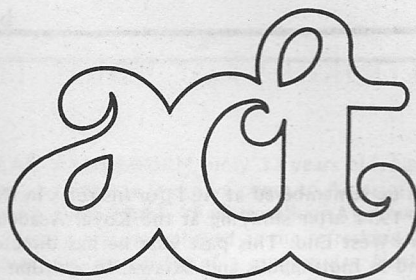


1976





## **a contemporary theatre**

**presents**

### **the West Coast Premiere of RELATIVELY SPEAKING**

by Alan Ayckbourn  
October 7 - October 30

Director ..... Paul Lee  
Scene Design ..... William Forrester  
Costume Design ..... Sally Richardson  
Technical Director/Lighting Design ..... Phil Schermer  
Stage Manager ..... Eileen MacRae Murphy  
Assistant Stage Manager ..... Michael Weholt

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#### **The Cast** in order of appearance

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The Cast in order of appearance

Greg ..... Mark Geiger  
Ginny ..... Katherine Ferrand  
Philip ..... Donald Ewer  
Sheila ..... Margaret Hilton

**THE TIME:** The present, a summer weekend

**THE PLACE:** In London and in the country

**ACT I**    Scene 1 — London, Sunday, 7 a.m., Ginny's apt.  
              Scene 2 — In the country, a garden patio  
                                There will be one 10-minute intermission

**ACT II**    Scene 1 — The same scene. A moment later.  
              Scene 2 — An hour or so later.

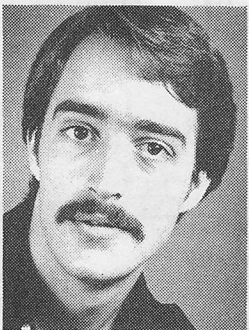
# The Company



**DONALD EWER** will be remembered at ACT for his roles in *IN CELEBRATION* and *SLEUTH*. He arrived in Canada in 1954 after studying at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, and playing in repertory in London's West End. This past year he has directed and played at the Meadowbrook Theatre, Michigan, and in Indianapolis and Ottawa. In addition to more than 150 roles in radio and TV in Canada, he has played major roles at Stratford, Ontario. An Obie Award winner in 1970 for *SAVED*, he has also been seen off-Broadway in *BILLY LIAR*. His Broadway roles include *ALFIE*, *UNDER MILK WOOD* and *ONE IN EVERY MARRIAGE*. Donald has also toured in productions of *THE CARETAKER*, *HADRIAN VII* and *GIRL IN MY SOUP*.



**KATHERINE FERRAND** has played six seasons at the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis in such productions as *OF MICE AND MEN*, *TARTUFFE*, *THE DUTCHMAN* and *LOVES LABOURS LOST*. She has been seen as "Roxanne" in *CYRANO DE BERGERAC* and "Myra" in *SEVEN KEYS TO BALDPATE* at Seattle's Repertory Theatre. Katherine played "Rona" in *KENNEDY'S CHILDREN*, and "Miss Angela D" in *THE COLLECTED WORKS OF BILLY THE KID* for Seattle Repertory's Second Stage. She has played at the Indiana Repertory Theatre, at the Chanhassen Dinner Theatre in Minneapolis, as well as in the NBC and NET production series of *THE CANTERBURY TALES*.



**MARK GEIGER** is a recent graduate of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London. There he played "George Lewis" in *ONCE IN A LIFETIME*, "Juan" in *YERMA*, "Max" in *ANATOL*, "Mirabel" in *THE WAY OF THE WORLD*, and "Lysander" in *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM*. Since graduation, Mark has played "Harry Roat" in *WAIT UNTIL DARK* at the Parkside Playhouse in Concord, California, and "Solanio" in *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE* at the Berkeley Repertory Theatre. This is Mark's ACT debut.



**MARGARET HILTON** is a veteran actress at ACT Theatre, having played in *DRACULA*, *BALD SOPRANO*, *THE CHAIRS* and *THE HOLLOW CROWN* at ACT. She played "Constance" in *THE MADWOMAN OF CHAILLOT* at the Seattle Repertory Theatre last season, and played in *A FLEA IN HER EAR*, *RICHARD II*, *HAY FEVER*, and *MISS REARDON DRINKS A LITTLE, RING ROUND THE MOON*, *GETTING MARRIED*, and *HADRIAN VII*, at the Repertory Theatre. She played "Winnie" in *HAPPY DAYS* at Seattle's Empty Space Association. Although Margaret's training was at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art, and she has had varied experience in repertory throughout the United Kingdom, most of her acting since 1962 has been in the United States. She has played at the Asolo Theatre in Florida, the Ithaca Festival in New York, the Cleveland Play House and the Milwaukie Repertory Theatre, among others.



