

January – April 2005

Saturday, April 30, 2005

This past Monday went to Kevin Covert's birthday party at Park with Alison Franck. Kevin's in Broadway's SPAMALOT, so a good deal of the cast was there. Ran into Steve Rosen, Sarah Gurfeld and Scott Schwartz and others. Park is a great place for a party; had never been there before. And Thursday night was another birthday party in Chelsea for friend Tiffani Gavin.

Last week was the 2005 William Inge Festival honoring playwright Tina Howe in William Inge's hometown of Independence, Kansas. Tina Howe is hilarious. The whole Upper-East-Side-New-Yorker-displaced-in-Kansas thing made for some good comedy when Howe accepted her award after the Festival's final presentation in her honor. She's very funny, and so are her plays. Before the Festival weekend, I only knew Tina Howe's MUSEUM, THE ART OF DINING, and COASTAL DISTURBANCES, which I read specifically in preparation for a scene for Howe's final tribute that I performed with actress, Robyn Cohen. By the end of the Festival, though, everyone there was familiar with the full scope of her work. I had a lot more to do this year than last, and all by the seat of my pants: each day there was something new to quickly rehearse and then put up for an audience. Director Michael John Garces helped throw together our reading of the new play, MAGICIAN'S CHOICE, by Lynne Kaufman, which was very well-received. We also did a reading of THE NIGHT THOREAU SPENT IN JAIL by past Inge Festival honorees Lawrence and Lee. I read "Bailey."

One of the Festival highlights was the new play Lincoln Center has commissioned Tina Howe to write, currently titled LUNCHEON ON THE GRASS. On the first night of the Festival we heard a reading of the not-yet-completed play, directed by NY's Carl Forsman of the Keen Company, and featuring a cast led by Elizabeth Wilson and the absolutely riveting Lynn Cohen. Howe

got up on stage afterward to share with us how she planned to end the play. The Festival's Hannah Joyce-Hoven promises to send pictures once they're ready, and I'll post them when they arrive. Pictures from last year's Festival honoring Arthur Laurents are on the photos page.

Next year is the 25th anniversary of the William Inge Festival, and the plan is to reunite all the past living playwright honorees. So far it looks like 6 or so have already confirmed. Hope I can make it back...

Tuesday, April 19, 2005

Off to the William Inge Festival tomorrow. Excited to meet the other artists, read some new plays, sit on some panels, and put together the final evening's multimedia tribute to Tina Howe. The tribute to Arthur Laurents last year was impressive – like a live documentary of his career. Eager to participate in this year's.

Saw Broadway's DOUBT about a week ago. The performances are exemplary, as I'd heard they would be. Cherry Jones and Brian F. O'Byrne, and Adriane Lenox, are all terrific, and Heather Goldenhersh is intriguingly vulnerable and odd as "Sister James." I became a fan of hers a few years ago when, researching for an audition, I saw her in the archival tape of Richard Nelson's GOODNIGHT, CHILDREN EVERYWHERE at the Lincoln Center Theatre on Film and Tape archives. She gave an equally compelling performance as a young, semi-spoiled aspiring actress in post-World-War II England – a far cry from the sheepish Bronx nun she's playing in DOUBT.

Also went to opening night of THE BAKER'S WIFE at Paper Mill on Sunday. It's a charming production with a great cast, fantastic set and lighting by Anna Louizos and Jeff Croiter, respectively, directed by Gordon Greenberg. The leads were excellent, and of the supporting cast Kevin del Aguila was hilarious as the town drunk and Gay Marshall's performance as

“Denise” seemed to magically bathe the show in a warm, French nostalgia. Friend Jesse Bush assistant directed. I thank him for the pre-show drink. I’m sure the warm, French nostalgia had something to do with that, too.

