is that the show itself became the star after Scott left, which was nice. But he was missed by us all. Brian came in full force and gave us 110% and took us to a new level.

Jo: Jeff Calhoun deserves a lot of credit for his staging of this production. How much did you contribute to the interpretation of what your character was like?

Garrett: Jeff and his team are so incredibly gifted, and I marveled at what they did with the show. Their creativity and vision was remarkable. They seemed to be happy with my take on Anne so I just kept going with that.

Jo: How did you grow into your part from opening weekend to closing? One thing I noticed was that everyone’s accents became stronger toward the end of the run. Anything else?

Garrett: No, not really. The bonds with the actors of course got stronger off stage, which of course enriched the performances on stage. I loved my relationship with my husband—Andrew Samonsky—and all the unspoken moments we had on stage were very special to me.

Jo: There’s been talk about taking *Shenandoah* to Broadway and I know a lot of the cast would be eager for this to happen. Definitely, the entire cast deserves to go with the show. Is there any progress on this that you are aware of?

Garrett: I think we should all let go of that dream. If it happens, get out the champagne!!!

Jo: Are there any behind-the-scenes special moments with Scott that you could share?

Garrett: I wish there were, I never really got to know him, he stayed pretty much to himself. I think he was terribly busy with family and career. But I can say he is one hell of a bowler!

Jo: What’s next on your plate? Do you have any upcoming shows?

Garrett: I just finished playing Sarah Brown in *Guys and Dolls* at the Cape Playhouse - a total blast! Up next I will be playing Oona O’Neil in *Behind the Limelight* in the New York Music Theatre Festival—it’s a new musical based on Charlie Chaplin. Visit <www.NYMF.org> performances begin in September and end October 1.

You can always check out my website, <www.garrettlong.com> and see what all I am up to!



Photo courtesy of Blue Ridge Entertainment

A CONVERSATION WITH RICK FAUGNO

By Jo Fox

May 23, 2006

Rick Faugno appeared as Nathan Anderson in the Ford's Theatre musical, *Shenandoah*, playing one of the middle Anderson brothers. Rick came to the show directly from the National tour of *The Boy Friend*, directed by Julie Andrews. Rick's theatrical career includes the original Broadway company of *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, the pre-Broadway production of *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* and the first Broadway company of *Wonderful Town*. Rick was also in *The Will Rogers Follies* with Keith Carradine and played Davey Jones in an episode of NBC's *American Dreams*.



Rick Faugno at Ford's Theatre stage door

Photo by Lily Lin

Jo: What was it like working with Scott Bakula in *Shenandoah*?

Rick: He's such a giving person. He's not really a celebrity as people think of celebrities. He's very down to earth. He's so personable and charming and just does the work and that's it. He's really just a guy that's very easy to work with.

Jo: How did you get the part in *Shenandoah*?

Rick: I went to an audition like everybody else, except for Scott I think.

Jo: I went to the Members' Event on Monday night and Jeff Calhoun mentioned that he had Scott in mind from the beginning.

Rick: Yes, he did. Interesting choice too. I never would have thought of Scott. I wasn't really familiar with his work in the theatre before and I only knew him from television and film. I didn't really know he was in theatre, but he's actually done quite a bit.

Jo: He started out in theatre and in *Shenandoah*.

Rick: He's done *Shenandoah* a few times I think.

Jo: I think Scott said at one time that he's played almost every role.

Rick: Pretty much. I think he has.

Jo: If you had a chance to appear again with Scott, is there any particular play you'd like to do with him and why this play?

Rick: That's a difficult question. A play? A musical? Or anything?

Jo: Anything.

Rick: I would like to do a straight play with him. I think it would be fun. Some kind of American play like a Sam Shepherd play or an Arthur Miller play. I think it would be interesting to see what Scott could do with that, not in the context of a musical. A straight, dramatic play. I'd like to be his son in that kind of a play.

Jo: Have you done other things besides musicals?

Rick: I have. I've done some straight play work but most of my career has been in musical theatre in one form or another, either Broadway or Regional. I did a Broadway play when I was younger called, "Conversations with My Father" with Judd Hirsch so I have some experience. Of course in college, at New York University, I did straight play work. Because I love to sing and dance so much, a lot of my work is in musical theatre.

Jo: And you are an incredible dancer, Rick.

Rick: Well, thank you.

Jo: How did you feel about doing *Shenandoah* under the Lincoln box at Ford's Theatre? Did it hold any special meaning for you?

Rick: Absolutely, especially this show. It was so politically charged, at this time especially. I think I'd been to the Ford's Theatre when I was younger, but I don't really remember. It was just amazing to be on that stage. I've been in Broadway shows and in theatres all over the country. After awhile, you perform in different theatres and it's just another theatre. But Ford's Theatre has so much history and that one singular event changed everything.

It's so amazing the thousands of people who flock there daily, filling the theatre. The park service people give a speech about what happened that day (Lincoln's assassination). They take you through the events of the day, what happened, and there's a museum downstairs and there's the building across the street where he actually died. It was pretty amazing to be singing about the Civil War staring up at Lincoln's box. It was pretty haunting.

Jo: When I spoke with Andrew (Samonsky), he talked about the opening number. I know you were in that as well. He said that when the Confederates were singing about grabbing a hank of

Abe Lincoln's beard, they're looking right at the Lincoln box. He said that was pretty eerie for him.

Rick: It was. I think he was standing up on the frame, so he was probably eye level with it. I was down in front sort of looking up at it. I just remember singing that whole verse looking pretty much directly at that box. Those lyrics – “if it's good enough for Jackson and good enough for Lee then hot damn Alabam, it's good enough for me.” Just amazing. Robert E. Lee and Lincoln and this play. It's really strange to see how worlds collide like that.

Jo: Doing such an emotional play each night and sometimes twice in one day is very taxing both physically and emotionally. Did you joke around backstage a lot to relieve the tension and did it take awhile to shed the emotions at the end of the play each night.

Rick: Oddly enough because it is such a dramatic, heavy piece, I don't know if it was set up this way from the start but this cast was one of the nicest I've ever worked with. There were no ego trips or divas and it was really a nice experience that way. Everybody was really easy to get along with and nobody had an attitude or anything, so it was great that way.

From the start it was pretty much a joke fest all day long. It was so much fun to be in there and working with these great, talented people. The serious stuff didn't come until later on. Of course we got more invested as it went along, but people never really lost their lightheartedness. We all joked around with each other and no one got too wrapped up in the piece where they couldn't sort of shake themselves out of their character. It was really great in that regard.

As far as at the end of the play, you'd be surprised to see what goes on. People can be joking around backstage just before going on for the burial scene. Five minutes after the scene where Jacob dies people are backstage screaming and yelling and carrying on. After awhile, it's just something you turn on and off and you don't really have to go to great lengths to reach that emotional place. It's something that you do every night without thinking. Of course you get into the moment, but you don't really hold onto it.

Jo: Is that because it's a longer run play as opposed to something you put on for a week and that's it?

Rick: Yes, I suppose that has a lot to do with it. Repetition has a lot to do with it. If you're only doing something for a week, you're just starting to delve into the character you're playing. But when something runs for nine or ten weeks, after a month you really start to become comfortable with the part you're playing. You start doing things you hadn't even thought of when you first started rehearsals. Sometimes I get bored so I like to try different things while still respecting the piece. I like to try to go different ways and to stretch my level a bit—try different choices that don't take away from what I'm doing but at the same time make it interesting.

Jo: I think I noticed one thing you did, if memory serves me. At the beginning of the play I noticed you sang from the ladder but at the end of the play you slid down one handed. Was that something you added after awhile?

Rick: You mean in “Next to Lovin'?” That was something I added over time. Just like anything else, I had to figure out what I was doing. After awhile I'd get so relaxed with the dance numbers and what I'm doing that I try to make it a little more interesting. I

played with the ladder a little bit. I played with the handstand section. I tried to add a little bit to the dance number without making it too different. It's just natural; people embellish.

Jo: After watching the play both at the beginning and the end of the run, I was able to notice a few of those things that were added.

Rick: It's something the stage manager has to keep an eye on sometimes because people can get a little too carried away and start going in another direction without really becoming aware of it. You're so comfortable with the show that adding a little something extra doesn't always occur to you or the other extreme and you go a bit too far and have to be pulled back. It's easy to do in a long run. This show was a short run. I'm talking about Broadway shows that sometimes run for years.

Jo: You mentioned earlier that the cast got along so well. People in the audience remarked how well the cast did together. There wasn't a weak member of the cast. I have a friend who went, I think she said 17 times, to see the play...

Rick: Wow.

Jo: And it held together every night she saw it.

Rick: It was really that type of show. Something extra was going on there. I don't know exactly what it was but there was definitely an energy to that show and that cast. It was really something special to be a part of and I'm really glad I got a chance to do it. I almost didn't do it. I came directly from another show, a tour of *The Boyfriend* that Julie Andrews directed and I had another five weeks on that contract.



Rick came directly to *Shenandoah* from the national tour of *The Boy Friend*, appearing with Andrea Chamberlain

Photo by Diane Sobolewski for Goodspeed Opera House

I had an offer (for *Shenandoah*) and I wasn't really sure I could do it. I had a principal role (in *The Boy Friend*) and I didn't want to upset people by leaving. But after talking with Chase [Brock, co-choreographer for *Shenandoah*], he said it was something I should be a part of. So I decided it wasn't something I could pass up and I left [*The Boy Friend*] early, and I'm really glad that I did.

Jo: I am too. As I said, I thought you were tremendous in that role and it certainly suited you.

Rick: Well thank you. I think it really did suit my personality and who I am in a way. It was a great experience.

Jo: Brian Sutherland took the reins as Charlie when Scott left the play. It's unfair to compare two actors, but in general terms, can you say something about the feel of the show under each actor? What were some of the differences in the way each approached the role?

Rick: Well, obviously, they're two completely different people and they bring two totally different styles to the role. The character of Charlie Anderson remained intact, but it didn't change so much that you would say wow, that's totally different, if you had seen the show with Scott and then with Brian. But at the same time, being in the show each night, (the change) is kind of like having a new father.

You can really see the little nuances and the differences in line reading. I want to say Brian has more of a relaxed quality about him; when Scott comes on, there's more of an intensity that's visceral. Brian has an intensity too, but it's a different kind of intensity, as in the way he approaches a song. It's like comparing apples and oranges. I think Brian did a fantastic job in taking over from Scott because it was a large undertaking to fill Scott's shoes. Everyone was really pleased with how he did.

I would be happy to do the show again under either one of those guys. Brian is more of a trained singer, I think. Scott has more of a gruff, manly voice, whereas Brian has a higher singing voice; that makes a difference in the songs and how you hear them. Not good or bad, just different.

Jo: I know it's a slow process to get a show to Broadway but are they still interested in doing that with *Shenandoah*?

Rick: Oh, yes, there's definite interest. It's just a matter of getting the funds, number one, because as you know, it takes a few million dollars to do something like this. I think right now the climate couldn't be more perfect for a show like this in New York, with everything that's going on with the war and our state of affairs. I really think this show would be an outlet for people who are fed up with the way that things are going right now. But at the same time, producers are nervous about this kind of thing. They don't necessarily want to back a show that is so antiwar and they might be a little bit afraid.

Jo: As you said, though, it's an antiwar piece. It's not anti this war or anti the Vietnam war.

Rick: That's exactly right.

Jo: Scott said something at the National Press Conference to the effect that we really need to concentrate on other issues rather than fighting each other, such as the environment which affects the entire planet.

Jeff Calhoun deserves a lot of credit for his staging of this production. How much did you contribute to the interpretation of what your character was like?

Rick: I worked with Jeff a long time ago when he was Assistant Choreographer to Tommy Tune on the *Will Rogers Follies*. But this was my first time working with him as a director. I think Jeff's style is to work in broad strokes like a painter. Before he

puts in the fine touches, he paints the scene in broad strokes, blocking areas of the canvas.

Ultimately I think he knows what he wants, but he's willing to try different things to get there and in that way, he uses his actors as tools to fill in the fine details. We'll try a scene a number of times in different ways to find one way that's best for everyone—the breakfast scene, for instance. We tried that a lot of different ways. We worked on that for three days maybe. There are a lot of elements there.

Jo: I know you had cooked food one night because it smelled up the theatre.

Rick: We had real food every night.

Jo: There was only one time that I smelled cooked food.

Rick: Some nights it was more cooked than others, but we had real food every day—biscuits and creamed corn.

After the actors figure out what the director is going for and in which direction the play is going, they refine their character to fit that direction. It became clear pretty early on where we were going with this play. I think everyone was sort of thinking in unison, which was great. We knew that Jeff knew what he wanted. He just loves to do things over and over again in different ways to see what works best.

I really think that's the best way to work. There really is no right or wrong in something as serious as acting so it's a matter of finding what works best for the overall story. The only way to find something that everybody can agree on, is just to do it a variety of different ways.

Jo: That's not always the case in theatre, that everything works or that a cast works well together. But this show just was one of those magical moments where everything and everyone worked well together.

Rick: I had that feeling early on in rehearsal. I thought to myself that this was really something special. Really something different. This was a production that I can genuinely say I was really pleased and proud to be a part of. The antiwar statement is probably the most important thing to me in the show, but beyond that, artistically, I really think we did a great job.

Jo: It was a very moving show, not only for the women in the audience, but for the men as well.

Would you like to see the cast come back together if they do take the show to Broadway?

Rick: Yes. Definitely. I would love to see this cast in its exact form go to Broadway. I would love to bring those from DC to New York. I don't know if that would be possible, but there were some incredible local actors in this production and I'd love to see them come to New York to do the show. I just think so fondly of this company. There are some great, great people in this show. They are people I respect as performers, whom I've been able to learn from.

Jo: Are you staying in touch with each other?

Rick: Yes. Definitely. I think I've made some long term friends in this production. I knew a few people in the show beforehand, but I was really able to become close with a lot of the cast.

Jo: Are there any behind the scenes special moments with Scott that you could share?

Rick: Let's see. I don't want to give away too much information. <chuckling> There are so many moments I can remember of Scott just horsing around in rehearsals. He's just so affable. Like I said before, we could be doing a dramatic scene and Scott would make a joke right away and slough it off.