**DIRECTOR PAUL LEE** is both an actor and director. He has played in numerous English repertory companies, including the Theatre Royal, Windsor, and The Bristol Old Vic Company. He was the artistic director of the Midland Theatre Company in Coventry, England, and for ten years was the senior tutor to The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London. He has been a lecturer in acting and film scripts to the London Polytechnic Film School, and for seven years was a contract writer to Associated Television, London, when he authored 14 original TV plays and numerous series episodes for British TV.

His London West-End credits include *THE HOUSE BY THE LAKE* and *DESIRE UNDER THE ELMS*. For six years Paul was a lecturer for the Academy of Dramatic Art at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan, and was chairman of the drama department. For the last three years he has been a resident director and actor at the Cleveland Play House, where he has directed *HAY FEVER*, *PRIVATE LIVES*, *THE RIVALS*, *THE SEA HORSE*, *CEASAR & CLEOPATRA*, *GET-RICH-QUICK WALLINGFORD*, *SCAPINO*, *A TOUCH OF THE POET*, and others.



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## The Company continued

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PLAYWRIGHT ALAN AYCKBOURN, only 37 years old, has provided London with ten plays over the last eleven years, but only a few have come to America. According to *PLAYS AND PLAYERS MAGAZINE* (A British publication), "Feelings about Ayckbourn are pretty varied in both critical and public circles. The literary brigade, relieved at the refreshing simplicity of Ayckbourn's comic writing and impatient to proclaim the arrival of a modern-day Noel Coward, have declared him to be an unsung, underestimated genius whose plays prove that the old values of 'craft' and 'polish' still count for something. Others, more helpfully, have championed Ayckbourn as a devastating and gifted chronicler of suburban misery and frustration as lived after a period of pervasive materialistic fallout."

Ayckbourn started his career in the theatre as an actor and stage manager in Edinburgh, England. He joined Stephen Joseph's Theatre-in-the-Round Company at Scarborough and started writing plays while a member of the company. He joined the BBC in Leeds as a radio and drama producer, and while there wrote *RELATIVELY SPEAKING*.

His other plays have included *MIXED DOUBLES*, *THE NORMAN CONQUESTS*, *ABSENT FRIENDS*, *CONFUSIONS*, *HOW THE OTHER HALF LOVES*, *TIME AND TIME AGAIN*, and *ABSURD PERSON SINGULAR*. *RELATIVELY SPEAKING* played at the Duke of York's Theatre in London in 1967, and came to the Arena's Kreeger Theatre in Washington, D.C. in June, 1974. As far as ACT knows, this is the first west coast production of the play.

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## Background About the Play

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From Alan Ayckbourn:

"In general, the people who liked this play when it was first seen remarked that it was 'well constructed;' those that didn't call it old-fashioned. If the latter is true, then I suppose it's because, as the song goes, I am too. As to whether it's well constructed, well, in a way I hope it is, since I did set out consciously to write a 'well made' play. I think this is important for a playwright to do at least once in his life, since, as in any science, he cannot begin to shatter theatrical convention or break golden rules until he is reasonably sure in himself what they are and how they were arrived at.

"And this knowledge is really only acquired as a result of having plays produced, torn apart and reassembled by actors and held up to public scrutiny for praise or ridicule. I suppose I am extremely lucky, writing for a small theatre company as I did for so many years, to have had almost a dozen plays put through this very process before reaching the age of thirty. Not only this, but to have had to fight all the limitations of a small theatre — the number of actors available, difficulties of staging, even lighting complications — and, most important, being aware that if my play didn't at least break even at the box office, we'd all be out of a job on Monday. I wrote, in a sense, to order, and there was no harm in this, since the order was always of a technical nature and dealt only minimally with content. But there is no sharper lesson for a dramatist than to find himself sharing a dressing-room with an actor for whom he has written an impossible quick change.

