

# THE REHEARSAL CLUB Founded 1913

[www.rehearsalclubnyc.com](http://www.rehearsalclubnyc.com)

## Alumnae Newsletter

*"To tell the story of The Rehearsal Club, to preserve its legacy and inspire the future generations of aspiring artists."*



LEE KELLEY

### A MESSAGE FROM YOUR CHAIR – Lee Kelley

Founding a new organization often requires Herculean effort. After two years, The Rehearsal Club is a reality. We owe so much to all those who made it possible, especially Kathy Conry, Honorary Chair; Michele Mason, 2008 Chair; Denise Pence, 2008 Vice Chair; Kathy Vestuto, 2008 Secretary; Terry Baughan, Treasurer and Maria Mallman, our Historian. I hope you will join me in extending my thanks to them.

Now, we must grow. To that end, I have designated two watchwords for 2009:

### "VISIBILITY" AND "EXPANSION."

Being your Chair is a privilege and a challenge. I accept both with great appreciation and I invite you all to come along on the journey to our Centennial and beyond. In whatever capacity and to whatever extent you can, we welcome your participation. We can only guess at the vistas and experiences ahead but preliminary glimpses indicate that they will be exciting, creative and as unforgettable as The Rehearsal Club itself.

### *The RC Hits the News!*

**Excerpt from full press release to be voted on at the next General Meeting in May (TBD)**

*"The Rehearsal Club, a New York theater legend, served as a safe haven for aspiring actresses and a hang-out for unknown actors before many found fame on stage and in Hollywood. Representing every decade from the 1930's through the 1970's, a group of Club actresses have launched a nationwide search for all other former residents inviting them to participate in a series of celebrity events culminating in 2013, the Centennial of its founding."*

### THE RC IS LINKEDIN!

Facebook "friends" recognize the value of networking online – so we created our own Rehearsal Club "group." Go to: [www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com) to create your profile, join our "group" and start exchanging information.



### CHANGING OF THE GUARD



**Chair:** Lee Kelley  
**Vice Chair:** Judy Jenson  
**Secretary:** Rise Clemmer

**Treasurer:** Terry Baughan  
**Historian:** Maria Mallman

**Steering Committee:** Judith Curcio,  
 Sunny Keyser, Jean Preece, Michele  
 Mason, Melinda Tanner, Alice Middleton,  
 Cameron Taylor, Denise Pence, Nancy  
 Wight

**INVOLVING THE GENERATIONS:**

Alice Middleton Anderson (1-212-255-5828) is our liaison (and Search Committee of one thus far) to the women of the '30s & '40s. We would like to take a vote at the next meeting to make these women "Honorary Members" and, therefore, not require them to pay "dues," but allow their names to be displayed on the web.

**Food for Thought:** Consider volunteering for a Big Sis/Little Sis RC Liaison. We hope to give our group a direct "purpose" to serve as aids to our older, fellow alumnae.



**SEARCH:**  
**Judy Jenson, Chair**

**CURRENT COMMITTEES**

This Committee will be reaching out through our unions to connect regionally with members.



**RC Products:**  
**Judith Curcio,**  
**Chair**

T-shirts, pins and charter cookbook are still available for purchase on our website. We are, however, collecting other treasured recipes for a more expanded version to be professionally published.

**Send recipes, pic & bio to:** [judith.curcio@espn.com](mailto:judith.curcio@espn.com)



**Plaque:**  
**Sunny Keyser,**  
**Chair**

We are diligently connecting the dots to submit a proposal to the West 53<sup>rd</sup> Street NYC Community Board requesting permanent recognition of the unique value of our home. If you can help,

**Contact Sunny at:** [sunnykeyser@yahoo.com](mailto:sunnykeyser@yahoo.com)



**Social:**  
**Cameron Taylor,**  
**Chair**

Our first NYC Theater Party is being organized around Kathy Conry's production of To Kill A Mockingbird scheduled in Brooklyn, NY on April 19, 2009. For RC "\$24 discount" tickets call 718-951-4600 x22 (Rick). For more information: **Contact Cam at:** [camcarolinak@hotmail.com](mailto:camcarolinak@hotmail.com)



**Museum Exhibit:**  
**Lee Kelley,**  
**Nancy Wight,**  
**Co-Chairs**

We are planning an exhibition with a museum in New York -- Target Date: Our Centennial. What we need from you? Nothing yet, but think about what YOU might own that would help tell the RC story. All donations would be submitted to the Museum and returned unharmed. Any questions?