One thing I'll always remember the scene that happens near the end when Jacob is shot and Scott turns around, grabs the gun from me, and shoots the sniper. It was a quick moment but it was really intense. It was a scene I looked forward to doing with Scott each night. It was just so powerful and made such an impression on the audience that I'll always think of it fondly. Charlie was doing just the opposite of what he was professing—exactly the opposite of what he wanted—and he basically became a hypocrite. Of course who knows what we would do if we lost a loved one like that, but that's the irony in the show. He gets dragged into the war and ends up becoming just like the people he didn't want to be like—he becomes a killer.

Jo: It was interesting that Nathan was the one who stood up to Charlie, because I got the feeling that Nathan wasn't one of the sons who would normally stand up to his father.

Rick: Being the middle brother he was obviously trapped there. The two younger sons were just kids and they knew that. Jacob and James were the two older sons and the rest looked up to them. James was hot to go to war but nobody wanted to stand up to him. So Nathan was the one who kind of rode the fence. He sort of looked up to James and respected his ideology, but at the same time, Nathan thought that James was kind of a hothead and sometimes a jerk.

Nathan was also a clown. He liked to fool around with his younger brothers and tease them. One of the things I loved about it was he went from being a pain in the ass to (his sister's suitor) Sam—always teasing him and making fun of him and Jenny—to consoling him in the second act after Geoff (Packard) sings "The Only Home I Know." Sam puts his arm around Nathan and they walk off stage.

The whole thing comes full circle, which is one of the things I loved about the show. At the end, with the two older brothers dead, Nathan is next in line. He steps up and becomes the eldest with all the responsibilities that entails; people now look to him. I enjoyed that journey. It was a nice kind of journey to go through each night.

Jo : What's next on your plate?

Rick: I had an audition this week for *My Fair Lady* so we'll see what happens with that. Aside from that, I've got a couple of things in the works as far as auditions but nothing solid yet. That's the nature of the business.

I've worked pretty much three years straight without a break, probably six shows in a row, day after day with one day off, and only small breaks between shows. Going from a Broadway show, into *The Boy Friend*, and then right into *Shenandoah*, it's been quite a long haul.

My body needs a break because I've been doing a lot of dancing in the last few years and I've had some injuries (that resulted in) tendonitis and I had to have cortisone shots in my ankle. Unlike athletes, there's no off-season. So I took this week off to kind of relax and recuperate; it's kind of nice to just let myself go and relax for a change.

Jo: What do you see in your future say five or ten years down the road?

Rick: I love theatre and I love Broadway and I would love to continue in the same vein I'm in right now. I'm now at the point in my career where I'm not accepting ensemble roles, which are basically singing and dancing in the chorus. I'm not even auditioning for these. I've done my share of that and I want to move more into leading roles. So this was great for me, doing two principal roles back-to-back.

I've always wanted to be able to blend acting, singing, and dancing. I've taken a lot of classes in all of them and I've never really wanted to focus on just one. Hopefully, I'll be able to continue to blend all three together. I'm hoping some time in the future I can do a really meaty role where I can do all three equally, kind of the way Scott did in the '80s and '90s.

Jo: So you prefer staying with theatre?

Rick: I thought a lot about going to Los Angeles and trying to get into TV and movies, and I've already done some of that. But I've done so much of my work in theatre, that I think at this point I've made too much headway in New York. It wouldn't make a lot of sense to just go out to Los Angeles; making that move would be like starting over. I'd have to build a base, get people to know me, and that takes a long time unless you get really, really lucky.

It would be nice to segue from a theatre career to film sometime later, if I were to become so lucky as to become a leading person in the New York scene. But right now, I'm content to keep doing good work in theatre. I really would love to get back on Broadway at some point. We'll see. You never know. This business is exciting that way.

Jo: When you did *American Dreams*, what was your guest role?

Rick: I played Davey Jones. It wasn't actually a role. They do an *American Bandstand* segment—the Monkees was the band that was on—and I performed "Last Train to Clarksville." It was like being on the set of a tv show—a fake *American Bandstand* with the bleachers and the kids. We'd get up there and pretend that we were singing and playing, and it was fun. But that's TV. It's a whole different feel.

Jo: Thank you.

Rick: You're welcome.



Rick (l. to r.) with Rod Harrelson, Kevin Cahoon, Julie Barnes and Craig Ramsey from the cast of Broadway's *Chitty, Chitty, Bang, Bang* which ran from April to December 2005

photo by Linda Lenzi/Broadwayworld.com

A CONVERSATION WITH ANDREW SAMONSKY

by Jo Fox
May 23, 2006

Andrew Samonsky portrayed James Anderson, second oldest son and husband to Anne, at the Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C. From *Shenandoah*, Andrew went directly to the Los Angeles area to repeat his starring performance as Jon in *tick, tick...BOOM!* at the Coronet Theatre, where it enjoyed a very successful run, having been held over for two extra weeks. Andrew first performed the role in November 2005 when the show made its West Coast premiere at the Rubicon Theatre. Previously Andrew has appeared in Disney's *On the Record* tour, *Into the Woods*, *Forever Plaid*, and *Smokey Joe's Café*. On television, Andrew has been seen in *Guiding Light*.



Andrew Samonsky in rehearsal
as James Anderson in *Shenandoah*.

Photo by Mark Romant courtesy of Andrew Samonsky.

Jo: How's your back? [Andrew threw his back out during *Shenandoah* and had to drop from the show before the run ended.]

Andrew: Oh, much better, thank you. It was so disappointing to not be able to finish the show. There was nothing I could do, but at the same time I just felt bad that I had to leave.

Jo: Did you get a chance to at least go back for the cast party?

Andrew: I was going to, and I would have loved to, but sitting on a train for three hours [Andrew lives in New York], wasn't going to do my back any good. I wasn't able to make it down there, so I wrote a letter and I called people. Now I have a week to get ready for my next show.

Jo: What was it like working with Scott Bakula in *Shenandoah*?

Andrew: You're always curious to meet someone of fame or celebrity—how they might be different from ordinary people. I had already heard that Scott was a great person to work with, and it was the truth. Scott showed up and everyone took to him immediately. He was just so friendly and so generous, so down to earth and so professional. After awhile he was just one of the guys. Very quickly we were all joking and chit-chatting. I can honestly say I've never known an easier person to work with. His professionalism, generosity and really just his compassion—he always asked how everyone was doing and knew everyone's first name—was a real treat. Actually, it was quite an example to me, and hopefully to everyone else, of how to be. It's obvious that he's the same guy he was growing up. As far as Scott's work is concerned and the way he deals with people, it was wonderful to

watch him and learn from him how to be a good person and an excellent actor.

Jo: I see a lot of similar traits with you, Andrew, the little bit I got to know you. I see you going down a similar path.

Andrew: Thank you. That's an enormous compliment, so thank you. Scott just has an ease about him that just makes it easy for everyone else. That's exactly what you want to do in theatre too because you're dealing with such emotional and personal feelings or subjects. To be able to put a room at ease the way he does, it's a wonderful trait in general and in theatre.

Jo: If you had a chance to appear again with Scott, is there any particular play you'd like to do with him and if so, why that play?

Andrew: I thought about that and it's a hard question because this show and the way Scott and I were cast in it just seems so appropriate, it's hard to think of another show. If I could think of working again with Scott, I thought I'd want to do this show (*Shenandoah*) in New York with him. I let my hair grow out and of course, Scott had his hair grown out and you know what? I got pictures back of Scott and me standing next to each other and we do kind of look alike with our hair long.



Scott and Andrew at Opening Night Party, Ford's Theatre

Photo by Mark Romant courtesy of Andrew Samonsky

Jo: You do. You were perfectly cast.

Andrew: In the show, James is definitely his father's son and the most like his father. It was a real treat, looking up to him the way I did while I was there, and then to have that situation on stage as well, that was great—the father/son relationship. I would spend time watching him on stage and maybe picking up some little traits and characteristics he did as Charlie Anderson, then I'd work them into James. There was a likeness between James and Charlie, and it was such a treat to be able to have the chance to fill this out.

Jo: I was there for the opening weekend and then I came back for Scott's closing weekend and I saw the differences.

Andrew: I think that's the beautiful thing about theatre and doing long runs of shows. You really get to spend time with the character and the situation, just as James would have with his father after growing up over 28 years. I only had a couple of months with him, but spending time with each other on and off stage really helps define those characters onstage.

Jo: Did doing *Shenandoah* under the Lincoln box at Ford's Theatre hold any special meaning for you?

Andrew: Oh, of course. I mean obviously it's a show that deals with the Civil War and we're in the theatre where Abraham Lincoln was shot. To (director) Jeff Calhoun's credit in the opening sequence where we are all union and confederate soldiers, we have a moment where we sing the confederate song ("Raise the Flag of Dixie") straight at the Lincoln box. It was an eerie feeling to be acting out this contempt for the union army as a confederate soldier and directing it right at the Lincoln box. There's something wonderful and eerie about it. There's one line we do as confederate soldiers where we say of the union army, "they get beat and we get cheered and I get a hank of Abe Lincoln's beard." We're saying that line right at the Lincoln box as well. It was just so special to be able to do that in this theatre.

Jo: Doing such an emotional play every night and sometimes twice in one day is taxing, both physically and emotionally. Did you joke around a lot backstage to relieve tension and did it take awhile to shed the emotions at the end of the play each night?

Andrew: Not to tell the actors' secrets but you'd be very surprised by how much fun and goofing off we're doing backstage. There was that opening façade of the soldiers standing in the frame as the curtain came up and right before that curtain came up, we were joking and laughing and maybe only a couple of seconds before the curtain came up did we finally get into position. You have to have fun, especially in this type of a show. It's emotional and it's hard work. You have to keep your spirits up. You've got to learn how to leave the show at the theatre and not take it home with you. And all the goofing around and joking really adds to the camaraderie with the cast and the way we are on stage.

Jo: Did you ever see *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* – the episode about Chuckles the Clown?

Andrew: No.

Jo: She goes to the funeral service for Chuckles and everyone is crying and sad. She tries to be serious and bursts out laughing instead. I've always equated very emotional happenings this way. There's sometimes a tendency to laugh when it's a serious occasion to relieve that tension because it is so emotional.

Andrew: Absolutely. I think that's often the case in very tense situations. People might laugh. Comedy is often at the expense of someone's tragedy. It's an interesting kind of irony of life.

Jo: Brian Sutherland took the reins as Charlie Anderson when Scott left the play. It's unfair to compare the two actors, but in general terms, can you say something about the feel of the show under each actor? What were some of the differences in the way each approached the role?

Andrew: That's a great question. Scott, of course, was the original Charlie Anderson in this production and, in my opinion, did a phenomenal job. I had actually worked with Brian Sutherland before in another show and I knew he was also a phenomenal performer. I wasn't worried about Brian not being able to do a great job. It's always a difficult task to come in and take over a role, especially such a big role as Charlie Anderson, but he came in and he did a fantastic job. For someone to take over a role, they have to be true to what the original person had done but at the same time, somehow be able to make it their own. He was coming in to a cast that's already been together for two months and that's gotten comfortable with Scott Bakula, after

working out little things here and there. Then Brian comes in and it all changes, because he's not going to do it the same way. It was interesting, though. Brian was definitely different. There was something a little more personable about Brian's Charlie. He didn't have quite the harsh farmer quality that Scott had brought to the character so well. But all the jokes and all the scenes played just as well. The humor was still there and the emotions were still there. It's hard to compare them. They attacked the role kind of their own way. A lot of credit to Brian to be able to come in and have the show still work so very well. But you get comfortable with Scott and you really love doing the show with Scott. Then it changes and it takes a couple of weeks to get comfortable with Brian, which is all I really had before I hurt my back and had to leave the show. Having those two weeks with Brian was an interesting learning process.



Andrew and Bret Shuford at the stage door of Ford's. Bret played younger brother, John Anderson.

Photo by Lily Lim

Jo: Jeff Calhoun deserves a lot of credit for his staging of this production. How much did you contribute to the interpretation of what your character was like?

Andrew: Jeff Calhoun deserves a ton of credit for the success of this production. But what he did from the very beginning, from the very first rehearsal, he made it very clear that he wanted everybody in this cast and on the creative team to contribute. He wanted them to offer their own ideas whenever they wanted to, and as much as they could. I think that's how a director should work. You hire creative people and you let them create. That's exactly what Jeff Calhoun did and I give him credit for the results of the show. I think it was a phenomenally directed show. He allowed his actors to find their characters on their own; he would guide us, but it was really up to us to make those decisions. I would have conversations with him about how I think James might be this way or that way, and Jeff would offer his advice. We would share ideas, then go back into rehearsal and try it again. It was actually quite a difficult rehearsal process for me to find James, but in the end I was really happy with how James turned out. That was simply Jeff allowing us to do what we do as actors. Of course, he directed everything else which was just gorgeous.

Jo: How did you grow into your part from opening weekend to closing? One thing I noticed – the accents were stronger with the whole cast toward the end of Scott's run in *Shenandoah*. Was there anything else?

Andrew: Over the course of a long run when you're doing a show over and over, you need to find new ways to keep it fresh. If you do the same thing over and over, you start running on auto-

pilot. You might call it growing over the course of the run but it evolves. Little things change here and there. That's not to say that what it was before wasn't good. It's just that in an effort to keep things fresh, little things would change, like the delivery of lines, or the interaction between characters will change. And you don't really notice it while it's happening through the course of the run. Probably what would be a really interesting experiment would be to watch the show at the beginning and then again at the end. You're probably the expert on this. We don't get to see it while we're on stage, but there's such a metamorphosis over time. Probably the show at the beginning is quite a bit different from the show at the end.

Jo: I never saw one show for so many performances in my entire life. I went to seven in one week, and it held together every single performance. If something is weak, your mind starts to wander, but I never had that happen, no matter who was on stage. Every actor up there commanded attention throughout the play and deserves credit. This was a Broadway production whether it was on Broadway or not. It was probably the highest quality performance I've ever seen, including those I've seen on Broadway.

Andrew: Well, thank you so much. We all kind of felt that way. I think we are all so proud of the show itself and the material that we really gave it our all. There are not a lot of shows on Broadway now with this kind of substance. It was exciting for us to think that this show had that kind of potential to reach audiences with the message it has. We all took it very seriously and we are all very proud of it. There's no word yet but we still have high hopes that it does go to Broadway. We're keeping our fingers crossed.

