

September – December 2004

Sunday, December 12, 2004

UNLOCK'D ended its run, yesterday, with a full house and a warm standing ovation. Thanks to friends Joe Calarco, Nell Benjamin, Michael Cassara, Alison Franck, and Patrick Parker for coming to see the show. Afterwards at Molly Wee Pub for drinks, Joe Calarco showed us the script for his upcoming Tokyo production of his SHAKESPEARE'S R&J, written entirely in Japanese. Joe may not be able to read his own script, but luckily he'll have two translators when he goes to Tokyo to direct the production in January.

Went to see an evening of songs by Brian Lowdermilk and Kait Kerrigan, tonight, directed by Michael Cassara who assembled a great cast including Michael Arden, Kate Shindle, Mandy Gonzalez, Alison Fraser and others for the performance at Opia.

Friends Eric Millegan and Jeff Gurner start rehearsals tomorrow for the world premiere of HAROLD & MAUDE at Paper Mill Playhouse, starring Academy Award-winner, Estelle Parsons. Here's a great publicity shot of Eric as "Harold" and Parsons as "Maude": Harold & Maude.

Sunday, December 5, 2004

Had rehearsal for UNLOCK'D, yesterday. The cast and writers – well, everyone involved – are hilarious. It's been a good two weeks. Performances are this coming week, and they had all sold out only a few days into rehearsals. I'm curious to see who all these people are who will be coming. Later went to dinner for friend Pam Adams' birthday, followed by another birthday party for friend Robin Carus at VINTAGE and ending up with seeing Jeff Gurner's band LISA JACKSON AND GIRL FRIDAY at CBGB's.

Wednesday, December 1, 2004

Along with Alison Franck, UNLOCK'D writer Sam Carner and UNLOCK'D cast members Andrew Palermo, Jeff Gurner, Laura Bell Bundy and Kate Wetherhead saw Derek Gregor play last night with his excellent band, M-LAB at The Knitting Factory.

Saturday, November 27, 2004

Saw the Manhattan Theatre Club production of Craig Lucas's RECKLESS, tonight, starring Mary Louise Parker (excellent, as always). Rosie Perez and Debra Monk are standouts, as well.

Friends Kenny Boys and Bethany Brooks are getting some great reviews as "Pastor Manders" and "Regina," respectively, in Ibsen's GHOSTS at New Jersey's Luna Stage Company.

Tuesday, November 23, 2004

Saw a screening last night through BAFTA with Alison Franck of the new film adaptation of Andrew Lloyd Webber's THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA. There was a talk-back afterward with director Joel Schumacher and star, Emmy Rossum. I'd give my impressions of the film, but that would be tacky, since it doesn't officially open until December 22. The reviews will be extremely readable, though; I can promise you that much...

Met the rest of the cast of UNLOCK'D, in our first rehearsal, yesterday. The cast is a veritable who's who of really great young up-and-comers: Richard Todd Adams, Catherine J. Brunell, Laura Bell Bundy, Jeff Gurner, Marya Grandy, Jim Newman, Andrew Palermo, Amanda Paige Ryan and Kate Wetherhead.

Sunday, November 21, 2004

Start rehearsals tomorrow for UNLOCK'D by Sam Carner and Derek Gregor, with director Will Pomerantz with whom I've been hoping to work for a long time. Now, happily, I get the chance to. Friend Kate Wetherhead is also in the cast along with Richard Todd Adams and some others whom I guess I'll have to

be surprised by, tomorrow, since I haven't been told who else is in the cast!

Details on the show (or rather a link to information) are posted on my news page.

Friend Jamie McGonnigal's all-star benefit concert of PIPPIN will happen on November 29th. Info about the concert can be found at www.pippinconcert.org.

Saturday, November 20, 2004

Wow. It's been awhile since I've blogged... I moved to a new apartment in Brooklyn and took some survival jobs, which I've been busy with before embarking on UNLOCK'D this coming week. One of the jobs is ushering at 42nd STREET, which will be closing, soon, at the Ford Center, soon to be re-named the Hilton Theatre. Hilton Hotels will be setting up a booth in the lobby to sell time shares. (Irving Berlin would roll in his grave. He didn't even allow a gift shop in his Broadway theatre, The Music Box, under the conviction that it was theatre, not the circus. Now they're selling time shares.) (Story courtesy Talia Krispel!) I heard a rumor that the Belasco Theatre, where DRACULA is currently playing, is going to be renamed The Hoover in a brilliant display of marketing synergy, with free vacuum-cleaner demonstrations in the lobby during intermission. But I digress...