**Contact: Lee at** [msleekelley@msn.com](mailto:msleekelley@msn.com); **or**

**Nancy at** [nwight1@gmail.com](mailto:nwight1@gmail.com)



**Production:**  
**Kathy Conry**  
**Denise Pence**

We're planting seeds all over the place to help us launch a "reunion." We know we have no real money to accomplish this so we're working through established non-profits like the Actors Fund, Lincoln Center Library, the Paley Media Center, the New York Foundation for the Arts and our various unions to entice them to help us create "something" and help us get our name "visible" once more. We have reason to believe that a "star-studded staged reading of Stage Door" is already in the works through the Actors Fund and we have submitted proposals in other areas to stimulate interest in creating a "Retrospective" for us. We hope the "stars" will come out to support these events – can your name help? Let us know! Combined with our grunt labor, we should be able to put The Rehearsal Club back on the map by 2013! And who knows? Maybe someone with real money out there will consider re-establishing our beloved home for future generations in New York. Pipe Dream? It could happen. Anything in this world is possible if we unite to create the energy. We are reaching out to YOU.

**Contact: Kathy at** [kathleenconry@cavtel.net](mailto:kathleenconry@cavtel.net); **or Denise at** [deboocks@aol.com](mailto:deboocks@aol.com)



### FUNDRAISING & DEVELOPMENT:

In these cruel economic times, there is still money available for worthy projects. Commemorating our history is a worthy project! Whether we are celebrating those who passed through the RC portals or for those future generations who may still benefit from the special community of support we were so fortunate to receive when we needed it most, help us REACH OUT. Any monies will go through a tax-deductible organization earmarked for our projects. Help us find those who are willing to help us financially.

Contact: Denise at [deboocks@aol.com](mailto:deboocks@aol.com)

### REGIONAL COMMITTEES:

As part of our outreach, we would like to establish regional reports in this newsletter. Whether you can act as a point person in your area for our "Goings On" column, or you are helping coordinate an event to bring your RC peers together, let us know what's Going On in your area. We want to support the missions of our peers.

### BOOK PROJECTS

*The House on West 53<sup>rd</sup> Street* (working title) is the first full history of the Rehearsal Club ever written, covering its humble but prestigious beginnings in Progressive-Era New York to its closing during the fiscally devastated 1970s. This ongoing documentary research for the book has thus far taken **KATHLEEN VESTUTO** to nine onsite archival resources, and has given her the opportunity to personally interview over 30 individuals. She is especially grateful to the 20 former Club residents – from the 1930s through the '70s – who have to date generously shared their stories. If you haven't yet spoken with Kathy, she looks forward to including you in this remarkable and loving adventure. Email [katves@aol.com](mailto:katves@aol.com). All interviewees will sign a standard interview release guaranteeing their approval of interview material prior to submission for publication. A percentage of any profits generated by the book will go to The Actors Fund.

*The Rehearsal Club: Untold Stories of the Real Stage Door* is also still in the works. This collection of personal memoirs written by former residents in their own voice and arranged by decade (1930s-1970s) requires submitting copyrighted material, *retaining your individual rights*, as part of this collection. Each contributing author will share equally among all contributing authors upon publication.

Inquiries or full, copyrighted stories (*preferably no longer than twenty pages*) should be submitted to **Lee Kelley** at [msleekelley@msn.com](mailto:msleekelley@msn.com) or **Denise Pence** at [deboocks@aol.com](mailto:deboocks@aol.com). If you cannot, for whatever reason, submit a story written and copyrighted in your own words, we encourage you to contact Kathy Vestuto. Preserving our individual histories is the main goal.



