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May 7-May 30

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A Contemporary Theatre

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Vol. XVII

No. 14

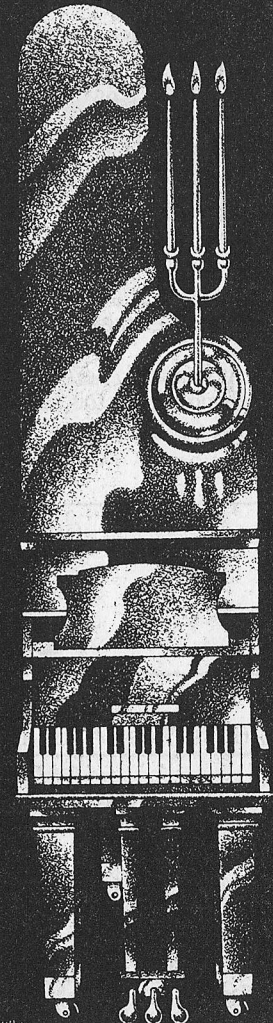
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A Contemporary Theatre



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CUSTER

by Robert E. Ingham
May 7 - May 30, 1981

Director	John Kauffman
Set & Properties Designer	Shelley Henze Schermer
Costume Designer	Julie James
Lighting Designer & Technical Director	Phil Schermer
Music Direction	David Hunter Koch
Production Stage Manager	Eileen MacRae Murphy
Stage Manager	Michael Weholt

THE CAST

George Armstrong Custer	William Ferriter
Elizabeth Bacon Custer	Suzy Hunt
Frederick William Benteen	Ted D' Arms
Marcus A. Reno	Nesbitt Blaisdell
First Woman (young girl)	Brenda Hubbard
Second Woman (Mrs. Benteen)	Elizabeth Rukavina
First Man (Lt. Harrington)	R.A. Farrell
Second Man (Myles Moylan)	Allen Nause
Third Man (George Yates)	Rod Pilloud
Fourth Man (man with carbine)	David Hunter Koch
Understudies:	Maureen Kilmurphy, all female roles; Daniel Daily, all male ensemble roles; R.A. Farrell, Custer; Rod Pilloud, Benteen; David Mong, Reno.

TIME AND PLACE: HERE AND NOW

There will be one 15-minute intermission

ACT Notes

From the Playwright

I grew up in a family of storytellers, in Virginia, and therefore hip-deep in Civil War history from the Confederate side. I knew of George Armstrong Custer only as one of an obnoxious group of Yankees who by weight of numbers and equipment made poor old Jubal Early — and my great-something-grandfather, a private in the 42nd Virginia Infantry named Dickerson — look bad in the Valley of Virginia in the Autumn of 1864.

In the Autumn of 1970, I went to teach at the University of Montana. Since we had never been West before, my wife and I decided that we should drive out, taking our time and seeing the sights. We camped in the Badlands; and so, it was only natural that when we came to a sign that said the Little Big Horn Battlefield was a few miles to the south, we went there too, to see where old Custer got what he should have gotten in 1864.

Well, it's a haunting place, the Custer battlefield; things hang in the air. When I got to the University, I hit the library and in my compulsive way read everything they had about the Custer story. Custer was not the idiot I saw in *Little Big Man*, nor is he the idiot you see in *They Died With Their Boots On*. He was in fact a complex and to some people a lovely man, of real, if limited, abilities; a sort of classic figure of the 19th century, full of confidence, full of hope, full of ambition, convinced in a childish sort of way of his own recitude, convinced that all you have to do is plunge ahead and do and dare, and God will take care of the rest.

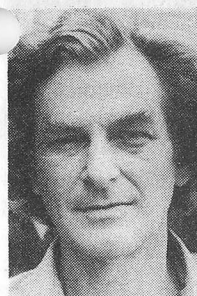
And I met Libby Custer, in some ways a monster, and in very important ways a lovely person. And I met Fred Benteen. And all those other lively people.

