



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE
AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

Preserving American Jewish History

MS-603: Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum Collection, 1945-1992.

Series D: International Relations Activities. 1961-1992

Box 71, Folder 5, Schapiro, Herb, 1982.

7 October 82

Dear Rabbi Tanenbaum --

Enclosed is some of the material Rabbi Pilchik thought would be of special interest to you regarding the Wallenberg project I'm attempting to develop. The letter to Irving Levine should give you a sense of the context in which I'm working; the excerpts from the NYCH grant application are useful for general information. (The grant proposal is now under consideration by the NJ Committee for the Humanities since priorities at the New York office proved to be elsewhere at their latest go-round).

In any event, I am determined to continue -- I have become very close to Raoul -- whether or not I get the kind of minimal support (some \$3000) I need at this point to finish the manuscript and get it moving. It's simply that, without such support, the way will be longer, with more stomach pains for me and mine, and more dark nights of the soul than I need at present.

I look forward to the possibility of your involvement.

Sincerely,


Herb Schapiro

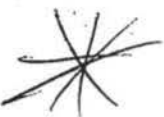
415 East 52nd Street New York 10022 935-1532

25 August 82

Irving Levine
American Jewish Committee
165 East 56th Street
New York, New York 10022

Dear Irv --

As you know, I am currently developing a program on Raoul Wallenberg, through the American Jewish Congress and Jule Schatz, for the New York Council for the Humanities. The proposal itself has to do with a dramatic presentation, and a public forum led by such individuals as Rabbi Balfour Brickner, Dr. James Carpenter of the General Theological Seminary, Earle Hyman, the actor, and Elenore Lester, author of a recent book on Wallenberg, among other speakers; the enclosed abstract should give you a more thorough picture of the nature and scope of the proposal. I am presently meeting with the people at St. Peter's Church in Citicorp Center to work out space and other arrangements for the 12 presentations, tentatively set for late fall. At the same time, I am attempting to complete the manuscript, excerpts of which I enclose for your perusal.



The word from the Director's office at the NYCH is that we have "a very strong chance" of board approval in late September. Whatever the decision of the board, a significant play on Jewish-related material would then exist, and be available for public television, colleges, community theaters, possibly off-Broadway. I have already received evidence of real interest from public tv sources, most notably, Robert H. Fresco Productions, which did "To Be Young Gifted and Black" and the recently acclaimed program on Henry Moore for tv.

The problem: I have managed to develop the proposal, organize the basic phase of the public forum and write a good portion of the manuscript quite on my own, "on spec." I wish to complete the script and prepare for fall presentation. I need for that purpose some \$2500 over the next 6-8 weeks to cover the time, supplies and materials necessary to the realization. The National

Conference of Christians and Jews has already recognized the urgency of this request and granted me \$1000 towards my original requirement of \$3500. The American Jewish Congress, which stands to realize some \$22,000 in cash flow from the proposal, has been unable to offer any support at this emergency phase of the project development, in contrast.

The need is immediate, the possibilities far-reaching. My feeling is that, as we did with the similar project on Saul Alinsky for the NYCH and the NJCH, we can reach broad general audiences and generate the same kind of excitement about something that reminds us of honesty and humanity. (The ALINSKY went everywhere from Westchester to an abandoned Krueger brewery in Newark taken over by a community action group; from Princeton to DC 37, AFSCME; from the Theater of the Riverside Church to Hunter College; we continue getting requests, long after the grants' expiration, from both the NY and NJ Humanities offices, for additional performances -- tenants' organizations in NJ, The Stephen Wise Free Synagogue, Williams College, through a Jersey alumnus, People for Change in the South Bronx, etc., as we attempt to develop the work further, for public tv and cabaret theater). I would go further and maintain that the WALLENBERG work might very well enjoy the same kind of success as THE ME NOBODY KNOWS did -- it was done a while ago in Johannesburg, which I could not have imagined or hallucinated when I first began moving the earliest version through the ghettos of Trenton.

Robert Corman, Director of the Fund for New Jersey, knows of my special involvement with the WALLENBERG project for some four months now, and suggested the possible interest of the Radius Institute in participation. I defer to your own wisdom in this regard and welcome any real suggestion you might be able to afford me: you know the needs and the urgencies, and you also know the possibilities. Mr. Corman would be pleased to consider any inquiries regarding my involvement; Jule Schatz, of the AJ Congress and the President's Commission on the Holocaust, could provide further details concerning the project and our hopes for it; Jay Kaplan, Executive Director of the NT Council for the Humanities, could as well testify to our efforts thus far.