"I wrote this play originally as a result of a phone call from the late Stephen Joseph, a truly remarkable man of the theatre, without whose unrelenting deadlines this would never have been written and to whom I dedicate the play, sadly, but with great affection. He asked me then simply for a plan which would make people laugh when their seaside summer holidays were spoiled by the rain and they came into the theatre to get dry before trudging back to their landladies. This seemed to me as worthwhile a reason for writing a play as any, so I tried to comply. I hope I have succeeded."

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## About the Cover

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The cover for this year's ACT program was designed by graphic artist Frank Renlie. In drawing the heads of each of this season's six playwrights, it became clear that the most contemporary-looking of the six was Giovanni Boccaccio, who was born in 1313.



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## Situation Comedy, or a funny thing happened . . .

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"Situation comedy or sitcom in show biz vernacular is a term which, if I may adopt their phrasing, comes to us through the courtesy of the harried people who supply the voracious requirements of commercial television. It evokes dozens of diverse images — Lucille Ball floundering about in one of her hilariously tangled webs; Phil Silvers bilking his way out of another bunco scheme; Carroll O'Connor getting his hoist on the bigot's petard . . . So what is situation comedy, and how does it relate to the theatrical tradition?

"The custom of categorizing plays and other entertainments is an ancient one, mirroring our human need to somehow make the infinite possibilities of the creative impulse finite and communicable. And so as the dramatic forms evolved so did the terms to describe them. Basic ones like comedy and tragedy, then farce and melodrama with scholars and critics refining and defining them, while at the same time finding them inadequate to describe the conucopian output of their confreres the dramatists . . .

"To return, then, to situation comedy, we find that as a term to describe a kind of entertainment it is a mere infant. In terms of the amount of material produced, it may already have surpassed the output of the stage and motion-pictures combined. Yet, for all its wide currency in television and with its qualities spilling over into other areas of show business as in the enormously popular stage plays of Neil Simon, as a term and possible genre it is substantially ignored by scholars and critics writing in the field. It goes virtually unglossed and otherwise enscribed in the annals of history and criticism. An exception to this is a recent compilation called THE LANGUAGE OF SHOW BIZ which attempts a definition of these words: 'A term more often applied to television now than to legitimate theatre. It suggests a light comedy in which average recognizable people are put in an unlikely circumstance, the comedy arising from their efforts to cope.'

"When one compares this definition with the same publication's definition of farce, the two are so similar that one is forced to conclude that really what we have in situation comedy is Persia renamed Iran. But farce is an ancient principality with borders as indefinite and devious as the fools and knaves who originally peopled its landscape. And whether situation comedy is entitled to claim all the territory occupied by its venerable counterpart is open to question.

"When we look at the nature of farce, we have to begin by acknowledging a paradox in the fact that the spirit of farce in entertainment existed long before the term . . .

"In the published text of RELATIVELY SPEAKING Alan Ayckbourn, or possibly his publishers, characterizes it simply as a comedy, but the suggestion has frequently been made that it is really a situation comedy. And if we do not insist on reserving that term for the products of the tube this is certainly true, for RELATIVELY SPEAKING is situation artfully sustained while British reserve deliciously delays the obvious question until all the chuckles have been extracted. Of course we might with almost equal authority and the brandishing of a hyphen call it a farce-comedy. And so it goes, Ayckbourn in his introduction to the text admits only to having set out consciously to write a 'well-made play.' Is it possible that the obstreperous elements of farce can be successfully contained within the rigid bonds of the 'well-made play'? The answer has to be, yes, when we are at once reminded of the French farces of the nineteenth century, especially those of Georges Feydeau who was a master of another of our terms, the bedroom farce. He succeeded in a career stretching from 1886 to his death in 1921, in stuffing time after time some of the most riotously amusing contrivances into the fashionable corsets of the 'well-made tradition' of the 'belle epoque.' The influences on Ayckbourn, Neil Simon and other contemporary writers of comedy certainly are obviously there, stretching back through artists like Feydeau to Moliere to Plautus and Terrence and beyond.

"What can we conclude from all this? Little, I expect, except that the scholars and critics will go on struggling to come to 'terms' with the protean waywardness of the creative outpouring which constantly confronts them. And that the theatre will go its sad, funny overlapping, incorrigible way regularly confounding their efforts to bring some order to it all."

by Herbert Mansfield

Herbert Mansfield is the Theatre Librarian at the Cleveland Public Library. The article is printed through permission from the Cleveland Play House.



