



May 2023

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Kate West, Editor

A MESSAGE FROM TRC'S PRESIDENT

Dear Friends and Members of The Rehearsal Club,

They say that “Good things come in threes” – and we have three great things to trumpet as we gallop into May with a whirlwind of news!

First

The entire TRC residency program has moved, in partnership with Webster Apartments, to wonderful new quarters at Found Study on the East Side. Our young women are loving their new shiny digs. Take a look below.



Second

The recent NYTimes article (1/29/23) created a great amount of interest from documentary filmmakers who want to tell our story. See the article [HERE](#). We scrutinized them all and chose a foremost filmmaker to create a documentary film and/or series about The Rehearsal Club. This long-term project will focus on the Residency Program past and future. Stay tuned for details.

Third

Hot off the press! TRC memoir *Cinderellas of West 53rd Street* is a treasure trove of behind the scenes stories in our former building with a huge collection of photos and important historical data. Congratulations to **Denise Pence** for bringing this project to glorious fruition.

There's more!

Mark your calendar for Friday, October 20th to celebrate our 110th Birthday in elegant style at The Players Club! A snappy revue is in the works to highlight some of our best artists with fabulous food and libations.

We have been able to do so much thanks to the financial support of our members and donors. Let's keep the party going!

Please consider becoming a Sustainer of The Rehearsal Club.

For just \$100 a year, you can help sustain the success of our growing family. The path lies with people like you who understand that we are truly changing lives – replacing failure and disappointment with the tools and confidence for a career in the toughest business of them all!

Become A TRC Sustainer

Thank you for all the support you bring to all we do!

Onward!



Gale Patron

Gale Patron, President

TRC Residency Program Moves to Found Study

For months The Rehearsal Club had been anticipating news on "the move" from Webster to a new location. Well that day finally came. Here are a few of us taking our last "farewell" photo of this historic day. On March 21, 2023, we moved to our second location called FOUND. Webster will always be part of our story as the first "home" TRC ever had in the 21st Century.



TOP ROW: Shawnee Fierros Casas Richberger, Sophie Sarnacki
BOTTOM ROW: Maria Elena de la Noval, Chelsea Weaver, Kelsey Lepesko

West Coast News Spotlight On TRC Alum Christopher Callen



I have been a professional actress/singer/dancer for over 60 years and am delighted to say I'm still going strong. It all started when I was singing professionally at age 16 in Tokyo, Japan, where my family was living then, and continued in my California college years. But I began to really flourish and prosper as an Artist and as a Person when I moved to NYC, and The Rehearsal Club!

One week after graduating from San Francisco State, I sold my little gold VW bug for \$300 and took \$150 of it to buy a one-way ticket to Manhattan. The remaining \$150, plus the \$27.46 in my checking account, was all I had. But I felt certain it would all work out. I was on a *mission*.

As the eldest of 8 children from a large Irish Catholic family, there was no room for any financial support, so I had paid my own way through college working as an actor/singer in the Bay Area – unheard of! And now I was finally moving into the “big time.”

I knew ONE person in NYC. My friend and first roommate from SF State, Kerry Slattery, had been living at TRC for about a year and had recommended me to be accepted as a resident. We are still good friends

to this day, and that is one of the wonderful outcomes of TRC friendships – they are often life-lasting.

At New York's Port Authority Terminal, I splurged on my very first New York cab ride. "The Rehearsal Club, 47 West 53rd Street, please." We drove through 5pm rush hour traffic – the buildings so tall and some so old! "THIS is a City!" I thought. The "New-York-ese," the roar of the trucks/buses/subways and the city hum, were all immediate music to me. I loved it. I had not a clue where TRC actually was, but I knew right away this was where I needed to be. Everything was new and exciting. I was following my destiny and my dream. I heard the cabbie yell, "Dis is it!" as he pulled up in front of the elegant brownstone.