Jo: I'd love to get to see it again with the same cast.

Andrew: It's a fickle business. Everyone wants the show to go to Broadway and I think this show, more than any other show I've been in, has the legs to get there. Unfortunately, it's not up to us. No official news yet. There have been rumors but that's all. Nothing I can say.

Jo: Have you heard about the musical that Ford's is doing at the end of next season? It's called *Meet John Doe*. It sounds like an interesting play for several of the cast from *Shenandoah*.

Andrew: I hadn't heard, but there are some phenomenal actors in *Shenandoah* who live in Washington DC. Maybe they'll be in that show as well.



**Andrew and Jo
Fox
at the stage door
of Ford's**

Photo by Teresa Patri

Jo: Are there any behind the scenes special moments with Scott that you could share? Any pranks?

Andrew: Well, I think one of Scott's fans sent us a picture of Scott when he played a woman on *Quantum Leap*, when he was in the trio of women singers. So we posted it in the dressing room. It was kind of our little good luck picture. It was great fun. Scott has such a good sense of humor about himself. He's a big St. Louis Cardinals' fan and I'm a big New York Yankees' fan and we're always ragging on each other about that. Scott, he's always having fun whenever he can. There's a special kind of feeling for Scott and working with him.

Jo: What's next on your plate after *tick, tick...BOOM!*?

Andrew: Unfortunately, nothing after it. But there are all these possibilities. *Tick, tick...BOOM!* will play in West Hollywood for the summer. I plan to go back to New York after that. If there's any more forward motion with *Shenandoah* moving to Broadway we'll see about that. There's also talk about *tick, tick...BOOM!* moving to New York after Los Angeles but that's all up in the air. As you know, that's the actor's life—you audition for the show, do the show, and then audition for another show.

Jo: Where would you like to be five or ten years from now?

Andrew: I know this interview is the result of Scott Bakula but to be honest, the more I got to know Scott and the wonderful history of his career, who cannot want to aspire to a career like Scott's? He started in New York just like me, doing plays and musicals, then moved to Los Angeles and, of course, had wonderful success there. He's done movies and television and such a wide range of acting jobs, that any actor would be jealous. I think just dabbling in everything like that, being open to everything and be good at everything—and Scott definitely has proven that—would be a great career to aspire to. Absolutely.

Jo: What are your thoughts about soap operas? I know you did *Guiding Light*. What would you prefer to do if you had a choice? TV or musicals?

Andrew: I grew up with a passion for music. As much as I love acting, I think music has always been my first love. I went to undergraduate school singing and musicals have a real special spot in my heart. They combine everything—acting, singing, and dancing. There's a lot of money in TV and film which makes it very attractive, and acting is wonderful in and of itself, but I would never want to limit myself.

Jo: Any comments about working on Steven Sondheim and Jonathan Larson productions? Both of these composers are edgier than *Shenandoah*. Do you find their works more challenging?

Andrew: *Shenandoah* is a traditional musical but it definitely had its own set of challenges. Creating a character that lived in the 1860's on a farm in Virginia. How do you become that person? Doing a Sondheim musical or a Larson musical, you have a little more ability to relate to those characters. In some ways, that's easier. Yet they are more complex musically. Every show has its own challenges. That's what makes it exciting.

Jo: How did you come to be with Disney's *On the Record*?

Andrew: Being in the right place at the right time. I had auditioned for the casting director about a year beforehand. I think they auditioned the entire city of New York for the role I was up for. They didn't seem to like anyone. They were just looking around for anyone else they hadn't auditioned yet. I was called in because I was new to New York and they didn't know who I was yet. Then they may have remembered me from a year ago. I think

the moment I walked in the director was whoops, there he is, that's the character, and right after that I was the guy. That's kind of the way it works sometimes. Hopefully, you're exactly what they are looking for, you do your best, and you leave the rest up to fate.

It was a very similar situation with *Shenandoah*. I walked in and it was immediate. Some auditions you don't know if you did well or not. You try to figure out how you did and what their reactions were. But with *Shenandoah* I walked in, auditioned, and could tell immediately that it was good and I was who they wanted for James. They were saying everything but "you're cast." That was great.

Jo: I read that Scott had a similar experience with *Quantum Leap*. Don Bellisario said afterward that he had all he could do to keep from hiring Scott on the spot, but he knew immediately that Scott was Sam Beckett.

Andrew: They just want to make us crazy and make us wait.

Jo: Andrew, it's been a pleasure. Thank you. And good luck with your career. I hope I get to see you in other performances.

Andrew: Please stay in touch. I had a nice talk with Scott before he left and I hope to stay in touch with him in Los Angeles. I hope if he has a chance, he can come see the show while I'm out there. I don't think this is the end for Scott and me, or me and you.

**Everything You Wanted to Know About *Shenandoah* and More
IN HIS OWN WORDS
Scott Greets His Fans on March 18 & 25, 2006
Compiled by Maret Johnson**

Through cooperation with Jay Schwartz, Scott enthusiastically greeted a large group fans in the theater after each of the Saturday evening performances at the start of the *Shenandoah* run. On March 18 (the weekend of the preview performances) Scott graciously spent an hour answering everyone's questions.

On March 25, although there had also been a matinee, Scott was once again humorous and relaxed, and showed only minimal signs of fatigue (he occasionally stood still) as he answered our questions from in front of the orchestra pit. Since some of the same questions had been asked both weekends, this piece reflects a combination of Scott's remarks.



Scott at March 25 Meet & Greet

Photo by Maret Johnson

Topics discussed included—

His Hair Length and Style: <Jokingly> Star Trek was a wig, (my hair) was beneath it all the time, for four years.

<Genuinely> I've cut my hair a couple of times since last March. Jeff called me sometime in the spring [of 2005] and started talking about

this show. It seemed like we were going to get more serious, so I started to let it grow. It's different, but if you look back at some of the hairdos back in those times, they were way out. They had stuff plastered and the guys had big poofy things on the sides. You know who had a great look? Jefferson Davis—man, he had a head of hair.

Washington, D.C. I love it here in Washington, D.C. and every time that I am here, I have a great time. But we have been working so hard that I haven't had a chance to do anything yet. Now that we are open and if we get past tomorrow, we can start having a normal (schedule)...what ever that is. It is not like I am here vacationing, I have something to do every night, but I am looking forward to Cherry Blossom Time. I've been here for that before, and it's coming right around the corner. So I am looking forward to that, and I am anxious to have a little rest from rehearsal. We stopped rehearsing on Thursday.

Being Back in the Theatre: The Ford's Theatre staff has said so many nice things about all of you, how great you were, and how nice and pleasant you were on the phone.

About the Ghost: No, I haven't (seen the ghost), but someone was telling me that they did something, and I think that the ghost left, but I don't think that it was intentional. I don't remember the ghost stories from the last time; I know that I haven't seen one. If you see little things going around the theater, somebody please tell me.

The Audience Response: It is great to be in the theatre and it is great to be in 'this' theatre. It is special to do this show here. And the audiences have been wonderful, so receptive and you guys have been a big part of that so far. Even the night that nobody was going to be here, a couple of you got in (to see it) Wednesday night. I appreciated it. It is like the sitcom situation; you have to keep laughing as if you've never seen it before, like it is so funny.

Have you ever sat in a sitcom audience and they show a scene and they say, "Now, let's all pretend that we have never seen it and we have to laugh in the exact same places for about the fourth time." It's like, ha ha ha (demonstrated). <Genuine laughter in response> But you have been a really, really tremendous audience.

This afternoon we had a large group of Red Hat Ladies and they were great. My gosh, Sam [when he asks Charlie's blessing] and I could have sat and talked about anything for a half hour and they would have been hysterical. I think that scene is almost word for word from

the movie. The routine is so wonderful in the movie and you can't beat good words.

The Play and Jeff: (Jeff) is really great, he has a great personality, a great demeanor; really sweet and great with everybody. He has never raised his voice at all, never, and that is unusual since everybody loses it at times. The orchestra is so great. I can't tell you how responsible Jeff is for all of it.

He insisted that I do the role, I tried to get out of it a few times but the last time, he said, "I have already hired the family and they all look like you, so you have to do this." May of last year, he came and showed me sketches. "Well, there is going to be a frame with 'The Nation Mourns' under it. We are going to do this, this and this." I said, "Okay."

He had never seen the show so (he) went from scratch. I didn't tell him anything. I said please, go and reinvent the wheel, reinvent (the show) because it needed it. Some of these folks are his *Big River* people that he worked with at Ford's. I didn't see that show but I heard that it was outstanding. A lot of people don't realize it, but (Jeff) choreographed it, staged it, conceived it, reconceived it, and put all of these wonderful, professional people together. It was really important (that he did it his way).

The Cast: This cast is really talented, and all of them are so unique, and they're great singers, really good and very professional.

Those kids are wonderful. (Just before previews) we had 12-15 people out with the flu. Kevin Clay, who plays the Boy, had a fever of 102° for five days and when you are little, you know that it really knocks you out. He was sick for more than a week and he picked up (the added dance routine) in an afternoon. I said, "How much dance training have you had?" "Nothing really, just doing shows." That is how natural he is, he is amazing. He is only 13 years old but he cracks me up, he's so funny. I love a kid that age—he is right there, he is real. You know, you have these images of yourself when you were younger; I think about my sports teacher when I played, was I as good on those teams? No.

But he has talent—he and Michael Mainwaring both have beautiful voices. You don't really get to hear their voices because they have kind of choppy songs. Their song, *Why Am I Me?*, should have been the *Quantum Leap* song, because it summed up the whole series; people switch places. It would have saved Don (Bellisario) a lot of sweat.

The Scene Changes: The show has never been done this way; if you have never seen the original show, it was very traditional. You do a scene and it would go black and the scenery was changed, then you would wait for the next scene. Then it would come up and black out again. This just dances beautifully and paces you. It is shorter than the original, considerably shorter, for the show's benefit and the audience too; the things that he took out are things that didn't move the show along.

Deleted Songs and Scenes: Did you like *Violets and Silverbells*? You and my mom!

If you really analyze what that song was—it is a "list song" and we just had a list song with *Beautiful Pair*. "You are the left hand, I am the right; you are the full moon, I am the night." Now going to *Violets and Silverbells*: "Grapes on the vine, flowers grow,"—these guys really liked their flowers, Man oh man! I am singing about Marigolds, the birdies, the flowers, the trees, and the raindrops. I don't know what they were thinking; maybe they were smoking flowers. They were into those flower metaphors.

So we lost that. I know that it is hard because some people miss James and Anne's reprise of that. But Jeff called me early on and said, "We're taking the dance out of *It's a Boy*." I went, "Oh, really!" I

hadn't thought about it, (but) I was getting all excited about that (scene). But Jeff said, "People are tired by that time in the first act and they want to get to the intermission. Are you okay with that?" I said, "Well, I'm okay." I knew that we could always put it back in.

Jeff added stuff when scene changes didn't work. We had to add choreography to (have time to) take the fence out, and he did that in a day, while those guys picked it up in an afternoon.

The show used to go back to the church, with the whole (cast) coming into the church. The family is late again, they're much smaller, and Reverend Bird had a different attitude toward the family. Finally the boy came into the church. Jeff asked, "Why are we going back to that church to bring the boy home?"

And I said, "Besides that, how does the boy know to go to the church? He is wandering back across the countryside by himself. Let's see, where is everybody? I know I will go to the church and maybe they will be there. I am not going to wait here at home; that would be silly." That's over-thinking it, and you don't want to over-think stuff.

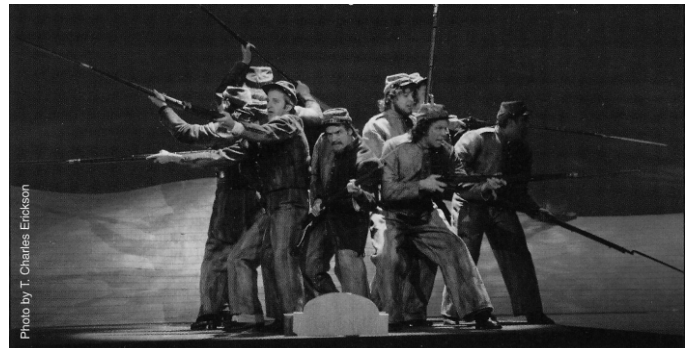
We were happy not to go back to the church again. We didn't know if we could make that work. The kid coming up and everything, it feels right but it was a kind of a big chance because there is so much that happened from when Jacob gets shot to the end of the piece. If you check off all the events, it is a lot to ask the audience to track and stay with it, to stay in that same emotional place and then the boy comes back.

His Favorite Songs in the Play: I am just lucky that this show is full of them. I like them all, I really do. I like that *It's a Boy* is a group number now, because it never used to be.

Forgetting the Lyrics or Dialog Onstage: It is always my worst nightmare—a constant nightmare that will wake me up. Mom keeps asking me the same thing, "How is your memory?" I say, "It's fine, but let's not talk about it." It's all part of the acting machine; of getting back to speed, but I'm used to being constantly on (that machine). You try to make every performance perfect, which of course you never can, but you are shooting for it every time. You guys don't know, but I know. It's great training for your mind to just keep working it, memorizing and trying to keep it quick and fast. I have a lot of words in this one again and the lyrics, too.

The Opening: Gosh, it is a great singing company, that opening number...how about that? The opening number is great musically but it's never been staged like this; the show starts off in a totally different way than ever before.

That coat is great! I want everybody to applaud it, but please don't do it. I hesitate to even say it, but the first time all of those guys turned around in their uniforms from gray to blue, I was watching and I applauded. I assured the costume designer (Tobin Ost), "Your costumes are going to get applause." He said, "I hope not."



Making the Train Scene Realistic: For the limited space we had, (they worked hard) to pull that kind of thing off and make it work.

Jeff kept saying, "Tobin is really good with spatial relationships and scale." Thank goodness he is, because I mean you have this open space and well, how big should the frame be? How big should the words be? It is not an easy thing to put on a drawing board. How big should the well be? The bed? The whole thing, all of that stuff is so pretty. We have little monitors and I catch myself just staring at the show backstage and it is so beautiful.