42nd Street has some huge tap numbers, which for a non-dancer (like this guy) are endlessly fascinating to watch. Standouts in the cast are, of course, Nadine Issenegger as "Peggy," Blair Ross as "Dorothy Brock," but my favorites are actually Alana Salvatore and Kelly Sheehan as "Annie" and "Lorraine," respectively. Honestly, though, if you're going to have to take a survival job between acting gigs, you could do worse than having to watch 30 beautiful girls dance for 2 1/2 hours. Say what you will about David Merrick, but he had the right idea about that one.

Joe Calarco asked me to read stage directions a few days ago for a few public readings of Beth Blatt and Jenny Giering's THE MISTRESS CYCLE, which he directed. I said yes and was a lone male sitting among the five beautiful "mistresses," Rebecca Luker, Julia Murney, Mary Bond Davis, Stephanie Bast and Sally Wilfert. During the performance it was like being "Guido" in 8 1/2, except with none of the women ever paying any attention to you. But seriously, the three full-capacity performances, produced by the new theatre company AWOL, were all enthusiastically received, even by me, limited only to my peripheral vision!

Went to Rye Mullis's birthday party last night at the Irish Rogue and ran into friends Michael Cassara, Jamie McGonnigal, Adam Arian, and others, but after a callback in the morning, work at 42nd Street and work, again, typing at a second survival job, I only stayed about an hour. And drank not a drop. Oh, well. Sometimes it's OK to let the other kids have all the fun. Plus, I have more script work to do before rehearsal on Monday...

Thursday, November 4, 2004

See this. It's great!

[Cam Jansen](#)

by Laurence O'Keefe and Nell Benjamin
at the Lamb's Theatre, NYC

There are 7pm performances on Nov 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 18, 19, 20, 26 and 27th

Tickets for CAM JANSEN can be purchased at: www.telecharge.com
Follow this link for discount tickets to certain performances.

Tuesday, November 2, 2004

VOTE!!

Friday, October 29, 2004

Last night I attended the opening of Roundabout Theatre Company's TWELVE ANGRY MEN, directed by Scott Ellis, at the American Airlines Theatre. This was a pretty tight revival of a well-known play and a natural-predecessor to television dramas like LAW & ORDER. And it was enjoyable in the same way. I have to say, though, that after one stale revival after another on Broadway, it's refreshing to see something presented without apology for the fact that it was written 50 years ago, and still have it come off so well. (Technically, this is the play's Broadway debut, though it's been around forever...) Often it seems as though there's a fear behind some of the revivals presented on Broadway that they necessarily have to be updated or made relevant to today, when they were written during and belong in another era. This production of TWELVE ANGRY MEN still feels like it's from the era in which it was written (the 50's), but it is exciting to sit there and watch it. It's like being inside an old movie. The social issues in this play, which then were probably pretty groundbreaking, could be perceived as cliched, now, but everyone knows the play was written in the Fifties; it comes off both charming and engaging to see things presented as they were in their original context with no apparent script-tweaking. And it doesn't hurt that some of New York's best stage actors illuminate the cast: Tom Aldredge, Mark Blum, Philip Bosco, Larry Bryggman, Robert Clohessy, Peter Friedman, Boyd Gaines, Kevin Geer, Michael Mastro, Matte Osian, John Pankow, James Rebhorn and Adam Trese.

Monday, October 25, 2004

I just posted my profile on www.stagespace.com. If you haven't checked this site out, yet, do – it's like Friendster for theatre fans and theatre professionals. Sign up for free here: [Sign up for StageSpace.com](http://www.stagespace.com)

Thursday, October 21, 2004

As I sit here staring poverty straight in the face, I'm glad

to have beside me an excellent memoir, written by British actor, Simon Callow (SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE), entitled BEING AN ACTOR. A great book about the daily ins and outs and ups and DOWNS of an actor's life. You can play to accolades one month and be eating out of cans, the next (...hmm, I think I can relate...) Lots of great theatrical anecdotes and lore. The book is filled with quotations by tried-and-true actors like Ruth Gordon (Harold & Maude) who said, "It's not enough to have talent. You have to have a talent for having talent." Now chew on that...

Wednesday, October 13, 2004

Last night I attended the Casting Society of America's ARTIOS AWARDS with Paper Mill casting director, Alison Franck. The ceremony was held at Caroline's Comedy Club, NYC. Among the many winners were Bernard Telsey and Will Cantler for MCC's production of THE DISTANCE FROM HERE, directed by Michael Greif; Judy Blye-Wilson for ALL MY CHILDREN; and Cindy Tolan for AVENUE Q, which she casts with associate, Matt Schreiber.