I dragged out my two bags, climbed the front stairs, and there at the door was my angel friend, Kerry. She helped me with my things and introduced me around as we climbed to my 4th floor West front corner room. I could view the CBS building and 53rd Street from my bed! We toured the lovely old brownstone – the sitting room (the ONLY room in which Gentleman Callers were allowed), the one phone on the wall in the hall shared by all 44 of us, and finally I met our "Den Mother," Mrs. Walker. I could tell immediately she was quite a character, but I liked her. When we entered the tiny basement cafeteria, I secretly gawked at the five *Rockettes* lined up with their metal dinner trays (fishnet stockings under their coats and garish makeup with quadruple thick eyelashes needed for the huge Radio City Music Hall). Kerry whispered they were between shows. Everything here was *magical!*

I needed a job/job *fast*. Through TRC's grapevine I got a hostess job nearby at Blum's Ice Cream Parlor. Many famous people came in, but my favorite was *Sidney Poitier*. He would quietly stop in weekly at around 9 pm, always polite and impeccably dressed, and ask to sit at the counter.

I wasn't in my room much, since I was out every day pounding the pavement, going to dance class, or visiting the MOMA. The Rehearsal

Club free anytime pass allowed me to sit in front of Monet's *Waterlilies* or look at the Henry Moore statues in the sculpture garden – a way to decompress from the hectic long days of auditioning, walking about in my 4-inch heels.

I started auditioning for roles listed in *Backstage* and on the Equity Board. I was on *fire*. Then, amazingly, 8 weeks later I got a Broadway show! I became the understudy to the leading lady and chorus for *Brigadoon* at City Center. It was directed by Gus Schirmer (who became my agent) and choreographed by dance icon *Agnes DeMille*! When we performed in the Macy's Day Parade, my family could see me on TV in California on Thanksgiving. I was living the dream.

I was only at TRC about six months, because I got a National Tour that took me out of town for over a year, and then I was established enough to get my own place. But I shall never forget my friend Kerry, who had sponsored me just as her friend, Judy Jensen, had sponsored her!

After that beginning, my career never stopped, with roles in one Broadway show to another to another, as well as voice-overs, commercials and a soap opera. But Broadway was always in the forefront, starring in 12 shows on Broadway, including *1776*, *Rodgers & Hart*, *The Desert Song*, *Truckload*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Over Here!* (where I danced with Denise Pence's fabulous husband, Steve Boockvor) and *Lend Me a Tenor*. to name a few.

**The Critics Rave About
Christopher Callen**

"A modern day Ava Gardner."
- Mr Blackwell

"Gutsy, sly, sensitive and seductive and her timing is on the mark, she never misses a beat."
- Froniers Magazine

"Christopher Callen among the cast seems the one with star quality."
- Tempo Magazine

And now in California I am blessed and very grateful to be working as much as ever, including film roles opposite Johnny Depp, Benicio Del Toro, Bruce Willis, John Travolta, a streaming series opposite Eric Roberts, and even in a 2-person TikTok series with over 7 million views (What a world! I once calculated that the sum total of all my Broadway work averaged out to about 1 million people).

But once a TRC alum, always a TRC alum – and even here in LA I have begun to get to know the LA TRC women, and they are all so extraordinary. I am thrilled to become more of a supporter and advocate for our new generation of young women, who undoubtedly will have their own unique success story to tell.

News of Our TRC Alums





When Gale Patron reached out to TRC Alum Marie Iversen Howard in advance of her birthday, she received the following response:



I am touched and flattered that you have asked for a photo for my 97th birthday. These were taken last October, on our 72nd wedding anniversary. Ken and I are are deeply grateful that we are still together.

I greatly admire that The Rehearsal Club has found a new home and, thanks to you, some talented young women are living in a caring, safe and happy environment ;

Brava Gail
All my warmest wishes
Marie Iversen (Howard)



Marie Iversen, Gus Ravey, Joan Bishop, Alden Shute and Kitty Clark, NYC 1947



Marie Iversen, Patsy Roberts and Eleanor Pechulis, NYC 1949



Marie with a group on TRC stairs, NYC 1947



TRC Member Sarah Burke

Sarah Burke (center), a Rehearsal Club Member, along with Linda Cool and Dolores Gordon, both Alumnae of TRC, after Sarah's March 18th performance in "Grand Horizons" at the Kirkwood Performing Arts Center in Kirkwood, Missouri. It was a production of the Moonstone Theatre Company.