A good deal of friends are appearing in or helped to write The Transport Group’s show, THE AUDIENCE (no surprise, since all-told, there are probably 40 to 50 actors in it, with equally as many contributing writers). The show has been getting some great attention. The real audience watches a fictional audience onstage who, in turn, is watching a new musical. It’s a fascinating concept, but, unfortunately, I dragged my heels on this one, and it’s going to close before I get to see it. But that doesn’t mean YOU can’t.

Saturday, April 9, 2005

Something big is brewing...

Tuesday, April 5, 2005

THE DRAWER BOY closed this past Sunday, but that’s been barely perceptible since I’ve been catapulted right out into audition-land again. Ran into an old buddy from Brown University, McCaleb Burnett, at a LAW & ORDER audition on Monday and caught up a little. It’s been a busy week, but lots of audition activity means the next booking could be sooner rather than later, so...great.

Looking forward to going back to the William Inge Festival this year, honoring playwright Tina Howe. I’ll be playing “David” in a reading of a new play by Lynne Kaufman called MAGICIAN’S CHOICE, as well as sitting on panels in various symposia during the festival and performing a scene from Tina Howe’s COASTAL DISTURBANCES in the multi-media tribute to the playwright of honor, which rounds out the festivities each year. The festival takes place miles and miles away in William Inge’s hometown of Independence, Kansas. Last year I flagged down one of the scores of cabs flying down the Manhattan

streets at 6 a.m., went to LaGuardia, and 11 hours later, there I was in a Kansas town so small they don't even have any cabs. Each year entertainment professionals from NY and LA converge on Independence for a long weekend to honor William Inge and the year's playwright of honor. Last year's Inge Festival honored playwright Arthur Laurents – here are some pictures. Past guest honorees have included Edward Albee, Arthur Miller, Stephen Sondheim, etc. Here's a link to the William Inge Festival website.

Just got a letter today with some exciting news from pal, Theodore Bikel, who played my father last year in THE CHOSEN. He'll be receiving a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame on April 29th. He's 80 and still hasn't slowed down: he'll be in THE DISPUTATION in D.C. in September and will be doing a new two-person play at Miami's Coconut Grove Playhouse (where we originated THE CHOSEN), in February. Congrats, Theo!

Saturday, March 26, 2005

Had a busy day yesterday. Three auditions, a voice lesson and THE DRAWER BOY. Got the news that I'd play "Miles" in last night's performance, opposite John Mahoney and Paul Vincent O'Connor, so I called my agent to reschedule my third audition, and rushed out to Paper Mill to review lines and run some scenes with Paul and the stage manager. The show went really well. THE DRAWER BOY is about a young actor who comes to study two old farmers – a stranger coming to someone else's house. So it worked really well that I was a new actor (a stranger) coming into this show the other two actors knew so well already. Friend Julie Novacek was able to get out to see the show on short notice, and she, Alison Franck and the other understudy, Edwin C. Owens, and I, all went out for a late dinner at Joe Allen's Restaurant after we got back to Manhattan. Ran into producer Hank Unger, whose production of WICKED is still going strong on Broadway, and now, too, on national tour.

Got some great news a few weeks ago from friend Kate Wetherhead. She'll be making her Broadway debut, joining the cast of William Finn's THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE, when it transfers from its off-Broadway run to Broadway's Circle in the Square Theatre, in mid-April.

Friday, March 4, 2005

THE DRAWER BOY opened last night. Had a fun time hanging out at the party afterward with friend Jesse Bush, who's assistant directing the next show at Paper Mill, THE BAKER'S WIFE; and friends Joe Drymala and Ryan Davis, who were at the press opening representing their theatre website, StageSpace.

Monday, February 28, 2005

First day off from THE DRAWER BOY, after two weeks of tech and previews. After the two shows on Saturday, stopped by Geoffrey Soffer and Rachel Hoffman's joint birthday party at Bar 9 with Alison Franck. Ran into Jamie McGonnigal, Bridget Berger, Cindi Rush among others. Paper Mill's weekend schedule has five shows, so overall, it's a weekend killer. But we've got Mondays and Tuesdays off. Perfect to kick back and get buried in this Nor'easter.