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## Director's Comments

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Sometimes, in an extreme situation, when our grip on the reality of an encounter begins to go out of control, it can plainly remind us that we live on the edge of an abyss. Then the prime concern is, at all costs, to rationalize, to find some firmer ground, and somehow restore the status quo.

For example, being hailed at a party by a total stranger who appears to know you intimately and yet whose face, voice, shape, and everything about him is utterly alien to you. Common sense suggests the correct response to be: "Excuse me, but I fear you are mistaken."

But suppose kindness, politeness, an unwillingness to embarrass, or even a lingering doubt leads you to cry, "Of course I remember you. I remember you well!" then your new acquaintance, suitably encouraged, pursues his advantage: "At Betty Hertzingers, last July" he replies. At which point you have reached a very dangerous intersection. If you now eagerly acquiesce, "Why yes, indeed, the Hertzingers!" you are now headed at best for a tiresome few minutes — at worst, for the kind of situation Alan Ayckbourn develops in *RELATIVELY SPEAKING*, which would proceed something along these lines: In the instant you burn your boats and accept this stranger, he will be struck by a horrendous doubt and will soon be convinced that there is something wrong somewhere, because he, himself, has never set eyes on you in his life. But it now appears, to his discomfort, that you, in fact, know him, which you don't. And so it proceeds.

The permutations on this theme become endless if you willfully add two more characters who, apart from every possible misunderstanding, compound the tangle deliberately (and for their own purposes), by lying. Thus the abyss opens and in due course you will begin to lose your grip and presently doubt your reason.

So now you have some idea of what to expect from *RELATIVELY SPEAKING*. It is a beautifully constructed play, an immensely clever piece of craftsmanship, once described by its author as "a clockwork toy." But it is more than that, because the characters are so human and mostly well-meaning. And so genuinely bewildered. They respond with resource and even a touch of gallantry to the sharp U-turns and mind-blowing non-sequiturs that lie in wait for them — and you. So hang in there.



*Paul Lee*

PAUL LEE

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## A Special Invitation

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TO OUR OPENING-NIGHT AUDIENCE. Complimentary refreshments\* and wine\* will be served in our new rehearsal room (backstage) following the first night's performance of **each production**. It's your chance to meet the actors, chat about the play, get to know the person who sits in front of you all season. First-nighters, please be our guests.

*\*Refreshments for the party are being provided through the courtesy of SCHUCKS AUTO SUPPLY.*

*\*Wine has been donated by the Pike and Western Wine Merchants, in Pike Place Market.*



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## Acknowledgements

ACT wishes to thank the Charles H. Beresford Co., Inc., The Vemo Company, and Pride & Suther Mechanical Contractors for their contributions to the remodeling of the theatre.

ACT wishes to thank Price Waterhouse & Co. for services rendered in preparation of ACT's financial statement.

ACT wishes to thank the Seattle Audubon Society for bird call records for tonight's production.

ACT wishes to thank Robert MacDougall for composing harpsichord music for tonight's production. Thanks also to musician Martha Goldstein.

THANKS to the Queen Anne News for their cooperation in printing the program this season.

THANKS to Intiman Theatre for use of costumes.

ACT's productions are funded, in part, by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts (a Federal agency), the Washington State Arts Commission, the King County Arts Commission, and the Seattle Arts Commission, through the purchase of special services, and Seattle's Corporate Council for the Arts.

ACT wishes to thank all the volunteer committees and workers for their tremendous efforts and work on behalf of the theatre's activities.

DOCTORS expecting calls during performances may give their names and seat locations to the House Manager, and the number 285-9892 to their call service.

LATECOMERS will be asked to stand at the rear of the theatre until the first break in the play.

REFRESHMENTS available in downstairs lobby only, one-half hour before curtain time and during intermissions. No drinks may be taken into the seating area.

SMOKING in downstairs and outer lobby only.

TAKING PHOTOGRAPHS or making recordings during the performance is strictly forbidden.

NO TICKET REFUNDS CAN BE MADE, but subscribers may exchange tickets for any other performance of the same show, providing the box office receives the ticket 24 hours before date and time printed on the tickets.

TICKETS for all ACT productions are available to students and senior citizens for \$2.50 during the half-hour prior to curtain time, if the performance is not sold out. Preview night tickets (the Wed. before opening night) can be purchased by everyone anytime at the box office, also for \$2.50. Curtain is 8:00.

