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## BROADWAY'S BUSY OCTOGENARIANS

By Steven Suskin

**T**he 1927-28 was a great one for Broadway in more ways than one. Not only did it see the most productions ever in Broadway history, it also saw the birth of giant talents who continue to brighten our stages. The Tony Awards wishes a "Happy 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday" to these theatrical titans.

### EDWARD ALBEE

Playwright Edward Albee exploded in the New York theatre world with a series of Off-Broadway one act plays including *The Zoo Story* (1958) and *The American Dream* (1959). He changed the landscape of Broadway in 1962 with *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, for which he won his first Tony Award. This was followed by *The Ballad of the Sad Café* (1963), *Tiny Alice* (1964), *A Delicate Balance* (1966, Pulitzer), *All Over* (1971), and *Seascape* (1975, Pulitzer). Albee then entered a relatively falow period on Broadway, with *The Lady from Dubuque* (1980), *Lolita* (1981), and *The Man Who Had Three Arms* (1983) which had brief runs. A 1996 revival of *A Delicate Balance* ushered in a second period of universal acclaim, with the Off-Broadway plays *Three Tall Women* (1994, Pulitzer) and *The Play About the Baby* (2000) leading to a triumphant Broadway return with *The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?* (2002, Tony Award). Albee has celebrated his 80th birthday with a full agenda of productions Off-Broadway and regionally—some directed by himself—including *Peter and Jerry* (2007), *Me, Myself & I* (2007) and *The Occupant* (2008).

### HAROLD PRINCE

Harold Prince holds more Tony Awards than any other individual—21. In a career that has lasted more than half a century, Prince directed the premiere productions of *She Loves Me*, *Cabaret*, *Company*, *Follies*, *Candide*, *Pacific Overtures*, *A Little Night Music*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Evita*, *The Phantom of the Opera* and *Parade*. Among the plays he has directed are *Hollywood Arms*, *The Visit*, *The Great God Brown*, *End of the World*, *Play Memory* and his own play, *Grandchild of Kings*. Prince also directed *Bounce*, which was seen at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago and the Kennedy Center in Washington DC. Before



Edward Albee

PHOTO BY ANTHONY MURPHY

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### CHARLES STROUSE

Composer Charles Strouse prepared for a career in classical music, training in Paris with the legendary Nadia Boulanger. Returning to his native New York for a stint with the equally legendary Frank Loesser, Strouse was working as a pianist and arranger when he got his break (and won his first Tony Award) with the startlingly refreshing *Bye Bye Birdie* (1960). "Put on a Happy Face" and the rest of the score immediately established Strouse on Broadway, resulting in a string of musicals including *All American* (1962), *Golden Boy* (1964), *It's Superman* (1966) and the Tony Award-winning *Applause* (1970). Strouse's biggest hit came in 1977 with that musical of "Tomorrow," *Annie* (and yet another Tony Award). The tireless Strouse continued with a string of musicals in different styles including *A Broadway Musical* (1978), *Charlie and Algernon* (1980), *Bring Back Birdie* (1981), *Dance a Little Closer* (1983), *Mayor* (1985), *Rags* (1986), *Annie 2* (1990), *Nick & Nora* (1991) and *Annie Warbucks* (1993). At 80, Strouse is preparing two new Broadway musicals: *Marty* and *The Night They Raided Minsky's*.



Charles Strouse

continued to write a string of effective and evocative musicals including *Philemon* (1975), *Colette* (1982), *Grover's Corners* (1987), *Colette Collage* (1991), *Mirette* (1998) and *Roadside* (2001). Since Schmidt's retirement, Jones has written a musical version of *Harold and Maude* (2004) as well as directing and appearing in the 2006 revival of *The Fantasticks*.

### MARIAN SELDES

Marian Seldes has been working on Broadway since 1947, when she made her debut opposite Dame Judith Anderson in *Medea*. Since then, she's become known as a playwright's actress, originating roles in plays by Tennessee Williams, Edward Albee, and Terrence McNally. Among her two dozen Broadway appearances, she was a member of the original Broadway casts of *Equus*, *Deathtrap*, *The Chalk Garden* and *A Delicate Balance*, the last of which earned her the Tony Award, one of five times she was nominated for that honor. Voted into the Theatre Hall of Fame, she last year completed a Broadway run opposite Angela Lansbury in the tennis drama, *Deuce*. She remained busy this past spring doing readings of works by Eudora Welty and Christopher Durang. ▶

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### JERRY BOCK

Composer Jerry Bock is best known for his fertile, decade-long collaboration with lyricist Sheldon Harnick that produced two Tony-winning Best Musicals; one of them, *Fiorello!* won the Pulitzer Prize, the other, *Fiddler on the Roof*, became for a time, the longest running musical in Broadway history. Bock made his Broadway debut in 1955 with the short-lived *Catch a Star*, with lyrics by Larry Holoferner, who also wrote lyrics for his next show (and first hit) the Sammy Davis musical *Mr. Wonderful*. Bock was chosen as one of the composers for the planned *The Ziegfeld Follies of 1957*, but it closed out of town. Soon afterward, Bock partnered with lyricist Sheldon Harnick. They would work together for just a dozen years but in that time they produced some of the most polished musicals of the 1960s. Their freshman effort, *The Body Beautiful*, set in the world of prize fighting, ran only 60 performances in 1958. However, producer Hal Prince liked what he heard and signed Bock and Harnick to compose *Fiorello!*, the 1959 musical biography of former New York City Mayor Fiorello H. LaGuardia. *Fiorello!* tied for the Best Musical Tony Award that year with *The Sound of Music*. For their third show, Bock and Harnick picked a third New York subject: a reformer who takes on Manhattan's notorious turn of

the century red light district, known as the Tenderloin, which gave the show its title. Their next project, *She Loves Me*, told the story of two salespeople at a Budapest perfume shop whose longtime bitter feud comes to an end when they discover they are each other's anonymous pen pals. Bock and Harnick entered Broadway immortality with their next show, *Fiddler on the Roof*, based on Sholom Aleichem's stories of a Jewish milkman in Tsarist Russia. Bock and Harnick got Biblical with their next show, *The Apple Tree*, structured as three one-act musicals about male-female relations throughout history. For their next project, they jumped to Germany and to the upper end of the economic ladder with *The Rothschilds*, the story of the rise of that mega-wealthy clan. Bock and Harnick went their separate ways after *The Rothschilds*, but did reunite to write a new song for the 2004 Broadway revival of *Fiddler on the Roof*, "Topsy Turvy." Bock has left one more legacy. In 1997 he established the Jerry Bock Award for Excellence in Musical Theatre, an annual grant presented to the composer and lyricist of a project developed in the BMI Lehman Engel Musical Theater Workshop.



Marian Seldes (left) with Angela Lansbury in 2007's *Deuce*.

Robert Viagas contributed to this story.

### HERE ARE A FEW MORE OF THE STILL-LIVING THEATRE FOLK BORN DURING THAT GOLDEN SEASON:

Tom Aldredge	Peter Falk	Rosemary Harris	Estelle Parsons
Tom Bosley	James Garner	Cleo Laine	Christopher Plummer
Paul Dooley	Larry Gelbart	Mitch Leigh	Yma Sumac