



July 2023

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Kate West, Editor

A MESSAGE FROM TRC'S PRESIDENT

Dear Friends and Members of The Rehearsal Club,

We've completed another fiscal year, tacking our small but mighty ship forward to build the future while we sustain the past.

TRC entered the 2022/2023 fiscal year on the heels of the New York Public Library Plaque Event with our MoMA Celebration and Rising Star Event sharing the spotlight. We thought of putting our feet up for a breather, but,

Our world changed through *The New York Times* in a TRULY extraordinary feature on January 27. You can see the article [here](#). The article generated amazing and continuing dividends, including over \$15,000 in support, new professional volunteers, and serious inquiries from 5 filmmakers to produce a documentary or documentary series. With research and deliberation, your TRC board signed an agreement with a prominent filmmaker, introduced to us by Andrea Frierson, for a long-term documentary project.

The article also sparked the interest of WABC-TV's entertainment reporter Sandy Kenyon. His story on TRC, featuring TRC Members and Residents, aired on June 20. You can view it [here](#).

The Residency Program MOVED to a new location! With the help of Maria Elena de la Noval, Residency Coordinator, and our landlord partners at Webster, the process was seamless! We have now supported 20 Residents since the program's inception only one and a half years ago.

Under the baton of Francine Mancini, TRC produced a fabulous showcase performance by Residents at Don't Tell Mama to a sold-out audience! We plan to Encore this event.

Our first ever TRC Members Celebration on June 8 was a wonderful meet and greet event spanning the generations and highlighting the recently published *Cinderella's of West 53rd Street* memoir.

We welcomed our first Executive Director, Harlene Freezer, to raise TRC professionalism in the industry with a special understanding of our unique place in the theatre in America. Harlene has jumped into her role with vigor and enthusiasm.

PLEASE SAVE THE DATE for our 110th Birthday Gala Benefit Celebration on Friday, October 20th, at The Players, featuring Blythe Danner in an original revue with performances by young and old – famous and not so famous! An added treat on Saturday, October 21st will be the recreation of the legendary Rehearsal Club Celebrity Gowns and Wardrobe Sale, spearheaded by Kathy Conry.

The fiscal year ends with enormous gratitude – first and foremost: for our board members and their service over the past year. Special gratitude to departing board members: Judith Curcio, Ivy Barnes, Margaret Darlow, Cynthia Darlow and Francine Mancini for their years of service. Welcome to Magda Katz, Sheryl Simms Foster and Donna Ingle as new board members. Kudos to our amazing fleet of dedicated volunteers who believe in the magic of following dreams with grit and determination – adding passion and love of humanity to prove that almost anything is possible! We are no longer a memory but a vibrant presence in the performing arts today.

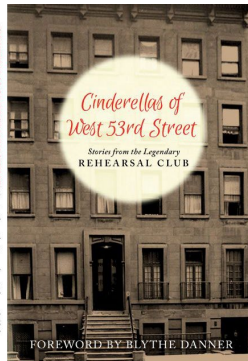
WE ARE THE PAST – AND WE ARE THE FUTURE with the values instilled by our original Rehearsal Club founders to support the artists of the future.

Thank you everyone!



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gale Patron". The script is fluid and cursive.

Gale Patron, President

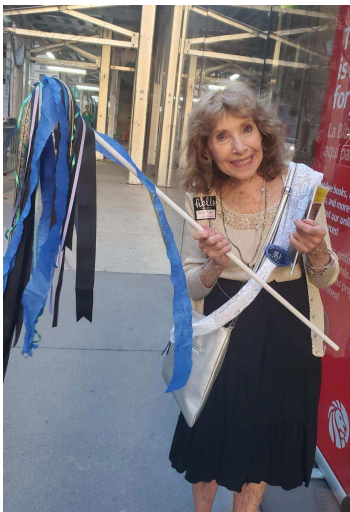


Book Signing Event at The Museum of Broadway May 13, 2023



Top row, left to right: Jean Preece, Glynnis O'Connor, Donna Couteau Brooks, Christine Feingold, Judith Curcio, Debbie Andrews, Julia Adams, Michelle Mason, Margaret Strom, Shawnee Casas Richberger Kneeling: Sunny Keyser, Maria Mallman, Nancy Wight, Denise Pence Boockvor, Melinda Tanner, Francine Mancini