GROUP DISCOUNTS for theatre parties of twenty or more persons are available for ACT productions. Discounts range from 10 to 20 percent off, depending on the size of your group and the performance date. To arrange for group sales, or for more information, please call Robin Atkins, 285-5110.



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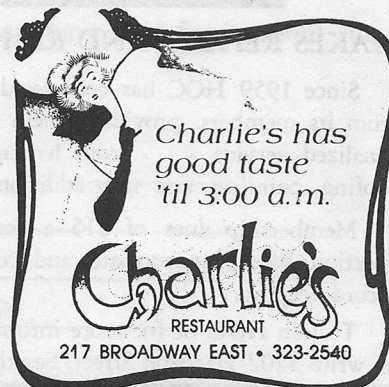
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the  
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## Behind the Scenes

The complicated artistic and technical business of getting a mainstage production on stage at ACT is primarily the function of a well-trained group of paid specialists who perform their tasks creatively although somewhat routinely.

However, there is one group of specialists who don't do their work routinely, or for money, or to achieve much creative satisfaction, and only tangentially are part of an ACT production. They are the "behind the scenes" volunteer committee members who take on the lovely and altogether efficient task each month of arranging the opening night parties.

This group has changed both its personnel and its responsibilities through the 12 years at ACT Theatre. For six years the theatre had only one party, following the opening night of the season, which was primarily the responsibility of the board members. But in 1971 the Theatre chose to expand its informal opening night party format to the opening night of each play. This opening night party allowed the actors to relax and enjoy themselves and gave the audience a chance to chat with the actors and enhance their theatre experience.

The first year Board member Gena Gorasht, with the help of veteran Board member Ellen Hazzard (who had been in charge of season opening night dinners for a few years), launched the wine and cheese parties in the lobby following each opening night performance.

Through the years, under the expert and ingenious guidance of such talented volunteers as Helene Sturman, Ingrid Zimmer, JoAnn Harlan and Midge Eddy, the party was able to retain its informal ambience and purpose, with increasing attendance from the audience. On a bare bones to non-existent budget, these committee members were able to present a sumptuous setting for casual talks among audience and cast and theatre staff.

An example of the elegant wine and cheese theme — which seemed to have endless variations — was the OH COWARD opening night party. As each party is in keeping with the theme of the play, OH COWARD decorations included a pale ice blue tablecloth, silver trays, a fountain, blue napkins and white flowers; the refreshments were pate, artichokes and dressing, finger sandwiches, nuts, olives and meatballs in a chafing dish — all with a champagne punch. Champagne on a beer budget. But sometimes they had beer.

All the parties from 1971 to 1975 were in the lobby of the theatre — the only available space. Beginning this season, the rehearsal room has been used for opening night parties. This year's committee struggled with the overwhelming problem of decorating that huge room behind the stage to accommodate an intimate party. The solution came when the committee decided to do nothing with the room; after all, the room is unfinished due to lack of funds to get it completed, and ACT theatre-goers understand the financial burden . . .

This year's hard working volunteer committee — Jane Baxter, Sandra Chait, Susan Herskovic, Edna Kalland, Judy Kinnaird, Jeanne Lipps, Cindy Mazzola, Nancy Nichols, Jerry Peterson, Corinne Young, Mary Uliberri and Sue Vitale — have concentrated on keeping the decorations and refreshments germane to the theme of each play. Happily, the parties are being underwritten by Schucks Auto Supply, with wine donated by the Pike and Western Wine Merchants.

Each month decorations are sought from various sources, such as the Museum of History and Science, where they borrowed farm tools circa 1850 for *DESIRE UNDER THE ELMS*.

The opening night party committee this month has obtained decorations from Nordstroms Display Department. The committee was going to serve "beer and skittles," until they learned that "skittles" was "a carefree existence, consisting of drink and play; unruffled enjoyment, usually with a negative: 'life is not all bear and skittle's.'" It's really up to the patrons to provide the "skittles."

For this opening night party, the committee is dressed in black with white aprons to serve ACT's guests. Please say "thank you" if you have a chance.