Date of Proposal: 21 May 82

Number: _____
(Office Use)

New York Council for the Humanities

PROSPECTUS

SPONSORING ORGANIZATION (Name and Address):

American Jewish Congress
15 East 84th Street
New York, NY 10028

PROJECT TITLE: RAOUL WALLENBERG:

Dramatic Presentation and Public Forum
On The Art of His Humanity

PROJECT DATES:

September 1 - December 15, 1982

AMOUNT REQUESTED: Requested of N.Y.C.H. \$ _____

Matching Funds/Services _____

PROJECT TOTAL: \$ _____

PROJECT ABSTRACT:

The program comprises two integrated parts: a 75-minute dramatic presentation on the life of Raoul Wallenberg, drawn from both documentary and original materials; and an open forum with audience participation, led by recognized scholars in the humanities in the fields of history, ethics, religion, psychology and Holocaust studies. The theater-piece will explore elements in Wallenberg's background and aspects of his motivation, leading to his emergence from obscurity in 1944 while attaché of the Swedish Legation in Hungary to lead the campaign and final rescue of 100,000 Jews from the Nazi inferno.

The issues addressed by the program range from the nature of moral responsibility, to the psychology of the Holocaust; from the uses of the creative imagination in activism, to the educational influence and implications of authoritarianism. We are consulting key scholars in various disciplines during the development, both of the dramatic presentation and the public forum. In keeping with the particular nature, purpose and interfaith significance of the program, we have secured, through the offices of Reverend John Gensel of St. Peter's Church at Citicorp Center, the use of the sanctuary itself for the 12 presentations projected for the fall. Such a site will assure a wide range of audiences, through the church's own cultural traditions, its history of public discussion and social concern, the Citicorp's own attraction for tourists, young people and the elderly, and midtown working people.

DETAILED NARRATIVE (1)

WALLENBERG

The life of Raoul Wallenberg offers a classic example in our time of the archetypal good man fallen among thugs and trimmers. In familiar existentialist terms, he suggests the quintessential man defining his life as he goes, and one who somehow finds the greater meaning of his life in saving the lives of others. Public discussion, only lately begun, on the special nature of his humanity, may be one way to discover more of our own.

As a Swedish national, he was immune from the plague of Nazism that infected a continent and the world. As the heir of a well-established family, his future seemed assured, in spite of any new order that may come into being. As a member of a different church, he could see that the Jews of Hungary were not "his people."

Yet, as a man, he could only abandon neutrality and comfort, and, as unpopular as that might have been, act for humanity, improvising his strategies and performances in the theater of the Holocaust.

We have just begun to know his name. We are beginning to learn something of his exploits. We will hear more and more of efforts made to solve the mystery of his disappearance in 1945 just after the Soviet army moved into Budapest.

Congress has granted him honorary American citizenship, and the Wallenberg Committee of the United States has started raising money for an international peace prize in his name. After long silence, books are now emerging from the scholarship and conjecture on his life and adventures, virtually all of them with separate theories as to his disappearance. Inevitably, the announcement has come that such material is "soon to be made into a major motion picture." Our proposal is designed to present Wallenberg "plain," with the dramatic presentation based essentially on documentary materials, the sources and context of his extraordinary achievement. Such an approach should be especially conducive to public discussion on a wide range of issues relating to our audiences, from the roots of bigotry and moral inertia to the role of conscience in society.

DETAILED NARRATIVE (2)

Dramatic Presentation

The work will feature a dramatic assemblage of such materials as letters, reports, interviews, eyewitness accounts and official pronouncements relating to Wallenberg, with the emphasis on 1944 and his creative improvisations for humanity in the face of moral disaster and chaos. It will contain as well sections relating to Wallenberg's stay in the U.S., primarily as a distinguished student of architecture at the University of Michigan; his subsequent work in Europe in the import-export business; and, most significantly, his disappearance after the Soviets captured Budapest late in 1944, along with the various continuing lines of speculation about his fate.