It changes so much and there is so much that I haven't seen, because they keep coming up with (new) lighting. We had to stop sneaking out to watch it, so I haven't seen the finished product. But it is just gorgeous, I am jealous that you get to see (it all).

The Fight Scene: Oh! The fight scene, we have had a good time with that, but it is a lot of work. I didn't get hurt, just little scraps and cuts. Mr. Carol went through the curtain over there <pointing to the stage left rise> one night. He landed on his backside, feet dangling out, I had to reach in and pull him back again. "Get back up here, Mr. Carol. You can't get out of the fight that way." He had had a bad day; he had fallen off the back of the stage so he was on one leg—"one wheel" as he said—so he was trying to favor that. It was a very difficult move that he has (to perform) and he missed it. The poor sound guy was standing there while the curtain was open. He was totally freaked out <demonstrating staring and waving>, "Chris came flying through there and everybody was looking at me." Sound guys don't want to be on stage or even be seen by the audience.

Audience Reactions: I did hear on the monitor coming back up from the first act and saw that there were a lot of kids here. I heard someone say, "Are we staying for the second half?" I wanted to look at them and say, "Who said that?" But I didn't see any empty chairs really.

Is it emotional for me? Oh yeah, but I get a lot of help from the cast. Little Megan (as Jenny) is so great. She is really present every night and is (right) there, as is Garrett (Anne) at the end of the first act. The baby in that scene always gets to me, but you know you get helped along—pushed along by the other people onstage, and the audience.

It is hard to hear people sobbing, to tune that out, but you have to take it all in, just as you take in the laughter. The listening is actually the best part, you know, the stillness. That is what I enjoy as much as anything.

Going to Broadway: Everybody hopes for that since the show hasn't been revived in so long in New York. There has always been that conversation but nothing goes anywhere until you have had success somewhere. Jeff has mounted his version of the show to see if it works and I think that he is finding out, with the response that we are getting, that the play is working, the time for the show is right, it certainly resonates. It is hard to do the show; it is hard to say some of the things just because it's so present.

You read the paper and war is all over it. A friend of mine was here on Thursday night. She is a flight attendant and she had recently flown back to L.A. with a mother holding a cardboard box with her son's ashes on her lap (after coming) to pick them up. In LA, they asked everybody to wait and let this mom exit the plane with her son. Everybody sat very still and let her walk off and (they) applauded. But there's always a constant reminder. The journey that this piece takes you on is powerful and it stands on its own. But there is a resonance to it right now and we feel it every performance.

It is amazing if you think about it, the words that were written 100 years ago, they're still ringing true today. I can't get through the first number without thinking about all of that. The irony is in every lyric that I am singing.

We've definitely had the conversation about going to Broadway, but first things first. (You've) done your part by being here and getting us off to a good start. You've really helped (fill) the house.

Theater Work and Family: Chelsea and I are working out the kids' lives, but I am telling people that it is a lot easier to be in this business when you are single. Being in the theatre is a different life and demands different kinds of things on your life. Acting is a self-motivated profession; it is all about doing your own thing on stage, so it is hard to do it with a family since you are not outwardly directed.

When I did this play before, I didn't have kids and never understood the meaning behind this piece.

Does my daughter have any definite plans after graduation? No, she is going to work and maybe do some traveling, do some Peace Corp work, something like that. She wants to do those types of things for a while, and we'll see. She is determined, and she likes to do her own thing, so I encourage that.

On Running: I still run, and my mother is very upset about that. She doesn't want me to exercise or anything, "Just be in the show, don't wear yourself out." But running helps me, I ran a lot up until two weeks ago, then I stopped the long ones. I am just grabbing short ones to loosen my body up.

Yes running relieves stress, but (I) get a lot (of stress) out while doing this show, and I don't have a lot of extra time right now. It is part of my philosophy that you can't have 'just enough.' You have to have more, to have the stamina and energy. In order to do that, I need to do more than just the show. I tried that before, with *3 Guys Naked from the Waist Down*, but we barely made it to the end of the week.

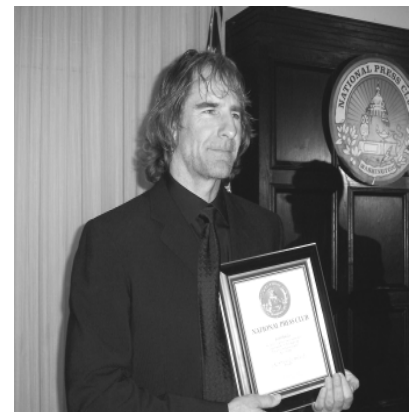
Sure, I could have done this show without having become a runner, but I have changed my philosophy about my singing, my health, and my own physical conditioning in the last five or six years, so it is hard to know the outcome yet. I know that I couldn't have sung the show, but the jury is still out <jokingly> since I haven't finished the weekend yet [meaning two more shows on Sunday].

Future Plans: No, I don't have anything planned right now. Jay will let you know. I've stayed out of TV for over a year now, and I'm looking for something to do in New York, but timing is always an issue for me. So I am going to finish this run, and we will see what happens with this show and other projects. I would like to do something in New York.

(I know appearing on the east coast) is a little shorter journey—which is good—for you East coasters and the Western Europeans. I've been asked to do things in the West End [London theatre] but I haven't been able to work that out. I would absolutely love to do that, but it's hard finding the time with my schedule and the kids.

Mr. Bakula Goes to Washington!

On April 19, Scott was the featured speaker at the National Press Club's Newsmaker Luncheon in Washington, D.C. Scott spoke of his experiences returning to the stage in *Shenandoah*, and of starring in the Civil War-themed show while America debates its involvement in another military conflict.



News item and photo by Donna Dickenson

BROADWAY BOUND

SCOTT BAKULA'S THEATRE CAREER - PART 2

By Sharon Major

With research assistance from Debbie O'Brien

Grease

After the conclusion of *The Baker's Wife* run, Scott headed back east and was cast as Johnny Casino/Teen Angel in *Grease*, the first production of the season for "An Evening Dinner Theater," in Elmsford, New York, about 20 miles north of New York City. The run began in September, just after Labor Day and continued through early November 1980, but Scott left the show before the run ended.

When *Grease* debuted on Broadway in 1972 it did not win any awards for its writers/composers Jim Jacobs and Warren Casey, yet overall the production was nominated for seven Tony's and two Drama Desk Awards. Nevertheless, its continuous run for over eight years (until 1980) makes it one of the most successful and longest running shows on Broadway, remaining popular even after the release of a top-grossing film in 1978. Recalling the Rock & Roll heyday of the 1950s, the musical weaves the highlights and heartbreak of adolescent concerns into a tapestry based upon a sweetheart tale of a 'good' girl and a 'greaser' guy trying to break out of their stereotypical identities. Its exuberant score and relevance to young people have made the musical a staple of theater companies across America.

Scott's role was not the lead, but rather he played a smaller dual role, making an appearance only in Act 2. As rock star Johnny Casino, Scott performed the animated "Born to Hand Jive," and in the very next scene appeared as Teen Angel, performing a song that sweetly urges a "Beauty School Dropout" to return to high school and graduate.



**Scott as
Teen Angel
in *Grease***

Original
photography by
Michael Ortiz;

Photograph from
wall exhibit
courtesy of Karen
Scheffler and the
Westchester
Broadway Theatre

The theater in Elmsford is now known as the Westchester Broadway Theatre, but photographs from past productions are on display for theatergoers, including the one above of Scott in his Teen Angel attire. The theater did not maintain records regarding the exact dates that Scott may have remained with the show, but his involvement with the following production surely meant that he had left by mid-October.

Ta-Dah!

Shifting from a musical with guitar strings to one with a string ensemble, Scott took a role in a new musical written by Hy Conrad, called *Ta-Dah!* The production, directed by Francis Soeder, opened November 5, 1980 and ran until November 23 at the American Theater of Actors in New York City.

Incorporating sketch comedy and songs, the show is based upon Shakespeare's farce *Much Ado About Nothing* and is essentially a play within a play. The characters believe they have been performing this Shakespearean play for over 400 years and wish to somehow break free and develop their own identities (including one member of the cast who seems intent on performing magic tricks and announcing Ta-dah!) Yet expressing their underlying desires to the audience and attempting to change their motivation doesn't seem to alter the progression of the plot and they eventually wind up at the end of the tale in spite of their efforts.

Here Scott portrays Benedick, a confirmed bachelor with swagger to spare, who as the tale unfolds, falls for Beatrice (Dee Hoty), a lady who has little countenance for men; yet because the plot dictates, she succumbs to Benedick's charms. Although both are supporting players in this incarnation, Benedick sums up the show in Act 1 with a catchy song titled, "As Simple as It Seems," which begins:

"Start off with a simple love story/ Not too heavy on theme/
Add one subplot, two allegories/ Mix in villains and schemes/
Lace it with suspicion and doubt/ See how much sedition comes out/
And life is not as simple as it seems"

Later in Act 1, hearing rumors of Beatrice's affection for him, he uncontrollably falls for her with a song called, "Suddenly." Beginning as a solo, Benedick sings:

"Suddenly the clouds all fade away/ Suddenly the haze has lifted/
Just when I believed the sky's a shade of gray/ Suddenly the breeze has shifted/
Turning gray to blue/ A simple thing to do/
Suddenly I'm gazing at a sky I never knew..."

After a couple of stanzas and refrains, Beatrice joins in, singing contrapuntally of her infatuation with Benedick.

Scott sings along with the rest of the company in several of the other numbers, as well as reprising "As Simple as It Seems" in a duet with Hoty near the end of the second act.

"It is the music, also by Conrad, and the performers that contributed most to *Ta-Dah!* ... (T)he piece had a lot of charm, but much of it was due to a lovely chamber ensemble and... the rest by several winning actors."¹

With only the briefest time off for the holidays, Scott needed little preparation for his next role, as he was once again portraying Jesus in *Godspell*.

Godspell, Equity Library Theatre

Established in 1947, the theater company with the strange sounding name—Equity Library Theatre—was created to showcase the talent of Equity union members, initially presenting plays in the public domain in public libraries throughout the city. In true showcase format, actors were not paid but rather given the chance to be seen by directors and casting agents. Eventually the Equity Library Theatre referred to the Master Theater located on Riverside Dr. featuring more current, well-established fare.

Midway through their 38th season, Equity Library Theater mounted a revival of *Godspell*, running from January 8 to February 1, 1981.

(l. to r.) Alynne Amkraut, Andy Roth, Scott, Liz Callaway, Kevin Rogers

Photo by Gary Wheeler



In this production, with William Koch directing a cast of ten, Scott once again portrayed Jesus. Andy Roth (below) performed the dual role of John the Baptist/Judas. Just as every production of *Godspell* varies in presentation, this was no different. The usual carnival-like enthusiasm was evident. "Dressed for the most part in t-shirts and jeans, they play musical instruments, put on puppet shows and magic shows, do soft-shoe dances and evoke a flash of Mae West, Katherine Hepburn and the Keystone Kops."²

But Koch added an international facet to some of the parables; one is set in Japan, performed in kimonos; "Turn Back Oh Man" is sung in a thick German accent; and in another, "lawyers, Pharisees and hypocrites are portrayed as coneheads, a la *Saturday Night Live*, with Father Guido Sarducci-type Italian accents."³



Scott and
Andy Roth
in rehearsal

Daily News photo

Peter Parker, Artistic Associate at the Paper Mill Playhouse (where Scott had previously appeared in two productions of *Shenandoah*) recently wrote me, "I actually saw young Bakula play 'Jesus' in *Godspell* at Equity Library Theatre (and) was very impressed with the performance. Since his success in television, we've tried several times to get him to appear again (at the Paper Mill) to no avail."

Other reviews at the time were also favorable. The *New York Times* gave an excellent review saying, "The 10 members of the cast...are an unusually talented lot...In the key role of Jesus, Scott Bakula manages to be both authoritative and genially hip without confusing one with the other...(T)he consistent excellence of every member of the cast is impressive."²

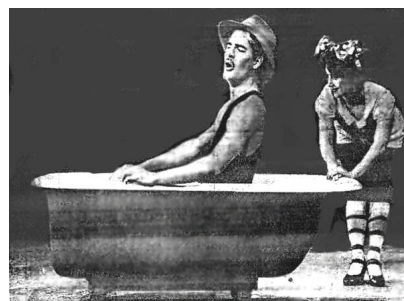
One reviewer predicted "at least five [of the ensemble] seem ready to flit out at any moment from regional and stock work to Broadway...(and) make it big soon (including) tall, blond Scott Bakula..."⁴ Perhaps for Bakula that move to Broadway would come via a try-out for a new musical in upstate New York.

Keystone

Immediately after *Godspell*, Scott starred as Mack Sennett, famous director and movie mogul during the silent film era, in *Keystone*. The musical, directed by Gideon Y. Schein, ran from March 4-22, 1981 way, way, off-Broadway—in Rochester, New York on the southern shore of Lake Ontario, at the Geva Theater (formerly known as GeVa, for Genessee Valley). Previews began on February 27.

This "world premiere" came after John McKellar totally reworked Dion McGregor's book and lyrics, to accompany the score created by Lance Mulcahy. The music has a piano ragtime flavor and McKellar's "hearts and flowers sentiment is admirably suited to the Sennett style" in this "small but classy show."⁵ World-class designer Desmond Heeley, a long-time friend of Mulcahy, designed the sets for the production, describing *Keystone* as "melodic and witty and in no way a pastiche."⁶

Mack Sennett's protégé and on-again off-again lover, Mabel Normand, is played by Ann Morrison, and the other eight members of the cast portray various characters familiar to the era. With over two dozen songs and 70 costumes, the evening is a tour-de-force. Most of the songs are upbeat, with clever comical lyrics, accompanied by two pianists and a percussionist.



Mack croons "Washing My Worries Away" for one of his 'flickers' while attended by one of his bathing beauties (Valerie Beamon)

Photo by Reed Hoffman for the Rochester Times-Union

"Why get yourself in a lather?! Wouldn't you rather just stay
Dreaming your dreams in the bathtub/ Washing your worries away?"