Spotlight on TRC Charter Member Sunny Keyser



Sunny Keyser is a wondrous TRC Charter Member who lived at The Rehearsal Club in the early 1960's. At the beginning of her theatre career, Sunny auditioned for Lee Strasberg and was accepted at the prestigious ACTORS STUDIO in New York City. Living at the time in Philadelphia, Sunny was not sure how to navigate such an opportunity and could not accept the placement. However, another opportunity presented itself. She was cast as the lead ingenue in a regional theatre production of *A View From The Bridge*. The production was a great hit in Philadelphia. She accepted a friend's offer to coproduce the play in Atlantic City. They formed a production company and

called it "The Ibis Theatre," and had a successful run of the play. It was during this time she decided she would try NYC to pursue her career. She and her friends put together a list of addresses as potential places to live. Not knowing the City, she

went to some very dangerous areas and was told by good people on the street to look in different areas. To this day, she does not remember how or where she found the address 47 West 53rd Street. All she knows is that it was a magical miracle.

On arriving, she saw a beautiful brownstone. Sunny had no idea who or what The Rehearsal Club was. She ran up the steps and rang the doorbell. A lady invited her in, visited with Sunny for an hour, and then, by some wonderful magical happening, Sunny was accepted as a Rehearsal Club resident. She was given the perfect room – second floor facing 53rd Street. She had several roommates, one of whom introduced her to eggs on waffles, which she still enjoys to this day. Sunny took full advantage of finding work in New York and appreciated every day the opportunity of living at the Club. Sunny ultimately got married and has two wonderful children. She continued with film work, commercials, soaps, modeling, trade shows and even a few jaunts on Saturday Night Live, and any acting parts that came her way. She also cared for her parents by traveling back to Philadelphia when needed. Today finds Sunny still living in NYC. She has many varied interests and has continued singing, dancing classes, exercise programs, and has been a member of The Broadway at 92nd Street Y Chorus. Sunny says her connection to the women of The Rehearsal Club is stronger today than back in the 60's, when as a young actress she lived in that perfect second floor room. The weekly meditation group led by TRC Alum, Michele Mason, is a treasured part of her life. The connection among The Rehearsal Club women is cherished. Sunny has worked hard as one of the TRC Charter Members who have created the new Rehearsal Club. And Sunny is by all means a treasure to all of us!



Annie O'Donnell Can't Seem To Retire!

Wonder what our Annie O'Donnell is doing? She was feeling like it's time to retire, when Bam!, she gets the best part of her career and is off to shoot in Pennsylvania! *Two Lives in Pittsburgh* became a creative highpoint in an already long and industrious career and an official selection at the 26th Annual Dances With Films Festival. More info on Annie and the film can be found at <https://twolivesinpittsburgh.com/> .



Then, back home, did she work on her tan? Nope, she



already has a commercial for the NBA (National Basketball Association), titled "Playoff Mode." Look for her as Bus Driver! Annie also has a fun role in the upcoming Apple TV series *Lessons In Chemistry*, starring and produced by Brie Larson, as well as a film with Richard Roundtree & June Squibb!. Guess she will be retiring from her retirement.

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News Of Our Celebrity Alums



Freshly back from directing the 'Serpent Queen' in France, Melanie Mayron started work immediately on a new play, *Madwomen of the West*, with costars Marilu Henner and Eve Gordon. Christopher Callan and Patricia Hill attended a performance, happy to support. The play continues through July at the Odyssey Theater in Los Angeles. Purchase tickets at the following link:

<https://ci.ovationtix.com/34367/production/1157678>

Christopher Callan was then off to perform in Las Vegas for 20,000 people in a Human Resources Industrial.

Patricia Hill was one of the honorees at the Earth Day luncheon for California Safe Schools. Patricia began her career in front of the camera, then broke into production as the first female cameraperson. Her credits are innumerable: *Cheers*, *Frasier*, *M*A*S*H*, *The Waltons*, *Everybody Loves Raymond* and many others. She documented an irrigation project by the Gambia River, was the photographer for Ted Danson's American Oceans Campaign and helped lobby in Washington for environmental causes.