'76 was coming up, and I had a wacky sort of idea for a Bicentennial play, and I tried to interest the man who was then Artistic Director of the Milwaukee Rep in it. But it is a wacky-sounding idea and the conversation soon dwindled into generalities. One of the characters in the play had been George Armstrong Custer, and so we talked of him. That summer, the Artistic Director had to drive West, and he stopped at the Little Big Horn, and came away infected. He asked me to write a play about the General for his second "Experimental" theatre. Well, he was my boss and I wanted to work there; how could I say no? Besides, I had invested a lot of time in it by then, and was beginning to feel a little bit the way Pirandello must have felt, writing *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. I had all these nice people bouncing around in my head saying, "Don't leave me now."

So I wrote what you see; originally, it was about four feet high and would have run three days. But I was fortunate, first through the good offices of Nagle Jackson, my original impetus, and then of John Dillon, and George White of the O'Neill Theatre Center, and Michael Miner of the Actors' Theatre of Saint Paul, to see the play done a number of times, with actors who were good enough that I couldn't blame them for the dull places; and I cried a lot, and threw away, and whittled it down to what it is now. I don't imagine that all those "perturbed spirits" who hang around the Little Big Horn will rest because of it, but I hope they'll feel some relief, to know that they've been thought about and looked out for, insofar as I was capable.

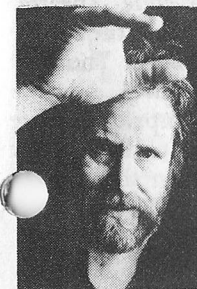
Robert Ingham

The Company



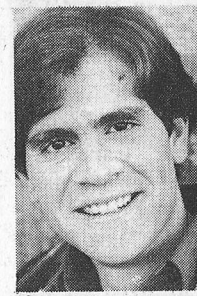
NESBITT BLAISDELL

(Reno) is making his first appearance at ACT. He is a member of New York's Colonades Theatre Lab, where he has created a number of roles, including "Captain D'Orsini" in *Moliere In Spite of Himself*. He recently performed at the Hartman Theatre Company in Stamford, Connecticut, and as "Belcher" in *Guests of the Nation* which was recreated for PBS television in February of this year. Nesbitt also has appeared with the Goodman Theatre in Chicago; the American Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford, Connecticut; The Milwaukee Rep; the Hartford Stage Company; and the Harold Clurman Theatre in New York.



TED D'ARMS

(Benteen) has appeared many times at ACT, in such productions as *Buried Child*, *Henry IV, Part I*, *Otherwise Engaged*, *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*, and *Dracula*. He has played leading roles for The Denver Center of the Performing Arts, The Seattle Rep, Intiman, and The Oregon Shakespearean Festival. His work as a director has been seen at the Tacoma Actors Guild, Intiman, The Empty Space, The Bathhouse Theatre, and The Skid Road Theatre. Mr. D'Arms and Barry Pritchard (ACT's New Plays Manager) are currently working on an original film script which has been selected as one of ten projects from around the nation for Robert Redford's Sundance Institute for Film and Video this summer. He is also a widely published and exhibited professional photographer.



R.A. FARRELL

(First Man) appeared several times in ACT's *A Christmas Carol*, including as "Marley's Ghost" in 1979 and 1980. He toured with The Young ACT Company in *The Forgotten Door* and in *A Wrinkle In Time*. With The Seattle Rep, this past season, R.A. appeared in *Strider* and in the plays-in-progress productions of *Salvation Now* and *American Dreams, Lost & Found*. At Intiman, he played "Montano" in *Othello* and "Humphrey" in *The Lady's Not For Burning*; at The Empty Space he appeared in the premiere production of *Zastrozzi*. He has also performed at The Cirque, The Oregon Shakespearean Festival, the American Stage Festival, and with several other theatres around the country.



WILLIAM FERRITER

(Custer) comes to ACT from New York, where he played "Kurt Sanders" on ABC's *All My Children*. On the New York stage, Bill appeared as "Ford" in *Merry Wives of Windsor*, "Sydney" in *California Suite*, and in *Catsplay* at Buffalo's Studio Arena Theatre. Originally from San Francisco, he received his dramatic training at The American Conservatory Theatre (A.C.T.), while performing at the Berkeley and Oregon Shakespearean Festivals during the summer, including productions of *Richard II*, *Little Foxes*, *King Lear*, and *Indulgences In A Louisville Harem*.