As documentary theater, the piece will represent dramatic variations on such examples of the genre as the Living Newspapers of the Federal Theater Project, IN WHITE AMERICA, and several of the works of Peter Weiss (most notably, THE INVESTIGATION, on the Nazi war crimes trials). We project a cast of 10-12 Equity performers, most of them playing a number of roles. For the part of Wallenberg himself, we anticipate an actor of the caliber of Sam Waterston, recently appearing as J. Robert Oppenheimer on PBS; Waterston has already expressed interest in the project through his work with Nicholas Wenckheim, our associate and researcher.

In addition to his work as writer and translator for the theater of social significance, Nicholas Wenckheim has done considerable research on Wallenberg over the past decade, both regarding sources emanating from Wenckheim's native Hungary, and others that have become more familiar in the developing Wallenberg scholarship. His concern has brought access to letters, photographs and other materials, some of these through correspondence with the Wallenberg family, some available thus far only in Hungarian--most notably an early biography of Wallenberg published in Budapest in 1948 by the historian, Genó Levai. He has also served as consultant to Eleanore Lester on key aspects of her recent biography, Raoul Wallenberg: The Man In The Iron Web.

In developing both the dramatic presentation and the public forum, we have been guided by consultation with Nicholas Wenckheim and Eleanore Lester; with Dr. Henry Feingold, historian of CUNY; with Dr. Bruce Cole, Vice-President of the Wallenberg Committee of the U.S.; and, through project director Julius Schatz, with the President's Commission on the Holocaust.

DETAILED NARRATIVE (3)

Public Forum

Discussion leaders will include at least one scholar in the humanities for each of the 12 sessions, in addition to two or more individuals who will offer their personal experience concerning the particular issues and topics. To insure a more dynamic program, speakers will be drawn from various backgrounds and will represent varying outlooks; the projected setting, the sanctuary at St. Peter's Church, should work to enhance their presentation, as well as that of the actors.

Projected issues and topics include:

The Place of Conscience in the Modern State
Symptoms of Bigotry in Contemporary America
Religion and the Holocaust
The Holocaust and Human Values
The Uses of Wit and the Creative Imagination
in Political Activism
Humanity as a Religion
Mass Psychology: The Roots and The Prognosis
The Humanitarian as Hero
Role-Playing in the Theater of Adversity
Wallenberg as Existentialist Hero.

We expect that a range of discussion possibilities of this sort will attract the general audiences we seek. Given the accessibility and attractiveness of the setting, we anticipate no difficulty in generating audiences of 125-200 people for each of the programs; such intimacy enhances the overall presentation, and encourages public dialogue on the issues raised. To encourage closer participation in the events, we contemplate a suggested contribution of \$2-\$3. In designing the dramatic presentation to stimulate public discussion of key issues and involve all kinds of audiences, we have profited from our successful experiences with The ALINSKY PROJECT and the NYCH.

DETAILED NARRATIVE (4)

Regarding the further development of the program, the New Jersey Committee for the Humanities has already expressed interest in participation, possibly as part of a cooperative venture involving the current proposal.

We also expect to consider such possibilities as public television and cable outlets.

* * *

AMERICAN JEWISH

Overall, we are guided by the words of Gideon Hausner on Wallenberg:

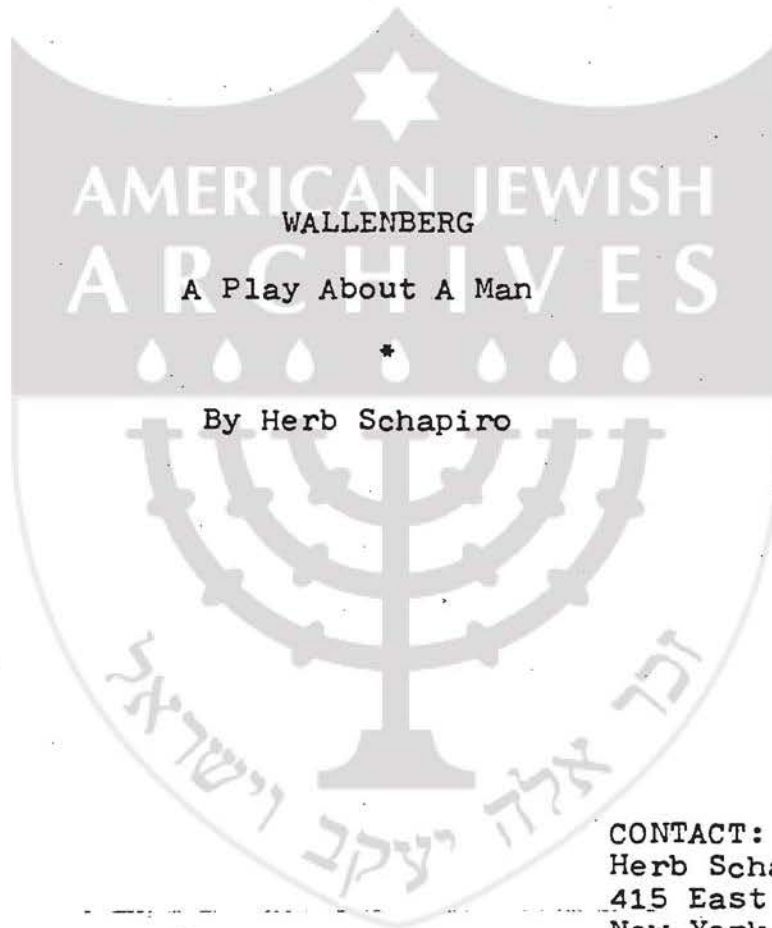
"In this age when there is so little to believe in -- so very little on which our young people can pin their hopes and ideals -- (Wallenberg) is a person to show to the world, which knows so little about him...his figure, in all its true proportions, projected into human minds."