"Bakula and Morrison are an effectively feisty pair as Mack and Mabel."⁷ But the two display a much broader range of emotions in their roles. "Ann Morrison—funny, lovely, touching, and alternately raucous and vulnerable—sings deliciously."⁸

Mack clearly charmed Mabel, and the audience as well. Bakula was hailed as a "disconcertingly sexy Sennett, but convincingly likable even in the unsympathetic moments, and manages his vocally wide-ranging songs quite well."⁸



Coquettish
Ann Morrison
as Mabel Normand

Additionally, there was a "delightful moment midway through the first act when the cast literally produced a one-reel silent comedy through the magic of strobe lights."⁹ "Its concept is that the films are real, the private lives stylized."⁸ Or as Mack asks Mabel at the end, "Was it all real?" To which she replies, "The flickers were Mack; I don't know about all of us."

Scott's connection to *Keystone* ended in Rochester. Nevertheless, aspirations for a Broadway production did not abate and nearly a year later (January 1982) a different production (without Morrison or Bakula) was mounted closer to New York City, at the McCarter Theater in Princeton, New Jersey. This was followed in 1983 with a cast recording and a similar production filmed in association with the McCarter Theater. This latter effort was broadcast by a local PBS station in New Jersey, with Morrison once again featured in the role of Mabel.

I Love My Wife, Cincinnati, Ohio

Scott spent the summer of 1981 performing in a musical comedy called *I Love My Wife*, back in his old stomping grounds in Ohio. Returning once more to the Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, this time at the Thompson Shelterhouse indoor theater, the musical opened the "Hot Summer Nights" season on June 25 and ran through August 2.

Originally *I Love My Wife* was a Broadway hit; it won two Tony's and three Drama Desk awards in 1977 and ran for more than two years at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre. Book and lyrics were written by Michael Stewart with music composed and arranged by Cy Coleman (one of the Drama Desk Award winners). "Cy Coleman's music runs the gamut from blues to barrelhouse, from country and western to marching band."¹⁰

Reminiscent of the movie *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice*, the action is set in Trenton, New Jersey and revolves around two married couples whose husbands feel that the sexual spark of their marriage will be improved by swapping wives. Scott plays Wally, and Nancy Hoffman plays his wife, Monica. Jill Hoel, previously seen in the "Park" productions of *Magic to Do* and *The Baker's Wife*, plays Cleo, wife of Alvin, performed by Stephen Joseph. Like the original Broadway version, the cast includes four musicians (including this production's director/choreographer Worth Gardner) who add to the merriment by playing their instruments onstage, singing backup, moving props and sets, and taking smaller roles.



Scott as Wally

Photo by Sandy Underwood

While the effervescent musical score propels the evening along, it's hard to imagine that the risqué lyrics and straight-forward dialog ever sounded fresh. With no particularly clever rhymes or double-entendres, citing song lyrics seems superfluous. The most humorous scene—the bedroom scene—is non-musical, but requires strict choreography. Much of the action takes place under the sheets as the two couples attempt to master the technique necessary for a foursome. In the end nothing really happens and the play ends with the guys singing the title song, "I Love My Wife."

Critics found the production entertaining and deemed it a hit. "The show is fluff—but such well-done, marvelously played and

superbly directed and choreographed fluff—that it's well worth an evening. And in many ways the production is a spoof on the fluff it presents...The acting and singing are uniformly excellent. All four principals, especially Bakula and Hoffman, put in top performances—whether singing, dancing or acting....'Wife' has its raunchy moments...but the four players are so enthusiastic and wholesome they pull the show off."¹¹

I Love My Wife, Elmsford, New York

Directly from Cincinnati, Scott went on to reprise his role as Wally in a different production of *I Love My Wife*, this one back at An Evening Dinner Theater in Elmsford, New York, the same theater at which he had appeared in *Grease* the year before. This production ran from September 18 to November 8, 1981, starring Charles Repole as Wally's buddy, Alvin. Randy Graff played Alvin's wife, Cleo, and Jacqueline Reilly was Wally's wife, Monica.



Charles Repole, Scott and Jacqueline Reilly

Photo by Michael Ortiz from
The Reporter Dispatch

Because of the "carefully orchestrated and intricate maneuvers" required in the bedroom scene, rehearsals

began several weeks before opening. In a newspaper interview, Repole said that even after opening "we have to rehearse the bedroom scene every so often, so it doesn't become sloppy." Nevertheless, mishaps can occur. Instead of falling out of bed onto his rear end, Repole once landed on his stomach. On another occasion, "Bakula's underpants ripped one night, but the audience never found out." And there is always the danger of a bed collapse! Repole insisted that the theme of the musical is really sentimental. "It says the grass isn't greener on the other side of the hill...The play is about love."¹²

Because of the musical's popularity with audiences on Broadway and in regional productions, one can only assume that the success of the production must depend more on the comedic talents and charisma of the performers than on the material itself. In other words, I guess you had to be there.

Having successfully performed in so many Broadway hits in regional and off-Broadway theaters, Scott was more than ready to finally take a place on the Great White Way.

Is There Life After High School?

There are several routes when getting a show to Broadway. Even with proven hit-makers on board, mounting a production with out-of-town tryouts is no guarantee that the show will succeed and ever reach New York City. *Magic to Do* found adoring audiences in Cincinnati and Boston, only to be rejected by the critics for its Washington, D.C. run. In some cases however, the producers decide to begin in New York, working out the kinks during previews, hoping they can triumph in spite of the watchful eyes of critics.

Is There Life After High School? was just such a revue. Previews began at the Ethel Barrymore Theater in April 1982, and after a change in directors and a delayed debut, it finally opened on May 7, giving a final performance on May 16. In a setting loosely structured as a class reunion, an ensemble of five men and four women sing about the concerns they had during those dreaded teenage years, the realization that somehow high school was never as blissful as recollection dictates, and the desire to do it over with the knowledge accrued with age. Written by Jeffrey Kindley, it was based on the humorous book by John Keyes which proposed that high school was a traumatic rite-of-passage for American youth. The songs were by Craig Carnelia and the production was directed by Robert Nigro.

Frank Rich, longtime theater critic for the *New York Times*, asserted that the charm of Keyes's original material was not evident, and equated the show with "detention hall" and that only one song, a tribute to high school bands called "Thousands of Trumpets" was "an attempt at a razzle-dazzle Broadway showstopper."¹³ Other critics described the musical as merely a "series of reminiscences,"¹⁴ and "an intimate revue that does not meet the grandiose expectations of Broadway."¹⁵ Years later, Scott emphasized the power of one critic in particular: "If you're running it means the *Times* has said something nice; if you're closing you know Frank Rich hated it."¹⁶

Scott was one of two male understudies for the ensemble, and as he related the frantic experience in Observer #20, he almost had an opportunity to make his Broadway debut. For one preview, cast member Phillip Hoffman was nearly stranded in a snowstorm while coming back from Philadelphia, barely making it to the theater before curtain. With a brief run of 48 previews and only 12 performances, there was never another opportunity for Scott to take the stage, and his Broadway debut would have to wait for another time.



Scott almost stood in for Philip Hoffman (upper row, with drum)

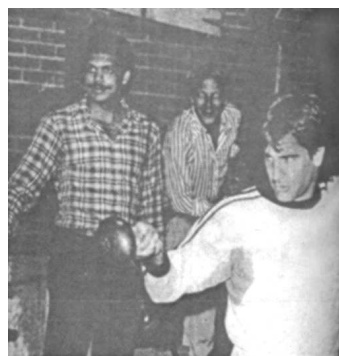
So is there life after a Broadway flop? Yes, back with old friends—Robert Johanson—in a very old (and steadfastly successful) operetta, *The Pirates of Penzance*.

The Pirates of Penzance

Since Scott has never performed in a genuine Shakespearean play, it would seem that Gilbert & Sullivan's operetta *The Pirates of Penzance, or The Slave of Duty* is surely the oldest material Scott has ever performed professionally. Although William Gilbert (lyrics) and Arthur Sullivan (music) had achieved great success in Victorian England, Gilbert came to New York City at the end of 1879 to finish writing "Pirates" and mount the production under his scrutiny. For over a century this operetta—a satire on the British upper-class and military—has been enchanting audiences with its witty rhymes, genial tunes and absurdly comical situation.

By the fall of 1982, a centennial revival starring Kevin Kline, Rex Smith and Linda Ronstadt had been enjoying a successful two-year run on Broadway. Its popularity may have prompted the Darien Dinner Theater in Darien, Connecticut to embark on a production of its own. After three weeks of rehearsals, the production opened on September 22 and ran through November 28, 1982.

Broadway veteran Christopher Hewitt—British-born and trained—was ideally suited to star as "the very model of a modern Major-General." Scott played The Pirate King, and Cheryl Overholt and Keith Ryan as Mabel and Frederic, were the young lovebirds. Robert Johanson helmed the production, having previously directed a string of hits for the Darien.



"Scott was soooooo fearless" according to Johanson

While not central to the plot, the role of the Pirate King is pivotal and demands strong vocal and physical abilities,

which Scott ably provided. "Scott Bakula makes a dashing and extremely athletic Pirate King;"¹⁷ and his "physical attraction, acting and vocal abilities, super-charged energy, vie for first place in his inventory of endowments."¹⁸

While most people might be familiar with the rapid-fire lyrics for the role of the Major-General, the role of the Pirate King also affords an opportunity for quickly spoken tongue-twisters, requiring good enunciation for this light-hearted nonsense. "We knew your taste for curious quips/ For cranks and contradictions queer..." as the Pirate King reveals the paradox to Frederic, namely that Frederic's duty to the pirates should continue until his 21st birthday, and since his "natal day" is February 29, Frederic "is a little boy of five."



"A paradox. A paradox. A most ingenious paradox" sings Mary Stout (as Ruth), Keith Ryan (as Frederic) and Scott (as The Pirate King)

Photos courtesy of *Darien News Review*

The reviews were most heartening. Scott was called "fresh and funny in his heroic posturing which ends all too often in falling on

his rapier—figuratively and literally.”¹⁹ In our last issue, Robert Johanson agreed that Scott was quite daring, and “as you can imagine he was a superb Pirate King.” Johanson received kudos as well. “A special tribute goes to the director too for the timing of the stage business with various members of the cast seeming to miss wildly swinging pirate swords only by most adroit last-minute leaps and other spontaneous action.”¹⁹ “A performer himself, Johanson goes at it with a clear understanding of what actors in the musical theater can and should do, as well as the skill to pull all components together and make a great show.”¹⁸

Another World

In September 1982, the reviews for “Pirates” mentioned that Scott had recently appeared on daytime television’s *Another World*, portraying the part of a reporter named Quentin Mills. What seems a bit incongruous is that according to the website for *Another World*—and an industrious individual who finally found a video of an episode with Scott—the broadcast date was in April 1983. It would seem that the latter date must have been a reprise of the role, but without substantiation from Scott or other sources, we suspect this is only a leap Sam Beckett could have made.

After the close of “Pirates” in November, Scott was most certainly auditioning and possibly working venues other than on stage. By the beginning of 1983, auditions for the roles in *Marilyn: An American Fable* had begun in earnest. Scott said, “I must have auditioned six or seven times...At one point they were talking about me playing the photographer instead of Joe DiMaggio, so then I was doing dance auditions. (Other times) I read with these different Marilyns.”²⁰ Once they had hired a small cast, Scott went around with the producers raising the money for the musical. Although the two following shows seem to have had very short runs, it was nevertheless a very busy time for Scott offstage.

It’s Better With a Band

It’s Better With a Band opened at The Club Room at Sardi’s restaurant in Manhattan on Tuesday, March 29 and ran until April 30, 1983. The show was subtitled, “A New Musical Revue” and had actually had a brief try-out without Scott in February at a nearby club called Don’t Tell Mama. The revue, directed by Joseph Leonardo, consists of eighteen songs whose lyrics had been written by David Zippel, and whose music had been composed by eight of the popular tunesmiths of the day, including Wally Harper (*Nine, My One and Only*) and Alan Menken (*Little Shop of Horrors*).



Daily News photo

All of the songs were performed by a cast of four, each with equal billing—Scott with Catherine Cox (left), Nancy LaMott and Jenifer Lewis—and served up with a piano accompaniment. “Mr. Zippel’s lyrics tell of ingénues, horse lovers, and would-be movie stars...in fresh ways.”²¹

The revue begins with all four singing the old Barbara Cook favorite, “It’s Better with a Band” (music by Wally Harper) and ends with the company singing “A Song for Myself” (music by Pamela Stanley). Scott had plenty of solos: “You’ll Never See Me Run” (music by Alan Menken), “God’s Gifts” (music by Rob LaRocca, the show’s musical director and pianist), “Lullaby” (Doug Katsaros) and “I Reach for a Star” (Jonathan Sheffer).

The Club Room was a small venue and adding a revue was a new facet for the famous theatrical hangout. Shows ran Monday through Saturday with an additional late show on both Fridays and Saturdays. During the show, patrons could order from a short menu of hot and cold light dishes found on the back of the simple bi-fold program.

Some reviewers tried to find a cohesive thread in the variety of songs, but nevertheless praised the execution of the cast. “The performers...have fine and knowledgeable voices that come across, whether in ensemble or in solo spots.”²² “The quartet of players are youthful, likeable not quite your kids next door, but sometimes they sing with a degree of wholesomeness and other times they portray sophistication.”²³

Hello, I’m Not in Right Now

Just prior to rehearsals for *Marilyn*, Scott found time to take a brief onstage role as Josh in *Hello, I’m Not in Right Now*, which played only three nights—July 22, 23, and 24, 1983—at the White Barn Theater in Westport, Connecticut. The White Barn was founded in 1947 by Lucille Lortel to present experimental works that might not otherwise find a venue. Directed by Anthony McKay, this show was a new musical written by up-and-coming Barbara Schottenfeld, who created the book, lyrics and music.