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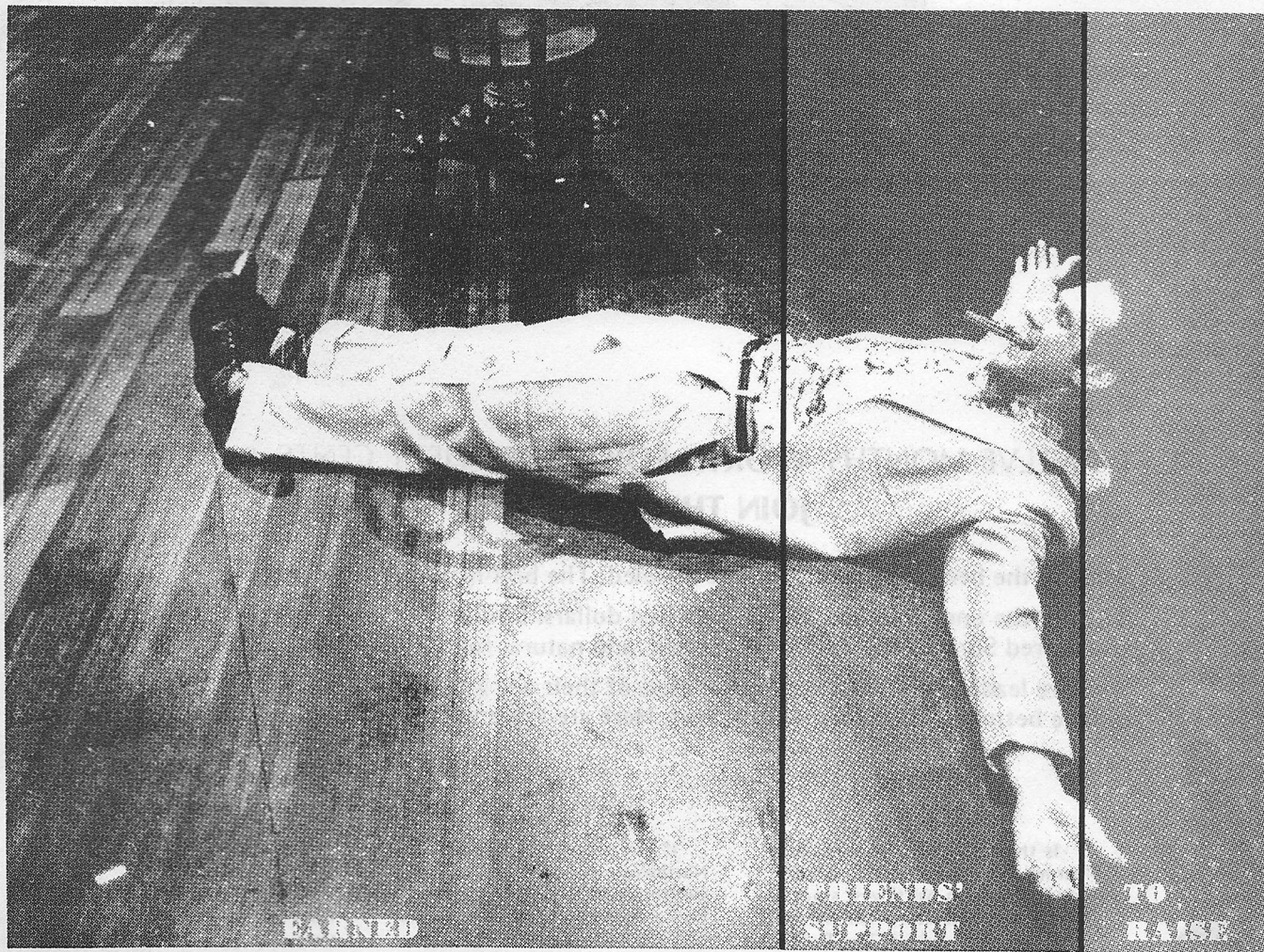
## Thanks, But. . .

Many of you have heard from one of ACT's enthusiastic Board members or their friends sometime during May, June or July. And many of you were able to respond to their request for funds with a gift.

THANKS, BUT . . .

ACT must still raise \$21,000 from individuals to make ends meet this year—to pay actors, designers, directors . . . to buy paint and materials for props and costumes.

Can you become a part of ACT with a contribution?



(Christopher "Spider" Duncan in *THE TIME OF YOUR LIFE*)

Ticket sales paid for most of the picture; ACT's friends and supporters have paid for some of the picture, but part of the picture needs to be completed. CAN YOU HELP?

YES! I WANT TO HELP. HERE IS MY GIFT OF \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

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(Contributions of \$25.00 or more will be listed in the program).