* * *



WORKING SCRIPT

EXCERPTS



CONTACT:
Herb Schapiro
415 East 52nd Street
New York 10022
935-1532

PRODUCTION NOTES

The play combines documentary and original materials, and offers a variety of presentational techniques associated with such as the theater of BRECHT, the OPEN THEATER of Joseph Chaikin, Paul Sills' STORY THEATER and the LIVING NEWSPAPERS of the FEDERAL THEATER PROJECT.

The cast of 12 moves freely into different roles, scenes, situations, and the action generally is flexible and free. We are down to basics in our material and the staging should reflect this. A simple turn, a walk across stage and we have a change of scene and another possibility; a narrator becomes part of a crowd, or a guard, the Secretary of State or an Eichmann.

The character of WALLENBERG is the one exception, and remains constant.

The LEGEND device can be done through projections or signs, or, more basically, with voices.

LEGEND: "In The Spirit of the Christmas Season,
The Colonel Comes To Dinner:"

A Dream Within A Dream Within A Dream

VOICES

Mid-December, 1944.

The Russian army is at the gates of Budapest.

Chief of the SS, Reichsfuehrer Heinrich Himmler, with an eye towards the future and possible accommodations from the Allies during peace talks, orders Eichmann to relax.

Wallenberg invites him to dinner.

He has his reasons.

On the day of the invitation, Wallenberg, more than usually busy serving humanity, forgets his guest.

Reminded at the last minute, he phones his associates, arranges for the creation of a suitable dinner, takes a breath, greets his guest diplomatically, and, afterwards, repairs with him to the sitting room to begin digesting it all over coffee and brandy and cigars...

WALLENBERG

What did you do before your present line of work?

EICHMANN

That was so long ago, like another life. For a time, I was a traveling salesman.

WALLENBERG

Curious. So was I. Very broadening, traveling among different people, doing business, learning their ways...

EICHMANN

Then I discovered the higher law, the power of the ideal. And I was reborn.

WALLENBERG

You gave up selling.

EICHMANN

I joined the Party. I discovered my destiny. The Fuehrer revealed it to me. An illumination of the soul.

WALLENBERG

A religious experience.

EICHMANN

Not the familiar kind.

WALLENBERG

Like Moses on Sinai or Jesus in the wilderness...

EICHMANN

Something unique. I am not interested in those old Jewish stories.

WALLENBERG

I understand. I simply refer to them since you are the recognized expert on Jewish affairs.

EICHMANN

I am so considered by my superiors, yes. Actually, my interest in such matters is long-standing. I have studied Hebrew and I know Yiddish. I spent some time in Palestine, in '37, that's right.

WALLENBERG

Strange. That's something else we share. I was there around the same time.

EICHMANN

I developed an affinity for the Zionists. I have often thought of myself as one of them.

WALLENBERG

I see.

EICHMANN

I found especially interesting that book on the idea of a Jewish state by your Theodor Herzl. Very sensible. The problems of a homeless nation. The need to find some place for them to dwell permanently. To provide solid earth under their feet...Real concerns.

WALLENBERG

Your own "resettlement" program...