BRENDA HUBBARD

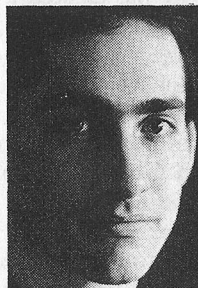
(First Woman) last appeared at ACT as "Muriel" in the 1979 production of *Holy Ghosts*. She also played the "Ghost of Christmas Past" in *A Christmas Carol* in

1978 and was a member of The Young ACT Company. Her area credits include "Anne" in *6 RMS RIV VU* at The Cirque and "Miss Casewell" in The Seattle Rep's *The Mousetrap*. Most recently, she co-starred with Tab Hunter in *Chapter Two* at the Derby Playhouse. Brenda has performed in numerous radio and television commercials and has stage credits from such companies as the Hope Repertory Theatre, the Monomoy Theatre, the Mt. Gretna Playhouse and others.

SUZY HUNT

(Libby Custer) made her ACT debut as "Belle" in last year's *A Christmas Carol* and she was a member of the 1981 Young ACT Company. She played "Maggie" in *Big*

Maggie and "Jenny Diver" in *Three Penny Opera*, both at The Skid Road Theatre, and "Hannah Reade" in *The Ballad of Mary Reade* and "Louise" in *Father's Day* at The Bathhouse Theatre. Her other area credits include "Mrs. Torrence" in *Design For Living* at Intiman, "Alice More" in *Man For All Seasons* at the Tacoma Actors Guild, and "Agnes" in *I Do, I Do* at the Palace Theatre.



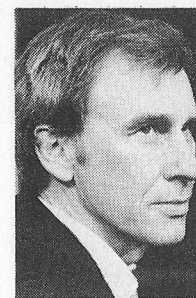
DAVID HUNTER KOCH

(Fourth Man) is making his first appearance on the ACT mainstage, but performed in the 1981 Young ACT Company production, *The Pushcart War*. He is also familiar to ACT audiences for his part in the inaugural ACT Backstage production, *Seattle Eclectic*. Last year he performed on ACT's behalf at the gala opening of The 5th Avenue Theatre. Among David's stage credits in the Seattle area are "Roger" in *Grease* at The Skid Road Theatre and *Jacques Brel*. . . at the Conservatory Theatre Company. Before coming to Seattle, David performed for seven years as a musician in show bands touring the west coast and Canada.



ALLEN NAUSE

(Second Man) recently appeared at The Seattle Rep as "Eddie Brock" in *Born Yesterday*. He was seen on our mainstage as "Jack Tanner" in *Man and Superman*, "Dave" in *Otherwise Engaged*, and "Coleman" in *Holy Ghosts*. At Intiman Theatre, his credits include "Trofimov" in *The Cherry Orchard* and, at The Empty Space Theatre, such roles as "Gabriel" in *Bonjour La Bonjour*, "Jack" in *A Prayer For My Daughter*, "Joshua Creffield" in *Oregon Gothic*, and "Wheeler" in *Angel City*. Allen has performed several times with The Oregon Shakespearean Festival, including such roles as "Benedick" in *Much Ado About Nothing* and "Edmund" in *King Lear*. Allen also played the "Prosecutor" in Stanley Kramer's film, *The Runner Stumbles*.



ROD PILLOUD

(Third Man) was last seen on our mainstage in the 1980 ACT world premiere of *Catholics*, in which he played "Brother Seamus" and "Father Walter." Rod previously appeared in ACT's *Of Mice and Men* and as "Flack" in *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*. His other Seattle-area credits include roles at The Seattle Rep and The Empty Space, and he recently spent three seasons with The Milwaukee Rep. In addition to numerous commercial and feature film appearances, he was seen in the PBS film *Wilder, Wilder* and in NBC's *The Last Convertible*. Rod has directed more than 50 productions in several regional theatres and is an accomplished composer, with scores that include "Astarte" for the Joffrey Ballet, winner of an ASCAP Popular Music Award.