Two shows, again, yesterday – but got back in time to catch the tail end of the 2005 Academy Awards. I'm most excited about Morgan Freeman's Best Supporting Actor win for MILLION DOLLAR BABY. His quiet dignity, clarity and unwavering honesty grounds every single film he appears in. He's been nominated three times before; I'm glad he finally took a statue home. And it was so great to see Freeman's wife, Myrna, celebrating there next to him. Myrna is a costume designer, and she costumed my first professional show out of school at Rites and Reason Theatre in Providence; she told me she fell in love with Morgan when she saw him up on stage in a show and he was "incapable of telling a single lie."

Friday, February 25, 2005

The tech period for THE DRAWER BOY is over, and now previews are underway. Official opening will be March 3rd. There's a great special effect in the second act – we'll see if it gets the buzz I think it will. Friends Kate Wetherhead and Becca Ayers thought the effect was cool – they came to see yesterday's matinee. Press coverage has begun to pick up, too. Here's an article with John Mahoney that appeared, today.

Monday, February 15, 2005

Today, the makeup artist came in to rehearsals for THE DRAWER BOY to do the wounds and scratches (it's a show set on a farm – s*** happens). It's always so exciting when the special effects makeup people become involved in the process. When I was a kid, I idolized the Hollywood makeup artists Dick Smith (The Exorcist, Amadeus) and Rick Baker (2001, Planet of the Apes), and I wanted to become a special effects makeup artist for the movies. So in addition to being obsessed with Nintendo and Alyssa Milano on Who's the Boss, as kids, my friends and I also spent hours reading Fangoria, perfecting prosthetic gashes and wounds and trying to trump each other each Halloween. One year, worked for a month or so on creating an ambitious facsimile for myself of Freddy Krueger.

I've long since put the pursuit of that interest to rest, but I do get to re-experience it every once in awhile, doing a show (most recently, THE CHOSEN, transforming from real-life angstful young urban New Yorker into bearded, Hasidic Jew). But every time the makeup people get involved when I'm doing a play, it's a brief trip down memory lane... Talked to THE DRAWER BOY costume designer, Jess Goldstein, the other day, and found out he designed the padded hose that Tovah Feldshuh wore in GOLDA'S BALCONY, which helped along her physical transformation into an aged, varicose-veined Golda Meir. Jess wasn't behind today's wound-creation, but gotta send some respect that way, too – my girlfriend thought those legs were really Feldshuh's ("Her legs are so ugly!") – sorry Tovah.

Monday, February 14, 2005

It's another day off from THE DRAWER BOY, and the last for two weeks. Technical rehearsals will start late next week, and then the show will start its first performances. Despite an eventful and arduous rehearsal week, still got out and had some fun. Saw Becca Ayers in the play JOY, last night, directed by Ben Rimalower and cast by friend Michael Cassara. The audience was packed and enthusiastic. Kate Wetherhead came along with me, and we all got together for drinks afterward at Film Center.

Saw a preview of DIRTY ROTTEN SCOUNDRELS the other night with Alison Franck. John Lithgow was as watchable as always, and Norbert Leo Butz is giving one of the most entertaining performances I've seen in a Broadway musical for a long time. His character is really such a lovable jerk. I'm probably not too far off the mark in guessing that this show has some of the most audacious lyrics ever to be heard from a Broadway stage.

Still religiously tuning in to UNSCRIPTED on HBO, every Sunday. The show's format may have its critics, but I've accepted it, and the realistic depiction of struggling L.A. actors is often so spot on to the point that many of the people and projects mentioned by the actors in the show are people and projects my friends and I are auditioning for, too. It's a guilty pleasure, and I don't have many, so...I'll own this one.