EICHMANN

Of course, in this world, one thing leads to another. Affairs do not work out necessarily the way we want. And that is why it is so essential for one to stand fast, to be the idealist no matter what. Something, incidentally, I see in you, Herr Wallenberg, and -- let us say -- in the unconventional way you approach your own work.

WALLENBERG

More brandy, Herr Colonel? Here, let me pull the curtains. The view across the Danube is most striking.

EICHMANN

The Russian artillery...

WALLENBERG

Quite a show, isn't it? Wagnerian.

EICHMANN

Schoolboys playing with fireworks. The Fuehrer has his secret weapons to entertain them with. But what do Bolsheviks know anyway about the power of an ideal? That is all that matters. Everything else is pitiable. And that is the way most people are -- rummaging this way and that for their petty crumbs with never an eye for anything higher, anything beyond their pittance. These schoolboys. The idealist stands apart from this, and laughs at it. The idealist lives for his idea, and that alone.

WALLENBERG

For any idea, Herr Colonel?

EICHMANN

I speak of significance, and destiny. The idealist is prepared to sacrifice to his idea everything. And everybody.

WALLENBERG

When you say 'sacrifice,' what are you giving up? Who are you sacrificing?

EICHMANN

I mean I would be prepared to send my father to his

death if that were necessary.

WALLENBERG

That would seem to place certain strains on your home life.

EICHMANN

Don't misunderstand. We have our personal feelings, our emotions. This is the common ground. But we never let them interfere with our actions if they come into conflict with our ideas. And that is where we remove ourselves from the common ground and climb to something higher.

WALLENBERG

How noble. But tell me, if common feelings can't affect your pursuit of the ideal, can the Russian army?

EICHMANN

Of course. We're prepared to redouble our efforts.

WALLENBERG

The deportations...business as usual.

EICHMANN

The resettlement program will continue no matter what. Don't you see, Herr Wallenberg? That's the test, the ultimate challenge: how well does one hold fast to his ideals in the face of adversity. Surely in your position you understand that. When I know there is opposition, I work more relentlessly. I kindle the fire. I fan the flames. If I did less, what would I be but a recipient of orders, an automaton, an imbecile? No. That would never do. I am, first and last, an idealist.

WALLENBERG

Do you remember Crime and Punishment?

EICHMANN

The concept is familiar, yes.

WALLENBERG

The book I mean. Dostoevsky.

EICHMANN

My work prevents me from reading as much as I'd like.

WALLENBERG

That can be a problem. Some jobs are so time-consuming, especially when they involve idealism.

EICHMANN

What do Bolsheviks know about idealism?

WALLENBERG

Enough to reach Budapest, anyway. But you reminded me of something he says in the book, something very particular, this: that men, to satisfy their logic, will deny the evidence of their senses.

EICHMANN

What has that to do with anything?

WALLENBERG

Why, that's Nazism for you. In essence. If you weren't dazzled by your ideals, you'd be able to see it. A child could see it. But clearly you need some help, and it's not my place. Still...here. If I were, say, a professor of logic, or a psychiatrist...or a traveling salesman, I could say to you, Herr Obersturmbannfuehrer, look around. Just open your eyes once again, and look around. What do you see?

You pronounce yourselves defenders of culture, and you exile your artists and scholars, and burn their books.

You proclaim a higher law, and no one can sleep, and screams fill the night, and blood seeps from the ground.

You declare war on the international bankers, and so you butcher 3-year olds and their grandmothers.

You glorify the Aryan ideal, and present us with leaders who resemble rodents or balloons of gas.

EICHMANN

I won't have you rant about Goebbels and Goering this way.

WALLENBERG

Lords of the earth -- who rummage through the jaws of corpses for the gold in their teeth...

No. You have no ideals, only hallucinations.

You have no ideology, only hatred.

You have no glory, only slaughter and statistics.

These are some of the things I might have said to you if I were not a diplomat.

You know, those fireworks in the distance are not celebrating 1000 years of the Third Reich.

Tell me, Colonel, what are your plans for after the war?

EICHMANN

Perhaps I will travel. I have not done enough traveling... This interlude is nearly over, as you suggest. Perhaps you are right about our cause, Herr Wallenberg, but it has given me luxury and power: the war has given me a good life. Well, all good things must come to a close. No more planes bringing me my wine and women from Paris, my delicacies from faraway places. No more will I enjoy my dogs, my horses, my mansion here in Budapest. The Bolsheviks will have it all, and they'll probably shoot me in a minute.