The three-character musical is “about friendship and romance, love and dependency, fear of commitment, and other assorted contemporary complications...Set entirely to music, the play is both a highly comical and extremely moving story.”²⁴ The two main characters are close female friends in their mid-twenties, music teacher/songwriter Abby (played by Jossie deGuzman) and antique dress shop owner Susan (Marin Mazzie); each has a romantic relationship with Josh, a consumer advocate turned corporate lawyer. The two gals sing about the difficulty of finding a straight guy. (“I’m Looking for a Boy to Love...Who’s Not Looking for a Boy to Love”) Another duet bemoans the fact that neither is getting any younger and that they better make a schedule if they want to have it all. (“I Have to Have My First Child by Thirty-three...So I Need to Be Married by Twenty-nine”) Josh is given his turn at personal revelation with “I Want You to Be the Mother of the Children I’m Not Sure I Want to Have,” which has now become one of Schottenfeld’s signature tunes.

“Schottenfeld treats the material with unstinting honesty. All of the conflicting emotions are here—the jealousy, the resentment, the fear of discovery, the heartfelt desire on the part of the jilted lover to see her best friend’s romance land on the rocks, and the resultant feelings of guilt...(The musical) was performed by a talented trio of singers.”²⁵

While the musical has not enjoyed as much acclaim as other Schottenfeld works, it was later produced with the title *Sit Down and Eat Before Our Love Gets Cold* and that signature song, “I Want You to Be the Mother of the Children I’m Not Sure I Want to Have,” was recently recorded by Jason Danielly and Marin Mazzie on a CD called “Opposite You.”

Marilyn: An American Fable

“It’s Joe DiMaggio! Joe DiMaggio!” is the cue that marks Scott’s debut on a Broadway stage. *Marilyn: An American Fable* was a musical that glittered briefly at the Minskoff Theatre in the fall of 1983 and was gone—but not forgotten.

Marilyn: An American Fable was about a dream; but not just Norma Jean Baker's dream to become a star, but also about the dream—or the fable—that people create about their favorite stars. The production itself was also a dream—a dream that the story of Marilyn Monroe could be told musically and captivate a Broadway audience. The idea was ambitious: to depict in song two decades of Norma Jean Baker's life, public and private, all in the span of a few hours.

The Production is born

The dream began during the winter of 1981 when successful producers William May and Malcolm Cooke were riding in a taxi, and May had a vision of "Marilyn" written on a Broadway marquee.²⁶ By 1982 a full libretto (the narrative was to be told primarily in song) had been fleshed out by Patricia Michaels and was presented to May and Cooke by Delores Quinton, an associate. The libretto contained more than two dozen songs written by Jeannie Napoli, Doug Frank, Gary Portnoy, Beth Lawrence, and Norman Thalheimer.

Kenny Ortega was hired to direct and choreograph the production and casting auditions were held early in 1983. At that time the principal singing roles were assigned, including Scott (as Joe DiMaggio), and Geralyn Petchel, a singer from Los Angeles who was a Broadway rookie (as Marilyn). Thus began the complex challenge of raising the estimated \$3 million needed to mount the production.

In PQL's interview with Scott (Issue #20) he tells of auditioning the show for potential backers. "We were down in Boca Raton [Florida], we were at country clubs in Connecticut, Massachusetts and upstate New York...we would have big presentations,...sing numbers and they would bring Geri out last...making the 'Marilyn' entrance, and we would sing a couple of songs."

During this period, demo tapes of the various songs were circulated. Sung by the principals already cast—Geri and Scott included—with only a studio piano for accompaniment, these tapes serve as a tangible record of the evolution of the vocal score. Some of the songs survived intact, others were changed substantially, and a few never even made it into the earliest preview.

But every stage production is a work in progress until opening night, when the performance is "set" and can no longer be changed. Many producers will begin a show with out-of-town tryouts to work out the kinks in front of a less judgmental audience, and value the reactions and the preliminary reviews. Others might start out in New York, making those initial improvements in staged readings or workshops Off-Broadway. Neither of these options was chosen by *Marilyn's* producers, the ranks of which had now swollen to 16, including Jerome Minskoff (who provided the theater) and the Nederlander Organization. For whatever reason, it was decided that the show would be developed in previews and open directly onto Broadway.

The Minskoff was one of the largest (1600 seats) and newest (built in 1973) of the Broadway houses at that time. Previously, their longest running hit had been the aforementioned 1980 revival of *The Pirates of Penzance* with Kevin Kline and Linda Ronstadt, which ran for almost two years until November 1982. Few productions, especially musicals, recoup their investment their first year, even when the theater completely fills the seats. So in August 1983 when it was announced that *Marilyn: An*

American Fable would open at the Minskoff in October, much more was at stake than that initial investment.



The preliminary announcement carried photos of Geri Petchel as Marilyn, including this close-up with Scott.

Photo by Don Brinzoc for *N.Y. Post*

The role of Arthur Miller, Monroe's third husband had yet to be cast, but it was never a singing role. Perhaps they were seeking a look-alike for Miller, finally casting Will Gerard.

By September the production staff had moved into the theater. Lighting Designer, Marcia Madeira (interview p.29) tells us she even had her own dressing room. Once sets were in place, performers could move from the nearby rehearsal space into the theater itself.

But preparations did not go smoothly. After seven weeks of rehearsals, Geri Petchel was replaced by Alyson Reed, a Broadway veteran (including Bob Fosse's *Dancin'*), who was both a singer and a strong dancer (she played the lead role, Cassie, in the road company of *A Chorus Line*). Reed says, "I came into the show 10 days before the previews began...(and) I basically learned the role in five days."²⁷

Those initial preview performances began in October. An October 22 performance demonstrates the inherent problem of trying to present someone's entire lifetime in one evening. Even with cuts from the original libretto, the show still needed substantial trimming, running over three hours. There would be no opening in October as initially hoped.

Previews continued into November, trimmed now to two hours, with November 14 designated as opening night. Naturally some large production numbers had been eliminated including the opening number, which was briefly considered for a finale. Yet songs from the original libretto seemed to magically appear, including Scott's solo "I'll Bring You Roses," a ballad that had first been heard on a demo tape in the spring; this song would once again disappear by opening night. To add to the turmoil and tumult of these break-neck changes, the producers fired Kenny Ortega, brought in Thommie Walsh to redirect some of Reed's numbers and pushed the opening night to November 20. Tunsmith Wally Harper was brought in too and supplied "Cold, Hard Cash" (lyrics by David Zippel), a razzle-dazzle production number replacing "Men, Movies and More" for opening night. While it is a natural evolution to expect songs and roles to be trimmed, cutting out the director/choreographer is not. The real story will never be known, but Ortega did retain full credit as director and choreographer—as well he should, since for the most part his vision was still intact.

Opening night has special significance for a Broadway show and changing the date can be taxing. By the rules established for Broadway houses, the date must be registered with the League of New York Theaters and Producers, which allows only one show to open on any given evening. Thus critics, who have not been

allowed to review a show in previews, are committed to attending only that one show. The opening night audience usually includes the backers of the show; celebrities, patrons of the arts and members of society; friends and fans of the cast members; and of course, the critics. *Marilyn* was no exception. The formal red-carpet, black-tie opening came on Sunday, November 20. Once the reviews hit the newsstands however, producers decided the show would close on Saturday, December 3, after only 16 performances and 35 previews.

With the endorsement of the Marilyn Monroe Estate, the anticipated effort was to provide a sympathetic and sentimental account of Marilyn's life. However, most reviewers felt the musical merely skimmed the high and low points of her life—her effort to have a serious acting career, her three marriages and her pill addiction—and “offers no surprises...it skims over everything that is well known.”²⁸ “A series of animated snapshots,”²⁹ said another. Some reviewers even wrote that they thought it was a satire.^{30,31}

And yet I certainly wouldn't be writing this much about it if I didn't think this show had merit. Jeff Calhoun (director of Ford's *Shenandoah*) told Scott he **loved** the show. Marcia Madeira and Kristi Coombs (interview p.33) still speak fondly of it. And that opening night audience—in spite of all of the critics—“cheered ‘Marilyn’ to the rafters.”³¹

Except for Martha Swope's photography, none of the usual accoutrements for a Broadway production were done—no Hirschfeld drawings were commissioned, no cast recording was made. And sadly, the press was so persuasive nothing more could be done but to close the doors and try to find the money to haul it all away.

And yet...

While reviewers may have been harsh on the musical overall, spending most of their ink on citing problems with the book and the pastiche nature of many of its songs, the performances were highly esteemed. Sy Syna states “...with a stupendous body, Reed can sing and dance.” And “...DiMaggio (is) a role invested with great warmth and

dignity by Scott Bakula.”³⁰ *Variety*'s Humm. writes that the show takes a “clichéd approach” and has “no inner substance,” but refutes the show's bad word of mouth, citing “Reed's commanding and resourceful performance” and asserting that “Scott Bakula is a quietly effective DiMaggio.”³² The *Daily News* agreed that “Scott Bakula is...a pleasingly low-keyed and convincing Joe DiMaggio...”³³ The following spring the association of New York drama reporters, editors and critics nominated Alyson Reed for a Drama Desk Award as an outstanding actress in a musical.

What was it really like?

Marcia Madeira confirmed that there were essentially three versions of *Marilyn*—the initial previews in October, the substantially changed previews in November and the final opening night version. It is a tribute to the professionalism of the entire company that in spite of the changes, each of the different performances seems highly polished and complete.

For the initial incarnation of the musical, the show began with a Prologue. The song “We Are the Ones” was supposed to establish the idea that Marilyn Monroe was concocted by the behind-the-scenes people—her agent, her hairdresser, her manager—and those who produced her movies. (Among these is the Studio Head, played by Alan North, who earlier had worked with Scott in *The Baker's Wife*.) “We Are the Ones” was first presented on the demo tape and yet was one of the first to be eliminated during previews. An opening night *Playbill* indicates the song appeared as a finale, but all of the versions I've studied use the reappearance of young Norma Jean singing “A Single Dream” with Marilyn as the final scene. The show's secondary concept—that Marilyn's public image was merely a fable—was handled much more subtly within the structure of the remaining songs, and probably for many theatergoers was lost altogether.

The opening night show begins, as the first scene in all the previews, with young Norma Jean, played by eleven-year-old Kristi Coombs, singing that she has “A Single Dream.”



“Maybe if I work hard enough/
It might belong to me alone/
...a single dream of my own.”

“Movie stars are loved/
they're loved by everyone/
And I want to be loved/
and wanted just the way they are/
Are you listening my star?”

Kristi Coombs as young Norma Jean

Photo by Martha Swope

Like those “animated snapshots” alluded to by the critic, young Norma Jean exits and a brown-haired teenage Norma Jean emerges onto a scene with people in raccoon coats, jitterbug dancers and an actual '40s roadster, where she meets and marries Jimmy Dougherty, the high school basketball star. Scenes quickly shift to a World War II factory where Norma works while Jimmy is off in the military, to her “discovery” as a pin-up model and finally a movie starlet, all told in upbeat songs reminiscent of the period. Although the songs are engaging and the staging effectively holds one's attention, except for that opening number there is little revelation of Marilyn's character and her inner feelings as she progresses toward that single dream. Exposition is periodically provided in short verses sung by the trio Destiny (who accompany Norma Jean/Marilyn throughout the play, sometimes frequenting the catwalk above the stage and sprinkling stardust on her at opportune moments) and by the duo Hedda Hopper (Mary Testa) and Louella Parsons (Melissa Bailey), the famous celebrity reporters of the era, who chant the gossip.

Once Joe enters the picture however the focus changes. We now glimpse the Marilyn Joe falls for. With a chorus full of men in tuxes, Marilyn is being filmed as she sings “Cold, Hard Cash” on the movie soundstage. Joe DiMaggio is brought in and introduced to her, enthralled by her presence; she too is enamored of the newly retired baseball hero. The original demo tape featured a song called “I'm a Fan,” which was a rather lame duet offering only the most superficial statement of love while lacking any true emotion. Mercifully, audiences were spared this inane sentiment which continually repeats in simple harmony, “I'm a fan and you're special.”

(continued on page 31)

**AN INTERVIEW WITH LIGHTING DESIGNER
MARCIA MADEIRA
JULY 2006**



From coast to coast and around the world, on land and sea, Marcia Madeira has followed her passion of painting performers and stages with color and light. Her first love—musical theater—drew her to Broadway where her work on *Marilyn: An American Fable* was preceded by *My*

***One and Only*, and *Nine*, a musical that earned her a Drama Desk Award and a Tony nomination.**

But there are so many facets to her career—from opera, ice shows, cruise ships and clubs—it is impossible to compile a brief list and represent the diversity. This year alone she has been in China (a US tour of *Rent*); the Caribbean (a cruise ship ice show); the Mediterranean (a cruise ship dance show); and she is just returning from Japan where she has been surveying theaters for another tour of *Rent* in early November.

I am deeply grateful that she took the time to speak with me. Visit her website at <<http://www.geocities.com/mmadeira2000>> for a look at her photographs from her various endeavors, including *Marilyn: An American Fable*.

Sharon: When did you first become attached to *Marilyn*?

Marcia: Early on, probably in the spring. Kenny Ortega, the original director and choreographer was excited by my work in *Nine* and *My One and Only*, and he set up an interview with me. I then began work in the theater in September. I had my own dressing room—it was amazing.

Sharon: Why do you think the producers didn't do out-of-town tryouts?

Marcia: I think they said it was too much money. They probably thought it was going to cost too much to move the sets around. I think the experience and whatever is learned by going out-of-town is totally worth the expense. To get the chance to work on it, tweak it, before it's finally seen in New York.

There were three different versions of it before it opened, each with a different director. First there was Kenny Ortega, then I believe Wally Harper became an interim director, and finally Thommie Walsh did the final version. [Ortega was still credited as director for the entire run.] All of the writers were busily writing different choruses. There were too many writers, with no clear vision.

Sharon: Did you have any interaction with Scott?

Marcia: Oh, yeah. Great guy—a really good actor and he sang well. He was perfect for DiMaggio and he just fit right in. He was really just right. He is a really nice guy, a great talent.

Mostly I would deal with people in terms of making sure they were in their light and that kind of thing, and talk backstage. A couple of years later, when he did *Romance, Romance* I went to

see the show and afterward I went backstage to see him. I got the biggest greeting! It was the **nicest** thing!

Sharon: The Minskoff at the time was a rather large and still quite a new theater, so it must have been nice working with modern equipment. Did you try to replicate a '40s or '50s look?

Marcia: Yes, it was nice. I had 600 lights, which was a lot for that time.