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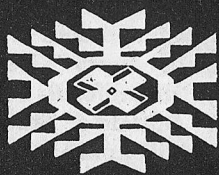
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ELIZABETH RUKAVINA

(Second Woman) played "Mrs. Fezziwig" in ACT's *A Christmas Carol* last year. At The Cirque she was seen as "Cecily" in *The Odd Couple* and at The

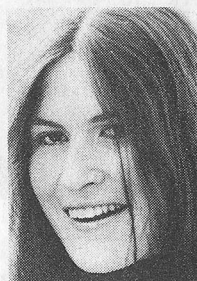
Empty Space Theatre she appeared as "Fat Auntie Albertine" in *Bonjour La Bonjour*. She was a member of the improvisation company *None of the Above* and taught advanced acting for Seattle Theatre Arts. Her credits range from "Lady Teazel" in *School for Scandal* at the Arts Club Theatre in Vancouver, B.C., to "Lydia Languish" in *The Rivals*, one of her many performances at the Theatre Royal in Bristol, England. Elizabeth also appeared in the film *Slaughterhouse 5* and in the ABC-TV documentary *What Does Your Mom Do?*



DANIEL DAILY

(understudy) made his ACT debut in the 1980 production, *Christmas Carol*. Since then he has been touring and performing with The Young ACT Company in The

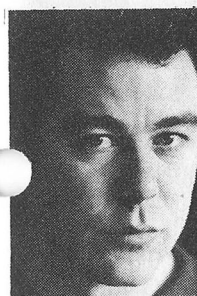
Pushcart War. Daniel is a graduate of the U.W. Professional Actors Training Program and has appeared at The Skid Road Theatre, Conservatory Theatre Company, and The Empty Space. His roles have included "Semyon" in *The Suicide* and the title role in *Tartuffe*, plus "The Priest" in *The Runner Stumbles*, "Bottom" in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, "MacDuff" in *Macbeth*, and "Tony" in *You Can't Take It With You*.



MAUREEN KILMURRY

(understudy) appeared last year as "Regina" in *The Little Foxes* at the Tacoma Actors Guild and in several productions of The Oregon Shakespearean Festival in Ashland

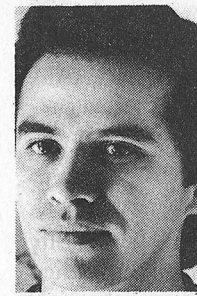
performed on ACT's behalf at the gala opening of The 5th Avenue Theatre. Among David's stage credits in the Seattle area are "Roger" in *Grease* at The Skid Road Theatre and *Jacques Brel*. . . at the Conservatory Theatre Company. Before coming to Seattle, David performed for seven years as a musician in show bars touring the west coast and Canada.



DAVID MONG

(understudy) also was first seen on our main-stage in the 1980 production of *A Christmas Carol* and just completed the performance touring season with The Young

ACT Company. David appeared in The Seattle Rep's presentations of *St. Joan* and *Eminent Domain*, and in several roles with The Bathhouse Theatre and The Empty Space Theatre. His roles include "Prince Dewlaps" in *Ming Strikes Back*, "John Dalmás" in *Bay City Blues*, and "Father Chase" in *Oregon Gothic*. He also appeared in the BBC television production *Ten Who Dared: Jedediah Smith*.



DIRECTOR JOHN KAUFFMAN

is an actor and director whose work has been seen on several Seattle stages. In 1979 he directed and performed as "The Mute" in ACT's production of

The Fantasticks. His other appearances here include *Fanshen* and *Makassar Reef*. In 1972 John won an Emmy Award for a one-man production called *The Indian Experience*, and he has had feature roles in such films as *I Will Fight No More Forever* and *High Ice*, plus such television shows as *McCloud*. His many acting and directing credits include work with The Phoenix Theatre, The Mark Taper Forum, The Seattle Rep, The Empty Space Theatre and numerous other resident theatre companies. John is currently an Associate Director at the American Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco.