WALLENBERG

You'll be making travel plans, then?

EICHMANN

I shall continue with my work. Perhaps that will enable me to spend more pleasant times here in Budapest. Of course, you, Herr Wallenberg, have made my job more difficult than it had to be.

WALLENBERG

I have tried. Consider it simply a conflict of ideals. I only regret I have not been more of an idealist about it, like you, Herr Eichmann.

EICHMANN

It has been a most delightful evening, a charming respite from the cares of the day. There is so much confusion these days. You want to take care. There are so many accidents, and the diplomatic passport is no guarantee any more, not at all.

WALLENBERG

Idealist to the very end!

Among the elements treated in the remaining sections:

Admiral Horthy: a mini-biography
and sketch of the political situation

Baroness Kemény: scene with WALLEMBERG
(he wins concessions by working
through her, the wife of the new
Nazi minister of foreign affairs,
in October, '44)

several eyewitness accounts, the witnesses
to the special confusion of the
final months of '44, and the
advance of the Soviet army on
Budapest

Eichmann and WALLEMBERG: a dialogue
after dinner (based on fact)

WALLEMBERG'S plans for the rehabilitation
of disaster areas after the war

the various theories following his strange
disappearance on January 17th, '45,
after the Russians took him into
custody

Documents/Sources will be properly noted
and acknowledged

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HERB SCHAPIRO

M.A., ABD:NYU (English/Theater); Poetry: Virginia Quarterly Review; Helicon, others. TV: In the Face of Justice; Whatever Happened to the Little Red Schoolhouse? for PBS Teaching (Drama, Theater Arts, Writing): The New School, CUNY, Rutgers; also member—Arts Council/National Endowment Writer-in-the Schools project; writer-in-residence, ESAA/HEW/Arts Council project. Director: summer theater/(The Me Nobody Knows (prison and school Equity tour); inner city arts, street theater, film projects; OEO, ESL, drug rehabilitation and general education project; writing, acting workshops. Films: Stages of a Summer; Island in Time; In and Out of the Inner City. Recipient:

Rockefeller grant; Stanley Drama Award; Tony nomination, Obie and Drama Desk Awards; New York State Arts Council grant (Younger Audience Play Commission); New York Council for the Humanities Grant

Address: 415 East 52nd St., New York, NY 10022 (212) 935-1532

TITLE • AVAILABILITY • PRODUCTIONS

Survivors: manuscript*; Actors Studio
The Big Game: manuscript*; Actors Studio
A Little Something Before You Go: manuscript*; Actors Studio
Kill the One-Eyed Man: manuscript*; Provincetown Playhouse
The Me Nobody Knows (adaptation, co-lyricist): manuscript; inquire at Samuel French, Inc., 25 West 45th St., New York, NY 10036; Orpheum Theater; Helen Hayes Theatre; Longacre Theater; NYC; Toronto; Chicago; Boston; Philadelphia, etc.; London; Hamburg; Paris; Hungary, Israel; Rhodesia
Teddy (book and lyrics): manuscript*
Leading Lady (book and lyrics): manuscript*
Don't Cry, Child, Your Father's in America: manuscript*; Henry Street Playhouse, NY
*Contact author for all manuscripts.

SYNOPSIS

A Little Something Before You Go: A woman gives a dinner in memory of her recently deceased husband, inviting friends and landlords, creditors and strangers, in a wild attempt to fill something of the vacuum she feels. An absurdist farce based on the fanciful possibility that all kinds of people can yet sit down at the same table together, out of spite, weariness, pride, whatever, perhaps just because it's so dark and nasty outside.

Two acts. One set—living room of an old NYC brownstone apartment. 6 males, 4 females.

Leading Lady (musical, with Gary Friedman): Based on events in the life of Victoria Woodhull, seeing her as a great performer on various stages of the American scene, one of our first superstars—of sex, business, religion, politics....

Two acts. Scenes—from medicine show to political convention, etc. Principals: 3 males, 2 females, chorus.

Teddy (musical): A satirical fable on Nixonism and other problems in the age of Aquarius. Main character: a bear (Teddy) of Chaplinesque humanity, who awakes after a bad dream in midwinter to discover that the woods are gone, goes in company of his Bert Lahrian Ranger to New York to find out why (Wall Street, etc.) and save his people.

Two sets. Settings—the North Woods and Wall Street. 6 males, 2 females, chorus.



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