TRC Ladies Who Lunch

Several TRC Charter Alums and General Members gathered for lunch at Gallagher's on Monday, April 10. A good time was had by all!



Clockwise from left: Leslie Shreve, Cynthia Darlow, Ellen Zalk, Sheryl Simms Foster, Michele Smith, Nanci Lanza, Michele Mais, Andrea Frierson, Kathy Conry, Virginia Seidel, Denise Pence, Margaret Strom, Michele Mason, Melinda Tanner, Cameron Taylor, Leslie Middlebrook, Judith Curcio, Debbie Andrews

Photo by Francine Mancini

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**Celebrating the final season of
"The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel"
at Top of the Mark on the Highline!**





Women of The Rehearsal Club unite with Boockvor Productions in support of Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS! As a fledgling organization, BC/EFA helped us get where we are today. After years of support from BC/EFA, the women of TRC continue to give back where and when we can. Our mission is to preserve the legacy of TRC while supporting and inspiring the next generation of theater performers.

In honor of our newly-published "Cinderella" book, we formed a "Cinderellas of West 53rd Street" team! Thus far, we've raised \$913 toward our **Team Goal: \$5,000**. Join us in support of GMHC and BC/EFA (who have been in TRC's corner since our beginning). Steve and Denise Bookvor, Team Leaders, have walked the walk since the early 80's in honor of their Broadway dance buddies who left this earth way too young. TRC President Gale Patron is pictured above right walking in 2019. This year, we will be "virtually" walking and encourage each of you to join them in support. If enough of you show interest, we'll meet in

Central Park on Sunday, May 21 for a Rehearsal Club Team Photo! Join our Team [HERE!](#)

TRC Membership 2023

A warm welcome is extended to some new and some recently renewed memberships for 2023. It has been so good to accept new members and to welcome back others who have been missing a while. We look forward to welcoming each to a committee in the near future! 2023 is shaping up to be a great year for memberships!

CHARTER ALUMS

Duchess Kathleen Bongiovi
Christopher Callen
Sheryl Simms-Foster
Sharlene Kessler
Linda Past

ALUMS

Riley McGregor

GENERAL MEMBERS

Tony Carey
Sierra Grabowska
Tasha Koontz
Mike Levine
Susan Mindel
Connie Tais

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED: Calling all TRC Members

We are in the throes of all kinds of activities and we NEED volunteers from among our membership to serve on our many committees. If you have any time, or ideas or enthusiasm to spare, please contact Margaret Strom at voicemargaret@verizon.net and she will get back to you with many options right away!

TRC is in all our hands and we need yours! Please Help!



We'll be wrapping our year with *All's Well That Ends Well*. Page Clements, our Shakespeare guru and teacher at T. Schreiber, keeps us professionally informed on each play throughout this year and will be joining us to read *The Countess* in May. Her Overview is scheduled for May 8, and readings will commence the next two Mondays, May 15th & 22nd. Our [COMPANY](#) trades off doing leads and/or doubling with many minor roles, just to keep the play moving forward. If interested in joining our merry bank of players, contact: Denise@denisepence.com She'll do her best to find a place for you!



CINDERELLAS OF WEST 53RD STREET



BearManorMedia.com

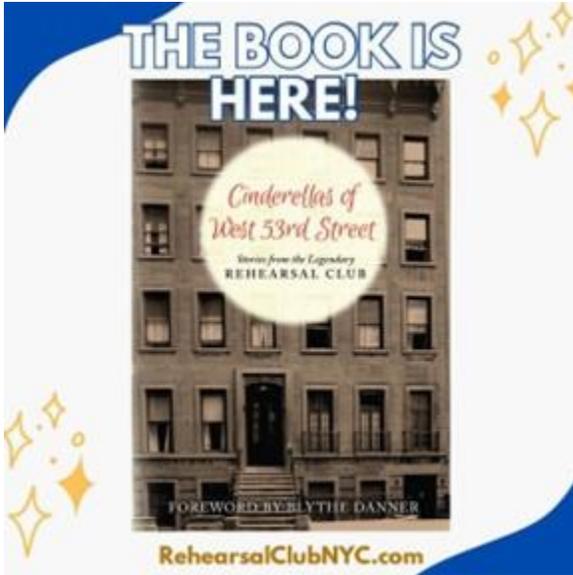
WE BE A BOOK!!