We used some period movie lighting fixtures onstage as props, but unless it was the scenes where a movie was being made, I was basically doing "time of day" or "mood," and trying to make everyone look beautiful, which of course, is my other job.

The scenes may have begun with a very realistic look, but if in song, it goes to another level, the realism drops away and the fantasy comes in. Such as when Destiny [the threesome who sing about Marilyn's life and dreams] appear somewhere else [onstage]. When people sang different songs we might go to a heightened reality or romance or whatever was being conveyed.

Sharon: Was there anything spectacular done for the premiere, perhaps with Alyson Reed arriving in makeup as Marilyn?

Marcia: We rented sky-trackers, with four searchlights, and we actually had some onstage for the movie premiere scene.

But the makeup Alyson wore in the show was so incredible that close-up she didn't look like anything, but ten rows away from her, she looked **exactly** like Marilyn. It was the most incredible makeup job, but it didn't work close up. If you saw her in the dressing room it wasn't the same at all, but when you saw her onstage, she just looked amazing. I don't know how long it took to get her ready, but it took a long time. It might have been a ½-hour to an hour in makeup, and then she had to have her wigs put on.

Sharon: Do you remember Geri Petchel in the role?

Marcia: Yes, I saw her in a lot of rehearsals and she was good; she had a lot of Marilyn qualities. I forget what was wrong, whether it was the singing or whatever, but she wasn't totally strong in the role, although she looked very Marilyn-ish. Alyson Reed looked less like Marilyn. I did like Geri, but she was not as strong as Alyson Reed in the long run, and that's why she was replaced.

Sharon: Did you get to keep any memorabilia or props as souvenirs?

Marcia: When they closed the show there was money owed, so we were told to just take our very personal things out and everything was locked up in the theater for weeks. Nothing was allowed to leave, not even a few professional items I had brought with me from *My One and Only*.

Sharon: The show closed in December, but the following spring there was talk about taking the show to Japan. Were you contacted about that, or do you know if it ever happened?

Marcia: I don't think the show ever went to Japan. They tried to get my light plot away from me, which I didn't give them. They

really should have paid me to go, or paid for the light plot; they wanted me to give it to them.

For your readers who might not know, a light plot is a ½-inch scale plan based on the scene designer's drawings of the grand plan of the theatre, with the scenery in place. It shows the location of all the lights, and with the associated paperwork, how to plug them all in, such as colors, wattages and other information. It doesn't include the cueing, it just tells where the lights all go.

The latest thing now is to go to China. I just went to Wuhan—a three-city industrial area in the middle of China—for a US tour of *Rent* that included some people from the Broadway and the National Tours. It was really amazing. The designers took the US designs and built the sets there in the parking garage under the theater and it looked just like the Broadway set. The people who went to see the show were very excited; they weren't necessarily familiar with the show already, but they were very interested to see something from the US with American performers.

They had Chinese subtitles on the sides of the stage. My translators actually ran through the subtitles and read to me what it said in English. It was just about exactly the lyrics—it was amazing—it was translated very well.

Sharon: To be successful in theater you have to have a passion for it. How and when did your passion develop?

Marcia: I guess it was because my parents really loved the theater. My father was a professor at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, involved in theater productions. My mother was an actress and she directed some productions at U. of Mass. and elsewhere. They often took me to New Haven and Boston to see a lot of out-of-town tryouts for Broadway shows. So I saw a ton of things as a kid growing up and loved it. What's not to love?

I did some summer stock at various places and I worked at the Kennebunkport Playhouse in Maine—we had a house in Kennebunkport. As for formal education, I started out in Liberal Arts at a junior college, then I attended the Yale School of Drama for two years, then Carnegie Mellon for my BFA.

I always thought that the lighting was the most fascinating. It helps to tell the story and paint the picture, setting the mood, and the magic of the changes with the music was very exciting. It is so fascinating because you can do so much with the lighting. The description I like best is something one of the directors I worked with once said about me: "Just give her a paintbrush and off she goes." I'm painting with light and it's a picture the whole time. I look at the stage and try to make the picture better, help tell the story, heighten the actors and music, put the proper cues in when the music changes. It makes it more fun or more dramatic, or it makes the dance numbers go better.

Sharon: What do you find the most interesting, musicals, dramatic plays, or ice shows on a ship?

Marcia: I think I love musicals best. I've done a ton of plays too. I love Shakespeare—it's almost like doing a musical with a zillion sets and the way it moves around and changes, with all the different characters.

Sharon: What is this upcoming production in the Mediterranean?

Marcia: I'm going to be on the "Splendour of the Seas" cruise ship sailing from Venice to Athens to do a ballroom show, called Ballroom Fever. It's a 45-minute show, with one couple featured

throughout the show. The usual format and the current show onboard has eight dancers—four couples—so one couple will be replaced with the featured couple. I'm also going to rework the current show to accommodate the new casting. Some of the staging is going to change and I'll have to adjust the lighting to suit the new blocking.

We rehearse the new version at night from about 11pm or 1am to the crack of dawn when the room is then used to send tours off the ship. In the afternoon, if the ship is in port, we can get back in the room for run-throughs and rehearsals.

Sharon: So when do you get to sleep?

Marcia: Yeah, exactly! I can sleep from 6 or 8am until the middle of the afternoon, when I get up for rehearsal and see what the dancers—or skaters—are doing. We have a run-through, I see what lighting is ready and we talk about it in a production meeting, have dinner, and maybe take a nap if we aren't starting back until midnight or 1am. It's a crazy schedule!

Sharon: So how do they put an ice rink on a ship?

Marcia: I just learned a whole bunch on this on the "Freedom of the Seas" cruise in the Caribbean. The deck that has the ice rink is on Deck 2, which is really the third deck from the very bottom of the ship. So it's very low, which means there is less torque and less movement for the skaters.

A concrete surface with pipes, like in a regular ice rink, is flooded and they use an ice resurfacing machine to build up the ice until it is the proper thickness. But the interesting thing is that underneath the ice rink, on Deck 1, are the cabins for the crew. Below the concrete-encased pipes for the ice is a heating system which prevents the cold and condensation that would affect the ceiling of the cabins below. It's a pretty complicated system and there are four giant compressors, and I know this because the controls are with the lighting and they were always coming in and checking the numbers, making sure the heaters and freezers were the correct temperature.

Sharon: Before we finish, do you have any other recollections of working with Scott?

Marcia: He's a great guy. I just remember that anytime I talked to him, he was very personable, always friendly. He wasn't a diva or difficult—always nice, appropriate and easy to get along with. He didn't cause any trouble. Just a great guy and he did a wonderful job with his performance. He was very consistent and he sang beautifully. What is not to like? Truly terrific.

When I first started in New York, I assisted (Lighting Designer) Ken Billington (*Chicago*, *The Drowsy Chaperone*) for a number of years, and I still do when he needs someone to replace him. That's how I became involved in the *Rent* tour to China. I also did the original *Sweeney Todd* with Ken, and some work at the New York City Opera. Later [1995] I worked with Ken when he was the lighting designer on Dan Butler's off-Broadway one-man show, *The Only Worst Thing You Could Have Told Me*. Scott is really good friends with Dan and came to hang out while we were putting it together; it was really nice to see Scott again. [Dan guest-starred in "Southern Comforts," the season three episode of *Quantum Leap*.]

Quantum Leap is really good and Scott is just like his character. Just from the little I've worked with him, I could look at him in the role (of Sam Beckett) and know, "That's our Scott!"

o o o o o o

By the opening preview, "I'm a Fan" had been stripped down to a single verse sung by Joe, as Marilyn returns upstage to the movie set.

"I might be just another man/ Waiting at the end of the line/
Just wasting my time/ But I'm a fan/ Who'd like to get to know you better?"

A driving drumbeat returns the focus to Marilyn's movie production upstage. However, by opening night a second verse was added, the sweet and mellow tune reveals a love-sick puppy-like Joe.

"Suddenly you're the only one I see/ If I were given half a chance/
I know what I might do/ I could fall in love with you."

This melody segues into a change of scene, with Sis and Tommy, two star-struck teens who are blocked by a "closed set" stage door which flew in from the wings. They decide to write Miss Monroe a letter, and the duet so succinctly portrays the feelings any fan has for his/her 'idol' that its appearance on opening night seemed to be sheer inspiration. The pairing of the two perspectives underscores the dichotomy and gives each more emotional heft.



Willy Falk (Tommy)
and Lise Lang (Sis)

Photo by Martha Swope

Tommy: "Tenderly I write these words/ Respectfully/
Hoping you will understand/ The kind of boy I am/
You're so naïve/ Really you're a lot like me/ I know you're very sensitive/
And need some gentle care/ You're delicate and rare"

Sis: "Faithfully I follow you're publicity/ You're someone that I so admire/
And very secretly/ I think of you as family/...
Hopefully you'll find the time to write to me"

Tommy: "A letter and a photograph/ Or anything you can"

Together: "Devotedly/...You're greatest fan."

What is most surprising however is that much of these lyrics were present in the original libretto, evidently forgotten until opening.

In the November previews, Scott sang "I'll Send You Roses" establishing the courtship of Joe and Marilyn. In actuality this depicts the promise that Joe made (and kept) to Marilyn on their



Photo by Martha Swope

wedding day that he would send flowers to her grave weekly should she die first.³⁴ It is not as morbid or prophetic as it sounds; this was a gesture that William Powell did for his beloved Jean Harlow, and Marilyn wanted to be assured of the same devotion they had shared. The audience was never told the significance of the song however, as if they had been expected to have come to the theater already knowing the finer points of Marilyn's history.

But by opening night this song had been replaced by Marilyn and Joe singing "Finally" as Sis and Tommy left the stage. The melody has much more dynamic range and Scott makes the words soar:

Joe: "Now my search is through/ Every wish came true/ With you
Finally, my heart can end its searching/ Endlessly, I'll love beyond forever/
Finally, I found you."

Marilyn: "I was incomplete/ Half a woman without you/
...And now I have everything/ Beyond all my wildest dreams/
Not only a home, but a life/ We can share together."

This song (along with "I'll Send You Roses") was first heard on the demo tape, and it was present in the October previews. While both ballads are tender expressions of love, they essentially serve the same purpose at this point in the show, so there was little point in using both. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note how the puzzle pieces were plucked in and out, seeing what might fit best.

Once again the trio Destiny appears, now wearing baseball caps and singing a new verse to "Church Doors," indicating Joe and Marilyn have wed.



Michael Kubala, Peggie Blue, & Ty Stephens (as Destiny)
Photo by Martha Swope

"...Limousines, diamond rings/
Flocks of press, important guests/
The headlines were ever so clever/
Yankee Clipper weds Marilyn
Monroe/
Blonde bombshell puts on a show/
...As church doors open wide/
Bride and groom step inside/
To start a new life, together."

Once the couple is married however, it isn't easy for Marilyn to find time for her career in Hollywood and their home in San Francisco (Joe's hometown where he owns a restaurant on Fisherman's Wharf). Joe pleads with her to give it up.

Joe: "Listen, I'm here to love you with everything I am, to protect you and build a real life, to hold you safe—a man and a woman. I can't share you, Marilyn. I'm not built that way."



Photo by Martha Swope

But in the end, she cannot walk away from the crowds that love her, and she is drawn into the premiere of her film, *The Seven Year Itch*. In a rousing production number, "It's a Premiere Night," the ensemble eloquently creates the heat and chaos of the event:

"This is the chance to be ready for the magic that is heavy in the air tonight/
And your palms sweat as the camera's set—you just can't sit tight/
As the lights hit the scene you could swear there was steam risin' from the street/
Then your heart starts a jumpin' and a bumpin' with every beat!
...Gotta push. Gotta shove. Gotta shove, push."

Then Marilyn makes her grand entrance, and the music slows so everyone can focus their gaze...

“...Just look at her smile, you can tell she has never felt so complete/
As she takes in the love of the thousands of fans at her feet.”

Then someone yells, “Where’s DiMaggio?” She is taken aback and reprises, “A Single Dream”:

“He wanted me to chose/ But right away I knew that only I would lose/
I’d take a bow and take a fall/ Why can’t I have it all?”

We understand full well Marilyn’s dilemma, wanting both a career and a happy marriage. What modern woman hasn’t wondered the same thing? Of course, back in the 1950s these thoughts were pre-feminist taboos; in 1983, and even today, women still struggle to attain that goal of having it all.

Earlier previews did not reprise “A Single Dream” at this point; instead they featured Marilyn singing “A Stairway Going Nowhere,” a sorrowful list song of how the marriage went wrong. Regardless of which interlude was presented, the refrain for “It’s a Premiere Night” brings down the curtain for all previews and opening night.

Like most men during this time period, Joe had “old-world” expectations for his wife. It is well-documented that during their disagreements, there were a few times that Joe hit Marilyn, but this aspect of their relationship was never articulated in any of the versions presented in the musical. In one of the November previews however, there was a subtle undercurrent of Joe’s bridled temper as he and Marilyn discuss her career and their future. Scott’s portrayal was a bit chilling to me at the time, having previously only experienced the righteous anger Sam Beckett often displayed. Yet, by opening night this attitude had once again been mitigated and the softer, more romantic Joe had returned.

Scott says, “...playing DiMaggio, being this great sports hero was unbelievable, a real privilege. The guy has this mystical quality about him...He had an incredible passion for that woman, even after she was gone, and I had to imagine what that was like.”³⁵ “I tried to be true to who he was, and to all the things I’d read about him and Marilyn. I tried to be realistic and honest, because I didn’t want to make fun of him in any way at all. He’s a tremendous guy, a legend.”³⁶

Act two begins with depicting Marilyn in bed and trying to sleep, while being tortured by her Demons—actually Destiny, offering Champagne and Pills. More vignettes set in New York City follow including her attempts to hone her acting skills for the stage. Reed also has a high-energy dance number with the ensemble, while her new husband Arthur Miller sits typing stage left. The November preview did flesh out the Monroe/Miller pair in greater depth, but by opening night these were cut to a meager two conversations, separated by the news (via the “Gossip” duo) of the loss of their unborn child. Once again there is the vague sense that we are only experiencing Marilyn’s superficial patina.