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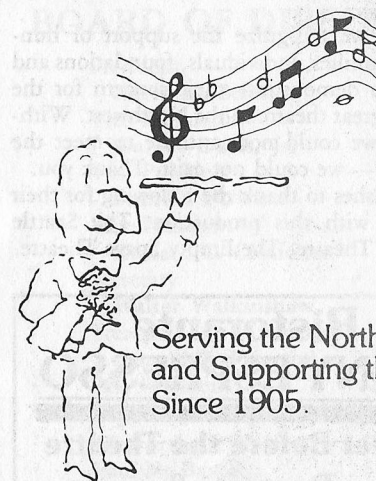
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ELIZABETH RUKAVINA

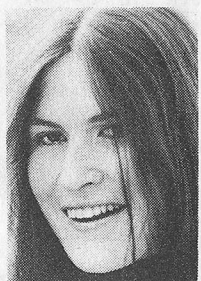
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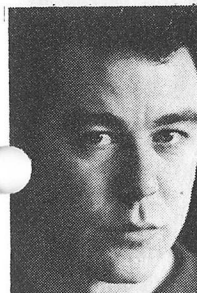


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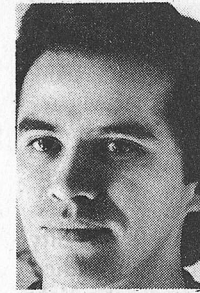
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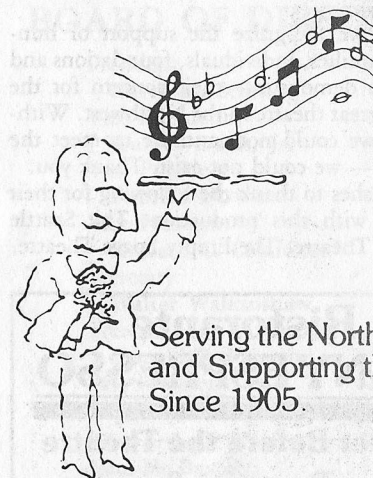
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PLAYWRIGHT ROBERT E. INGHAM

was born in Bedford County, Virginia, and named after Robert E. Lee. Educated in history at the University of Virginia, he studied playwriting at the Yale

School of Drama and has taught acting and directing at Grinnell College in Iowa. He was also in charge of the graduate program in directing at the University of Montana. For the last few years, Mr. Ingham says he has made "sort of a living" as an actor at The Milwaukee Rep and other Midwest theatres. He presently lives with his wife, costume designer Rosemary Ingham, in Dallas, Texas.

ACT gratefully acknowledges support by the National Endowment for the Arts (a Federal agency); the Washington State, King County and Seattle Arts Commissions; and PONCHO.

In addition, we thank regional businesses which generously support ACT through their contributions to the Corporate Council for the Arts (CCA).

Finally, we recognize the support of hundreds of families, individuals, foundations and trusts who demonstrate their concern for the future of great theatre in the Northwest. Without you, we could not continue to meet the challenge — we could not exist. Thank you.

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Art in the Lobby

ACT's commitment to the growth and development of all the arts in the Northwest is demonstrated during the run of each play by donating space in the upper lobby to individual artists. We believe this gives the audience a chance to view new works, enhances their theatre experience, and affords ACT the opportunity to be of direct public service to the greater arts community.

The art work is juried through a committee of the ACT Board of Directors. For further information, call Pamela Powers at 232-6006. For information on the purchase of art on display, contact Michael Eagan in the ACT Office, 285-3220.

During the run of *Custer*, ACT is pleased to present a special showing of some of this country's top western artists' works. These artists have achieved national acclaim for the individualistic portrayals of our heritage. This special showing was co-ordinated by Joella Oldfield, Artists of the Old West, Inc. The participating artists are:

Roger Broer (Kent, WA)
 Ron Crooks (California)
 Tom De Decker (Redmond, WA)
 Ken Dowd (Issaquah, WA)
 Barb East (Colorado)
 Matt Fontana (Tacoma, WA)
 Bud Helbig, C.A. (Montana)
 Alden Metcalf (Bellevue, WA)
 Ned Mueller (Renton, WA)
 Fred Oldfield (Federal Way, WA)
 Ace Powell (Montana)*
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