After a sometimes-arduous journey, we are proud to announce the publication of the Boockvor Production's Project, "Cinderellas of West 53rd Street: Stories from the Legendary Rehearsal Club." Published by Bear Manor Media, alum memoirs span 4 decades, 1940s to 1970s, as told by the original voices of *Stage Door*. Historically, these coming-of-age stories also include TRC's journey to its "rebirth" and incorporation in 2019.

The "official" launch is on NYC's Rehearsal Club "Recognition Day," May 11, which will kick off with a book-signing event at The Broadway Museum. On June 13, TRC Affiliate **The Lambs** in NYC will hold another exclusive event for their members. Watch for more throughout our 110th Anniversary Year.

For more information, contact: PR@boockvorproductions.com

**We can't wait to dive into this exciting book on May 11th—
TRC's Official Day – presented to us by Mayor Adams last year.**



We are beyond ecstatic that *Cinderellas of West 53rd Street* is now available for purchase! This has been a labor of love YEARS in the making and we can't wait for everyone to enjoy it.

You can pre-order the book now from BearManorMedia.com, Amazon, or Barnes and Noble for its May 11th release!

TRC Workshops



Meditation & Mindfulness

Hosted by RC Alum: Michele Mason
Thursdays 2:00 – 3:00 pm EDT

Highly recommended to reduce stress and help to bring you into a state of true Zen.

Meeting ID: 831 8071 5132

Passcode: 364616

Thank you, Michele, for sharing your amazing gift with us every week! This Workshop is a special place to collect, reflect and commune.

[May Zoom Link](#)



Tapping Your Way To Wellness!



Tap dance IN A CHAIR?!?!? You bet! TRC members just completed this virtual tap-dancing Course, with Tap Master and Osteoporosis Expert Linda Rose Iennaco.

Whether a beginner or a seasoned professional, young or old, you'll experience the joy of tap-dancing with the benefits of exercise – without worries about physical limitations, balance, hip, knee or foot challenges. Learn or relearn the basics of tap dancing from a **seated position**.

We'll stand when we're ready – and we did! Great fun, great vintage music and great for the body! Lest we forget – wonderful to be dancing. Well – sort of!

These classes that normally cost \$23 per session are **FREE** to Rehearsal Club Members! Would you all like more? Classes must be in a consecutive series of three to train your muscle memory. Are you game? Just let us know what month is best for you, what day and time is best. Name your time zone. Contact us at info@rehearsalclubnyc.com

You only have one body!
Let's keep moving it with renowned TRC Member Linda Rose!



Amazon Ends Smile Program OneHope Wine Offers Alternative

As you may have heard, Amazon has ended its Smile Program, which allowed shoppers to specify a charity or organization to receive a percentage of their spending on Amazon. But don't despair – **OneHope Wine** to the Rescue!

Join them on their mission to give back to local and global organizations with 10% of every purchase donating directly to a cause of your choice. With over \$9 million donated to date, they continue to change the world one glass at a time.

Check out OneHope at the link below.

Please consider The Rehearsal Club in your estate planning. Gifts of this nature have long term tax benefits. Speak with your financial advisor.

[OneHope Wine](#)

Explore! Engage! Enjoy!

Visit TRC Website – Click: www.rehearsalclubnyc.com

We had a good turnout during our 2023 Membership Drive, which ended on November 30, 2022. If you missed it or know someone who would like to become a member, we will always “throw up the sash” to welcome you in or back!

If you have any doubts or questions about your dues or gifts to The Rehearsal Club, please write Jackie Gautreaux, our finance whiz, who will send you a list of your contributions during the last few years. Reach out to Jackie at RCFinancecom@gmail.com.

Thank you for your continued support of TRC.
We can't do it without you.

[TRC Dues](#)

Join our Facebook Group,
follow and support TRC and our Sisters on social media.



The Rehearsal Club

2350 Broadway – Suite 934
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