Monday, February 7, 2005

Had the day off, today, from THE DRAWER BOY. Yesterday ended the first week of rehearsals with a stumble-through of the show. Spent the day off lazing around Manhattan. Stopped by the Actor's Equity Lounge/Audition Studio to read the bulletin board and see what was going on there. Some big open calls for summer stock. Ran into Mark Campbell, who I did a production

of A Christmas Carol with, and caught up. Then went to The Coffee Pot to write and do some script reviewing. Called friend Becca Ayers whom I haven't seen for months, because she was out of town doing a show. She was at an audition, nearby, for a production of THE LAST FIVE YEARS, so she came and visited for awhile with me. Ran into friend Ryan Davis, there, too, and chatted for awhile. Becca's in a play, JOY, directed by friend Ben Rimalower, (starring the "Dell dude," Ben Curtis) at the Producer's Club. Going to go see it in a week with Kate Wetherhead.

Later had drinks with Alison Franck, Patrick Parker and John O'Neill, who had all just gotten out of conducting some auditions for THE BAKER'S WIFE, which plays Paper Mill after THE DRAWER BOY.

And now, back to the script. These are not the easiest lines to learn, especially since the character tells the same story three times, but each time in different way. And, man, it's hard to keep that straight... Saw an interview with Judy Dench a while ago, where someone asked her how she learned her lines. She said she draws a hot bath and does not get out until she's learned them all. (Doesn't her script get wet?)

Friday, February 4, 2005

Well, now, after three days of table work on THE DRAWER BOY with playwright Michael Healey in the room, I have such a deeper understanding of and enthusiasm for this play. Last night I went and had dinner at The Delta Grill to visit friend Jesse Bush who was bartending there. I talked the play with him, since he has a special interest in it, having recently directed a production of it a few months ago at Ithaca's Kitchen Theatre. Jesse was especially interested in hearing what playwright Michael Healey had to say about his own play; most never experience the luxury of having the playwright's point of view, firsthand, in rehearsals. Paper Mill is pulling out all the stops to give this play a superior production; I'm

really excited at how it's coming together...

Later went to see Trevor Oswalt's band, The Lost Tricks, at the Ars Nova space. Great harmonies, cool instrumentation, and skinny white ties!

Tuesday, February 2, 2005

Last night I did a reading of a play, Pandora's Box, a mock Restoration comedy. Played the insufferable fop. Friend Isaac Robert Hurwitz directed it, and we read it to an enthusiastic crowd as a sendoff to its playwright, Sally Faraday, who's on her way home to Australia.

Thursday, January 20, 2005

Back from L.A., learning lines for THE DRAWER BOY, and trying to decide what to bring to Jeff Marx and Rena Strober's shabbat potluck dinner at Hurley's on Friday. Something to complement kugel... decisions...

Tuesday, January 10, 2005

Just got around to watching the extras on the DVDs of two of my favorite movies, Milos Foreman's AMADEUS (the director's cut) and Mike Nichols' THE GRADUATE. My favorite thing about DVDs are the extras (I'm disappointed with the DVD of TOOTSIE, though, another favorite film of mine, which has no commentary, featurette, interviews or anything). Anyway, was watching the documentaries on the making of THE GRADUATE and the making of AMADEUS, and there is something endlessly fascinating to me to hear actors like Dustin Hoffman or F. Murray Abraham referring back to their time in the trenches, early on, before their first breakthrough roles. The frustrations, confusions, struggles and neuroses they discuss in themselves as young actors are comfortingly familiar; not so comforting is how strikingly apparent it is that even after things take off, the frustrations, confusions, struggles and neuroses continue. It's a good thing, then, that I'm such a

glutton for frustrations, confusions, struggles and neuroses.

This morning had breakfast with my friend and former acting teacher from Brown, Mark Cohen. Mark's a professor of acting, now, at Emerson College in Boston. Was fun to catch up after not having seen each other for about three years. Back in college, Mark introduced me to one of my favorite plays, Ibsen's LITTLE EYOLF, as well as stoking the fire under my complete intolerance for B.S. in acting.