Patricia reports that the West Coast TRC contingent is looking for other Rehearsal Club ladies to help them put together an event showcasing the Cinderellas book. They are canvassing bookstores and have an interested art gallery. Please contact Patricia at camopmom@mac.com

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TRC Alum Kim Cattrall returns to the role of Samantha in *And Just Like That*, the reboot of *Sex And The City*, for one

scene this season on Max (formerly HBO Max).



TRC Residency Program Alum News



Lenny Mendez just finished performing in the Regional Premier of "Audrey" at Creative Cauldron Theatre, Falls Church, VA. Congrats to our brilliantly talented former Rising Star. May her light soon be beaming on the boards of a Broadway Stage. Lenny is in the blue dress in the picture above, playing the part of Collette in the regional premier of *Audrey*.

In Memoriam

We are saddened at the passing of TRC Golden Girl Bernice Winters Shepard. Her son Mike shared some thoughts with us:

In her 100 years, my mother went from being an actress (often playing "brat" parts, a role that her children found quite amusing), to being a wife and Tiger Mom (no one appreciated at the time what a trend she started), to Demolition Derby driver (those driving lessons my father gave were not entirely successful), to loving caregiver after my father's health declined, to vibrant independent widow and bridge aficionado, to "at last they listened to me and made me grandchildren" grandmother, and finally to theatre trip companion after her move to the Bay Area. She loved her time in New York City, loved going to the theatre, and really enjoyed

the Rehearsal Club Centennial celebration.

TRC sends heartfelt condolences to Bernice's family and friends.

Below, Bernice with Golden Girl Betty Biggers and Nancy Wight.



Virginia 'Annette' Hunt, 87, died on Jan. 11, 2023. In an acting career that spanned more than 60 years, she played hundreds of roles, always thrilled to be part of a theatre company. Among her favorites were Shen Te/Shui Ta in *The Good Woman of Szechuan*, Martha in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, Amanda in *The Glass Menagerie*, Dunyasha in *The Cherry Orchard*, the title role in *Dona Rosita*, and Alice in Eve Ensler's *Lemonade*. She became nationally recognizable as the character Harriet in television advertisements for Ajax Cleanser.

The Betsye Kay Finch Performing Arts Foundation Awards 4th Annual Scholarship

Janiyah McAllister, a 2023 graduate of Harrison School for

the Arts, won the fourth annual Betsye Kay Finch Performing Arts Scholarship on May 23. Janiyah fell in love with musical theatre in middle school, performing in "The Lion King Jr." Janiyah, 17, of Davenport, FL, received accolades and a scholarship for her performance at the 2022 National High School Musical Theatre Awards at the Minskoff Theatre in NYC, representing the Straz Center in Tampa.

Betsye Kay Finch, the Foundation's namesake, was a jazz, tap and ballet dancer. Her daughter, TRC supporter Alexis Rocker, launched the BKF Performing Arts Foundation in 2019 to keep alive her mother's *Joie de vivre*.



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.

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



SHAKESPEARE ALIVE! is on hiatus until September, when we will be doing *Merchant of Venice*. This is an actor-driven workshop. [Page Clements](#), Shakespeare instructor at T. Schreiber Acting Studio, graciously shares her knowledge in an Overview the week prior to each play. We read two hours per week for 2 and sometimes 3 consecutive weeks. We record everything for our own learning process; sometimes sharing bits of brilliance on social media. Otherwise, there is no audience, no pressure, no "casting." YOU choose your dream role to tackle, and our company will support you.

If interested in being added to our mailing list for immediate updates, contact TRC Charter Alum and Advisory Board Member [Denise Pence](#).

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: 826 3351 2427
Passcode: 535077

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

July Zoom Link

Goings On Is Now Bi-Monthly

TRC's Newsletter Is Now Bi-Monthly. Deadline for submissions is the 24th of the previous month. Send submissions to trc.newslettersubmissions@gmail.com

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