Monday, October 4, 2004

Spent the day watching the 45-minute presentations of this year's selections for the NAMT Festival, held at Dodger Stages. A standout amongst the presentations was the new show, THE DROWSY CHAPERONE.

Later, attended a CD launch party at the theatre district's Angus McIndoe restaurant for the a cappella group, Pieces of 8. Friends Jose "Chach" Francisco and Mandy Linden are members of the group. Their website.

Sunday, September 26, 2004

Saw friend, Jesse Bush, last week just in time to catch him before he left for the Kitchen Theatre, in Ithaca, to direct my absolute favorite new play, THE DRAWER BOY, by Michael Healey.

Friday night saw ALTAR BOYZ. A really entertaining show with a great script by Kevin Del Aguila. If this show doesn't transfer to a commercial run, then my powers of prediction...suck. **9/28/04 update: my powers of prediction DON'T suck. They're transferring. Whew.

Sunday, September 19, 2004

A busy day...Went to the Broadway Flea Market, which was buzzing with activity, then saw a matinee of WICKED. Ensemble member Kristy Cates was on for Idina Menzel in the role of "Elphaba." She did a great job. Had gone to see friend Michelle Federer ("Nessa Rose") a year ago when the show was in previews. A lot of cast members are different now, including Jennifer Laura Thompson in the role originated by Kristin Chenoweth. Jennifer Laura was excellent, and new cast member George Hearn brought a welcome gravitas to the role of the Wizard. The show is still turning people away at the door, a year in. The place was packed.

While doing THE CHOSEN with Theodore Bikel, he highly recommended Tovah Feldshuh in GOLDA'S BALCONY, on Broadway. Well, months later, now, I finally saw it. I only knew Tovah Feldshuh in her role as the (may I say) hot, hard-edged defense attorney "Danielle Melnick" on LAW & ORDER. Her transformation from real-life bombshell into late-life Golda Meir is astounding. Any actor who knows the delight and difficulty of complete absorption into character and total physical transformation must see this performance.

In two weeks, GOLDA'S BALCONY will break the record for the longest-running one-woman show in Broadway history.

Friday, September 17, 2004

Attended the launch party of Joe Drymala and Ryan Davis's new theatre website www.stagespace.com, tonight, at the Ars Nova Theatre complex. Along with running into friends Sandy Rustin and Marny Smith, also met actor and headshot photographer

Trevor Oswalt, whose photography is truly exemplary.

Later stopped by Jeff Marx's birthday party at Hurley's – lots of friends, there. These parties at Hurley's are starting to seem like a Gen-X version of the Algonquin Round Table. Except without the Dorothy-Parker vitriol...Well, I'm sure there was vitriol somewhere–this is New York theatre–but no one shared it with me...

Monday, September 13, 2004

Attended the opening night performance of Paper Mill Playhouse's 2004-2005 season opener last night, the Gershwins' rarely-produced OF THEE I SING. This is the first season completely under the helm of new Paper Mill President Michael Gennaro, who came to Paper Mill from Chicago's Steppenwolf Theatre Company. This fantastic, ambitious and energetic production was ably directed by Tina Landau. Friend Herndon Lackey appears in the show, along with a cast of 29. A review has already appeared on Talkin' Broadway.com.

Thursday, September 9, 2004

Went to the opening gala of the new Dodger Stages off-Broadway theatre complex tonight. An incredible facility. Guided tours left every ten minutes and saw each of the 5 new theatre spaces. The high-tech lobby stretches the length of an entire city block! Article on Dodger Stages.

Wednesday, September 8, 2004

Got back on Labor Day from a road trip around New England. Stopped through Brown University, where this year's wide-eyed freshmen sat on the main green to hear their first orientation speech; had a burger at Charlie's Kitchen diner in Harvard Square and wrote postcards to friends; walked the Central Market in Boston. Prime rib, at a chilly dusk, up near Dartmouth. Dinner in a quaint Vermont mill town, Bellows Falls. Coffee on an overcast Sunday in Williamstown. Leaves

hadn't started turning yet, but what a refreshing place to escape to, far away from the Republican National Convention and its resultant madness.

David Ellenstein's most recent production of THE CHOSEN, which he directed at his theatre out in San Diego, just opened to great reviews. Here's one: THE CHOSEN in San Diego.