Saw friends Kate Wetherhead and Jesse Bush, tonight, at the Delta Grill. I wouldn't have felt compelled necessarily to say anything about that at all, except for the fact that Jesse asked if he'd be appearing on my blog. I told him, "no."

Sunday, January 9, 2005

Attended a matinee yesterday of LONE STAR LOVE: The Merry Wives of Windsor, Texas, by friend John Haber. The show was great with a fantastic cast led by Jay O. Sanders as "Falstaff." Later attended Joanna Parson's HAPPY HOUR SALON, an open mike with six or so different acts that Joanna conceived and MC's, followed by a party at Richard Topol's, friend from THE CHOSEN at Paper Mill.

I know I'm like a broken record about this, but I find Joe Calarco's trip to Tokyo to direct the Japanese premier of SHAKESPEARE'S R&J to be fascinating. Now in addition to his journal about the trip, there are photos from the trip, too, all on, or linked from, his website.

Tonight I'm attending the opening night of HAROLD & MAUDE at Paper Mill Playhouse where I'm excited to be returning myself in a month or so to understudy the role of "Miles" in THE DRAWER BOY. Friend Eric Millegan plays "Harold," opposite Academy Award-winner Estelle Parsons as "Maude." Too biased to post any sort of review of the show, but I'm excited to see it, tonight. I'm a huge fan of the film; really eager to see how they've adapted it to the stage...

Wednesday, January 5, 2005

Joe Calarco has arrived in Tokyo to direct the Japanese premier of his SHAKESPEARE'S R&J. Here are some of his first impressions.

Monday, January 3, 2005

Hope everyone had happy holidays and a great New Year's celebration. Before writing about anything else, I wanted to provide a link to any of you who are able to contribute something, even the smallest amount, to help aid the victims of the horrible disaster in Asia. There are many charities who could use your aid and that take donations online. Here is just one: United States fund for UNICEF. Thanks to friend Dan Diggles for the link.

Since my last entry, we lost a great actor and New Yorker, Jerry Orbach. In reading many of the articles and obituaries and Internet postings about this talented and jovial actor, I was able to piece together a surprising and touching realization about my own experience having worked with him on an episode of LAW & ORDER. In one article, someone Orbach knew said that he "always knew his lines and everyone else's." Another recounted how extremely kind Orbach was to the actors in featured roles who would work opposite him on the show. If they flubbed a line, he'd tell them to keep going, knowing that everything would be fine in the final edit. If they were nervous, he'd try to put them at ease. He was outgoing and approachable: between setups, Orbach chatted with me about politics in the wake of the first Bush victory, voter fraud in Miami, and cards.

It was my first-ever TV appearance, and in the scene I shot with Orbach, I had some challenging technical jargon to speak. In the middle of a take, I went up on my lines. Of course, there were other takes – it wasn't the end of the world – but privately, I felt a little embarrassed. We shot some other

angles and then the final shot in the scene was a closeup on Orbach. He began his take, and then HE flubbed a line. "What's my line, again?" he said to the crew. No one answered him – they just immediately started another take and he got it right.

At the time, (and in these two years since), I thought, "OK, it was a little embarrassing to have gone up on my lines, but so what? So did Jerry Orbach." Though in the back of my mind I think I already suspected this, I'm now pretty certain that this man who "always knew his lines and everyone else's" went up on purpose, for the psychological benefit of a nervous young actor.

What a class act. It was a privilege to have appeared in my first TV spot opposite someone like him.

Rest in peace.

Friend Joe Calarco has left for Japan to direct the Tokyo production of his SHAKESPEARE'S R&J (in Japanese!). Joe has joined the blogging world, and will be journaling about his experience there. No news, so far, about his first day in Japan (but it's a long trip; maybe he's still en route). Guess I can take out LOST IN TRANSLATION, in the meantime, and imagine what it could be like...