### REMEMBRANCES – Paulette Attie

A living legend. Paulette Attie made her singing debut in a talent show at age 3 (and refused to get off the stage). She graduated with top honors from UCLA and the following weekend was performing as a showgirl in Las Vegas. She went on to play a wide range of diverse leading roles in musicals and operettas, winning the Silver Globe Award for playing a French nightclub singer. A multi-talented performer, she held a variety of television daytime drama roles, wrote and sang for her own radio show and conceived of, and co-wrote, the hit NMT production of *Encores* (a history of the American musical) which successfully toured the country produced by Columbia Artists. She worked throughout her fateful battle with liver cancer to complete her book, "Seven Keys to Live a Masterful Life," due to be published soon. The women of the RC will be

purchasing a copy and donating it the Donnel Library in her name. For more details on her life visit: [www.pauletteattie.com](http://www.pauletteattie.com).

**LETTER TO THE EDITOR:**

Dear Rehearsal Club Alumni:

My entire life has been focused on dance, from lessons as a child, to performing, to teaching for 21 years. In 1998 I discovered a new way to direct my energies. One of my former students, an eleven-year old girl, did not survive an automobile accident. The way that I felt I could help the family was through dance. I set up a dance scholarship in her name at the studio where I was teaching. This, along with a tribute dance that I choreographed and performed in alongside my daughter and the surviving twin sister and 50 other dancers, brought her family great comfort.



★Dancing for Angels, Inc.★

Establishing the scholarship was one of the high points of my dance career. I wondered how I could do more. It took two years to bring my thoughts and ideas to fruition.

Along with my husband Howard, I formed Dancing for Angels, Inc. in January 2001. To date we have awarded 24 dance scholarships. Every scholarship is named in honor or in memory of an individual or for an organization – **we would love to dedicate our 2009 Scholarship in the name of The Rehearsal Club.**

Dancing for Angels, Inc. is a nonprofit, (501) (c) (3) corporation. The mission of Dancing for Angels, Inc. (DFA) is to help children develop socially, emotionally and physically through the creative expression of dance. DFA has been formed to provide opportunities for children to participate in dance programs who otherwise would not be able to do so.

Our next fundraiser is tentatively planned for Friday, November 20, 2009 in Central Valley New York directly across the street from Woodbury Common Premium Outlet. At our last event, we had seven dance studios from the New York and New Jersey area perform for us. This event, along with our matching scholarship program at participating dance studios, is our main source of scholarship money. All of the money raised goes to students and all of the work done is on a volunteer basis.

**If there are any dance studios, or musical performers who would like to be a part of the fundraiser please feel free to contact me at [dancingforangels@yahoo.com](mailto:dancingforangels@yahoo.com). We would love for anyone from The Rehearsal Club to be a part of the evening.**

**Joyce Chapman, Artistic Director**

**Editor's Note:** If there are any dancers among you in the NY area who would be interested in joining us in creating a dance piece at this November performance in recognition of the RC, contact the editor at [deboocks@aol.com](mailto:deboocks@aol.com)



## 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Rehearsal Club Team!

Sign up at:

<https://www.kintera.org/faf/teams/registerTeam.asp?ievent=295208&lis=1&kntac295208>

Like everything else with our group, we need participation to turn an idea into an "event." My husband and I have walked this walk since the 80's – many of our gypsy friends have died from it and many others are now living with it. We walk in memory of each of them. We hope you'll join us this year.

As we move closer to the walk, we will organize a meeting place for each registered walker so we can at least start the walk together. Plan to meet for lunch at O'Neal's to nurse our (by that time) sore bones back to life.

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY PHYLLIS!

March 29<sup>th</sup> – 90+ and still going strong!