Midway through the second act, Joe makes another appearance. In real life, Marilyn had been locked away in a mental institution on her therapist’s advice. Distraught she actually made several calls, finally reaching Joe in Florida. He came immediately, and although they had not been married for seven years, he demanded, “I want my wife,” and threatened, “I will take this place apart, piece of wood by piece of wood.”³⁷ Without awareness of this particular historical note, one might not fully appreciate the gentle ballad, “Don’t Hang Up the Telephone/ I’ll be right here by your side,” Joe sings when Marilyn makes that fateful late-night call.

One verse in particular begins conversationally, and with a resonant crescendo, Scott’s voice fills the theater:

“Don’t be afraid tonight/ Until tomorrow’s light I’ll see you through/
Then I’ll find a way to you/ I swear, I’m gonna be there.”

Conversationally again, Joe suggests she “think about coming back to California,” and concludes with the resounding refrain,

“You can sleep without your fears/ Don’t worry baby, I’ll be here.”

Marilyn does indeed head back to California singing the optimistic and energetic “All Roads Lead to Hollywood.” Destiny carries her suitcases and she descends a genuine airline stair-ramp to the crowd below. Back on the soundstage she once again meets up with Joe where their voices combine into a sweet, almost giddy repartee—“My Heart’s an Open Door”

Joe: “Here I am, feeling like a fool again/ Like a boy in school again/
I’m trembling/ You know me.
I forgot, just how warm your eyes could be/ How you get the best of me/
When you smile/ You know me.”

Marilyn: “With you, my heart’s an open door/
You see in me what others just ignore/
With you, my life means so much more/
Than photographs and newsprint on the floor...”

Together: “Look at me/ Floating ten feet off the floor/
You make my spirits soar/ You know me/
...With you, my heart’s an open door.”

Presumably written during rehearsals, this delightful song doesn’t appear in either the preliminary libretto or the demo tape, but was included near the end of the show even in early previews. In the final version, the song ends with a script arriving “from the front office” and Joe handing it to Marilyn, telling her she’s “going to be great.”

What follows is a frothy production number. Marilyn sits in a pink bathtub, surrounded by dancing plumbers wearing pink jumpsuits with boots to match, singing “Miss Bubbles.” This sort of number violates Marilyn’s very soul and as the movie set is cleared, Reed belts out a defiant rebuke that they’ll never get the “Best of Me.”

Marilyn returns to the dressing room; Tommy is waiting and expresses his dream of one day being in a movie with her. Marilyn’s cautionary reply: “You have to be careful of those dreams, you know. Sometimes they can take you over and you could wind up with a whole lot of ‘dream’ and hardly any ‘you.’” As Tommy leaves, Marilyn reprises her unwavering desire for “A Single Dream.”

“Movie stars are loved/ They’re loved by everyone...”

and as she finishes the verse, she is joined by young Norma Jean,
“Maybe if I wish hard enough/ It will belong to me alone/
A single dream of my own.”

The orchestra swells as they walk upstage together toward the Hollywoodland sign in the distant hills.

Final Commentary

While it might be argued that I have an inclination to ignore the musical numbers that do not pertain to Scott’s roles, analytically the scenes with Joe and Marilyn are truly the only ones that provide any depth to the myriad of characters. Plus, the longevity of their relationship serves to cement the two acts together. It is

my suspicion that if the musical had not attempted to sprawl over two decades, but rather had centered more on Marilyn and Joe's relationship, it would have been more cohesive.

Since the musical ends before Marilyn's death, one more bit of historical information might help me plead my case. Contributing to the tragic aspect of Marilyn's death was that only the week before, in spite of her previous relationships, she and Joe had made plans to remarry. Sadly it was only Joe who stepped in and accepted the responsibility for the funeral arrangements. They were two of America's icons—a hero and a goddess—whose public personae masked their private needs; an American fable indeed.

Twenty-some years later, I still get a lot of pleasure from this production. After all, it may be as close to a romantic role as Scott may ever have, and he certainly sounded wonderful singing such endearing songs with a full orchestra. In later years, after *Quantum Leap*, it was rumored that Scott was being considered for the role of DiMaggio in a made-for-tv movie about Marilyn and Joe. He's never expressed why it didn't suit him, but I suspect that it may have been because the script may have dealt with the more sordid details of their relationship. And besides, it wasn't a musical!

Conclusion

So these dreams that people have, can they come true? We are all inspired to dream; Marilyn Monroe's dream to have it all; the producers dream to see "Marilyn" on Broadway; and me to finally write this article about *Marilyn: An American Fable* that I promised *The Observer* back in 1999. Sometimes just reaching the goal is success enough, whether others regard it with pleasure or disdain.

Life After Marilyn: Where Are They Now? AN INTERVIEW WITH KRISTI COOMBS



Kristi Coombs (Young Norma Jean) was **only eleven for her Broadway debut, but she was already a veteran stage performer. She was the youngest cast member for the musical *Annie*, playing Molly in the 1st National Tour and then starring as Annie in the 2nd**

National Tour, for a record-setting 1450 consecutive performances. Now in her early thirties, she is once again allied to Marilyn Monroe, donning the persona and singing in a *Legends in Concert* production in Atlantic City (and soon, Myrtle Beach), and in a Rat-pack variety show at The Supper Club in New York City, called *Frank and Friends*.

I had the opportunity to speak with Kristi in early August, and her non-stop enthusiasm for her work was evident from the start of our conversation.

Sharon: What was it like working with Kenny Ortega?

Kristi: It was my Broadway debut—I actually haven't been on Broadway since—and being only eleven, Kenny Ortega was so great

to me. It was a wonderful experience a lot in part because of Kenny. He was just very warm and sweet, and knew how to work with kids—to make them feel comfortable but also treat them like professionals at the same time.

In my case I was originally hired to be the understudy for the role. I remember when Kenny told me. He pulled me aside and said, "It's exciting news for you. I just want to let you know that we want to give you the role." I was real excited but I felt bad for the girl who was being replaced and I asked if it was okay to be excited. He was real sweet in bringing that news to me too. I loved him.

He was very patient in teaching me as well. I was always pretty good at picking up the choreography fast, but he was very patient with me and I adored him for that too.

I don't know if he would remember this or not. I would go to his apartment sometimes—not that he ever would invite me—he probably hated that I was knocking on his door. At eleven you don't think you're an inconvenience to anyone. I would ask if I could watch his Olivia Newton-John videos that he had choreographed because I loved her at that time. He would always graciously accept and let me watch these while he would be doing his own thing. And just because he was so nice, I would do his dishes for him.

When he left the show, he gave me a beautiful rhinestone-encrusted Marilyn Monroe t-shirt that he said Olivia Newton-John had given him. I was thrilled to wear that. Kenny Ortega was wonderful.

I was added to the last scene in Marilyn shortly after previews began, but it wasn't originally like that. After Kenny was replaced nothing had really changed, at least nothing in my part was altered in any way.

Sharon: I know you would have been tutored on the road, but how about for Broadway?

Kristi: When I played *Annie* I was in almost every scene so *Marilyn* was a real easy show for me. For *Marilyn*, the understudy and I were tutored at the theater in the dressing room.

Sharon: What did you do after *Marilyn*?

Kristi: I continued to work until I was about 14, but when puberty hit I wanted to be normal and go to school. I probably did some print work, a couple of commercials, like for HBO, and some staged readings for a couple of plays and musicals. There was a workshop for *Kicks*, which was directed by Tom Eyan (*Dreamgirls*) with music by Alan Menken (*Little Shop of Horrors*, *The Little Mermaid*). *Kicks* was a wonderfully amazing show that never really went anywhere. I worked with Bebe Neuwirth who was in the chorus, but it never got past the workshop stage. The show was based around the personal lives of a couple of dancers in a kickline, similar to the Rockettes. I played the daughter of one of the women. That was a fantastic experience and probably the biggest thing that I did after *Marilyn*. Then I attended high school and college after that.

Sharon: Do you have any recollection of working with Scott?

Kristi: Yes, I actually met Scott before we ever did *Marilyn*. His wife at the time, Krista Neumann, played Grace Farrell when I did *Annie* on the road. So I actually met Scott a couple of times when he came to visit her on the tour. He was very nice and warm and wonderful, so by the time we were cast in *Marilyn* we had already "gone way back." <laughing> I remember Krista being pregnant during the rehearsal phase, and mom and I were very excited for that.

Scott bought me a beautiful Borghese makeup kit for an opening night present. I was thrilled because I was really into makeup at the time, being eleven and definitely a girly-girl.

Sharon: Did you ever watch *Quantum Leap*?

Kristi: I'm more apt to watch someone I've worked with, so I was an avid watcher of *QL* and I remember being so excited for him—the show was a hit—and for everything he's done. My favorite episode was probably “Lee Harvey Oswald” because I thought the ending—where Jackie was saved—was so unexpected. My mom and I would often say, “Did you see Scott in this movie?” I'm very thrilled and proud (for him).

Sharon: Tell us about your current projects and passions.

Kristi: I'm doing the “Legends in Concert” in Atlantic City this summer, then in Myrtle Beach in November and December. In October, I'll be doing an off-Broadway show called *Frank and Friends*, at The Supper Club in New York City. It's like a Rat-Pack show with Frank Sinatra and Marilyn Monroe.

I'm most proud of being Assistant Program Director and Dance Department Head for a (theater) company (called) Broadway Artists Alliance, which is a Manhattan-based musical-theater intensive for young adults, ages 12 to 19. I'm having a wonderful time working with these kids because we have the same passions. I can relate to them being young and passionate about this business, and they can relate to me because I grew up as a child actor. It's fantastic to work with these kids and be behind the scenes. Personally I gain as much from it as being onstage. The company's fairly new but it's grown tremendously in the last year. It's a wonderful, wonderful experience and nice to be a part of it. [Those interested can check out <www.BroadwayArtistsAlliance.org>]

Another thing I love doing is that I perform and choreograph for the USO of Metropolitan New York and it's a truly rewarding job to get to perform for the troops and veterans, especially during wartime. As much as you might not agree with the war, I absolutely support the troops. We perform at ceremonies, also sing at corporate events, go to VA hospitals and retirement ceremonies, all kinds of stuff. The USO is 65 years old and still doing its part, so I like being a part of that too.

Kenny Ortega (Director and Choreographer) left the footlights of New York and headed west for the big screen, doing among other projects, directing and choreographing the unexpected hit—and now-classic film—*Dirty Dancing*.



In addition to directing for the *Gilmore Girls*, he directed and has just won his second Emmy for choreographing the Disney tv movie *High School Musical*, which has been a top DVD seller since its release in June and also won an Emmy for Outstanding Children's Program. One of the extras on the DVD has

an ebullient Ortega teaching dance steps to the home audience, revealing more about his passion for his work than words can ever say.

Alyson Reed (Marilyn), trained in classical ballet from her childhood, also headed back to the west coast to star as Cassie in the film version of *A Chorus Line*, a role she played on the National Tour just prior to *Marilyn: An American Fable*. In 1988, she was back on Broadway and Tony-nominated for her portrayal of Sally Bowles in the revival of *Cabaret* starring Joel Gray. She has appeared in guest roles in numerous television dramas and sitcoms over the years.



She too shares a credit in the hit *High School Musical*, portraying the theater coach, Mrs. Darbus (left). Unfortunately, the role doesn't allow her an opportunity to either sing or dance, but we might hope to see her again if

the youthful cast for the sequel to “Musical” (now in pre-production) remains the same.

Up Next for Scott...

Shortly after *Marilyn* folded, Scott did a workshop in New York for *3 Guys Naked From the Waist Down*, once again beginning the long journey in the development of a new musical.

The next installment of Scott's theater career, including exclusive interviews, will continue in our next issue of *The Observer*, #35, in early 2007.

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¹ Judy Thrall, *Backstage*, 12/12/80

² John S. Wilson, *NY Times*, 1/12/1981

³ Barry Yeoman, *East Side Express*, 1/22/81

⁴ Norma McLain Stoop, *Dancemagazine*, March 1981

⁵ Clive Barnes, *NY Post*, 3/12/81

⁶ Dave Stearns, (Rochester) *Times-Union*, 2/26/81

⁷ Doug, *Variety*, 4/8/81

⁸ Herbert M. Simpson, (Rochester) *Times-Union*, 3/5/81

⁹ Jack Garner, *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, 3/5/81

¹⁰ Clive Barnes, *NY Times*, (liner notes, original cast recording)

¹¹ Ellen Brown, *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, 6/26/81

¹² Harcourt Tynes, *The Reporter Dispatch* (White Plains), 10/26/81

¹³ Frank Rich, *NY Times*, 5/8/82

¹⁴ Joel Siegel, WABC-TV(NY), 5/7/82

¹⁵ Howard Kissel, *Women's Wear Daily*, 5/10/82

¹⁶ Tom Provenzano, *Dramalogue*, May 25, 1989

¹⁷ Tom Killen, *Darien News Review*, 9/30/82

¹⁸ Jeanne Davis, *Westport News*, 9/29/82

¹⁹ Ruth McDermott, *The Hour* (Norwalk, CT), 10/1/82

²⁰ *The Observer*, Issue 20, Summer 1999

²¹ *New York Times*, 3/28/83

²² Sherry Eaker, *Backstage*, 4/8/1983

²³ Jose., *Variety*, 4/13/83

²⁴ *Westport News*, 7/15/83

²⁵ Tom Killen, *Fairfield Citizen-News*, 7/27/1983

²⁶ Eleanor Blau, *NY Times*, 8/5/83

²⁷ Jim Calio, *People Weekly*, 12/5/83

²⁸ Christopher Sharp, *Women's Wear Daily*, 11/21/83

²⁹ Edwin Wilson, *Wall St. Journal*, 11/30/83

³⁰ Sy Syna, *NY Tribune*, 11/21/83

³¹ John Beaufort, *Christian Science Monitor*, 12/2/83

³² Humm., *Variety*, 11/23/83

³³ Douglas Watt, *NY Daily News*, 11/21/83

³⁴ Donald Spoto, *Marilyn Monroe*, Harper Collins, 1993

³⁵ Sheryl Kahn, *Theatre Week*, 8/22/88

³⁶ Paula Vitaris, *Show Music*, Winter 95/96

³⁷ Richard Ben Cramer, *Joe DiMaggio: A Hero's Life*, Simon&Schuster, 1999