Phyllis Creore Westerman (1940s)

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Enid Hart Boasberg  
Blythe Danner  
Marsha Silverman Firestone  
Lori March  
Patrice Soriero Stanbovsky  
Jan Granger Wikstrom

**GOINGS ON:**

**CAROL BURNETT**'s Special, *A Woman of Character* aired recently on Channel 13 (PBS) where she spoke so endearingly of the RC. Maria Mallman also caught her episode on *Law and Order* (3/17) where "she outclassed and stole every scene with her extraordinary gift to transform herself into a mesmerizing, believable character so far distant from that which we have known or seen in the past. BRAVA." If you read this, Carol, you should know we are your greatest fan club.

**LORA MITCHELL** has two short pieces included in *Six-Word Memoirs on Love and Heartbreak*, by *Writers Famous and Obscure*, published by Harper Perennial. This is the second edition of the *Six-Word Memoirs* collection; the first, last year, was a *New York Times* bestseller.



Lora was also spotted in her famous *French Connection* close-up, during one of TCM's clever montages promoting their upcoming schedule.

Photo: Fox; reproduced in *The New York Times*, 2/22/09

**KATHY CONRY:** Excerpt from Daily Nebraskan re: *To Kill A Mockingbird*'s "Miss Maudie" by Michael Todd: *Although the story will turn fifty next year, the story still captivates young and old, and parallels to today's world are evident. Conry mentioned the hard times we're facing with today's economy are similar to those the characters are in, as the novel was set during the Great Depression. But that aside, Conry believes it was Lee's use of the timeless theme of a morality deeply rooted in family that speaks to the young and the young at heart of every generation and that has given To Kill A Mockingbird the long life it has enjoyed. 'I think Harper Lee was able to take family values, social values and human values and put them into a story that every young person could recognize as their own story,' said Conry. "[T]o do a play like this anywhere in this country is an honor and a joy because you realize you're doing what is important about theater which is taking an important story to tell to areas all over the United States so that people have to continually be reminded of these values. We have to continually be reminded that people are created equal. Believe me, I know that for a fact. Even though we know it's true, it doesn't happen all the time"*

(See pg 2 Social Events to catch her performance in New York)

**MELINDA TANNER and DENISE PENCE:** Catch these two appearing as sisters in the 10-minute play by Heather Violanti, *Passing Time*, for the First Annual Strong Kids Playwrighting Festival, April 1 & 2, at the Marjorie S. Dean Little Theater, 5 West 63<sup>rd</sup> St., NYC, 8pm.

**ANNIE O'DONNELL** – made her third appearance as "Mama Dee", formerly "first wife", and now "second wife" - damn that "Adaleen"!! (Mary Kay Place) - of "Roman Grant" (Harry Dean Stanton) on the HBO hit "Big Love" ( Episode # 32, "Rough Edges" ), Sunday March 8th.

**RISÉ CLEMMER** – is heading to Las Vegas for the historical closing of the Folies Bergere. A reunion of the Rudas Dancers, just months short of making their 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, is planned. Risé plans to use the time to find and enlist the support of other RC alum who might be among the Rudas Dancers which just happened to be her first job upon leaving the Rehearsal Club those many years ago.



### Good Girls Only

*Lyrics by Charlie Leipart, Music by John Kroner*

*Performed by:*

*Kathy Conry, Melinda Tanner, Cynthia Darlow, Denise Pence, Michele Mason & Rise Clemmer*

**THANK YOU BLYTHE!** As many of you know, Blythe came to our last General Meeting to show her support in everything we've been trying to accomplish. She, like Carol Burnett and a host of other stars among us, has fond memories and recognizes the valuable contribution The Rehearsal Club played in each of our lives. We hope some of our seeds sown will bear fruition between now and our Centennial in 2013. We reach out to each of you to participate where you can, contribute ideas, plant your own seeds and support others doing the same.

**TOGETHER WE ARE STRONGER** – and can move mountains.



### Fall, 2008 GENERAL MEETING

*Amanda Roberts, Michele Mason, Kathy Conry, Blythe Danner, Nicky Gallas, Judy Jenson, Melinda Tanner, & Cameron Taylor*

**2009 SPRING GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING**  
**Date in May to be announced soon! Plan to BE THERE!**