



SPECIAL ISSUE IN MEMORY OF RITA CORN SEPTEMBER, 2015



Lemon Bay Playhouse Dedicates Its 29th Season IN LOVING MEMORY OF RITA CORN November 29, 1935 - August 6, 2015



Born in Beicknel, IN, Rita migrated to Englewood around 1988. Not soon after that she became part of the Lemon Bay Playhouse family. Her start to becoming a vital part of Lemon Bay Playhouse began when she made her acting debut as Dr. Gladys Petrelli in our fourth season show, *Tribute*, in 1991. That was the inauguration of her career path in theatre, and there was no looking back. Since that time, Rita performed in over 90 productions at theaters including Charlotte Players, Lemon Bay Playhouse, Players of Sarasota, Venice Theatre, Golden Apple Theatres and the Glen Loche Dinner Theatre in Syracuse N.Y. She has a long list of accomplishments at the LBP. Rita was very involved in the theater's move to its present location. She and her husband, Dick, started Readers Theater and the children's acting camp. She was on the board of trustees and later became the production and artistic manager of the playhouse. These are a few of the many accomplishments that Rita contributed towards the development of the playhouse. There were many other that are too numerous to mention.

The two masks associated with drama represent the traditional generic division between comedy and tragedy. They were chosen because that is what I see in the career of Rita in the short time that I have known and worked with her. She not only provided Lemon Bay Playhouse with comedy, acting and directing skills and entertainment

but, she also provided us with tragedy in the sense that she left us too soon. Since Rita was such a significant part of the growth of Lemon Bay Playhouse we find it fitting to honor her by dedicating our 29th season productions in her memory. We will miss her presence at the playhouse and at the curtain speeches with her opening greeting, "Hey!, Hey!, Hey!" Although she is missed she will not be forgotten. - Jim Sciarelllo

TRIBUTE TO RITA CORN BY PAUL HYATT

On the night of January 4, 1991, a new star was sighted by a small but enraptured group of people in Englewood, Florida. No, these fortunate folks were not on the beach with binoculars, they were seated in a cozy little amateur theater, called the Lemon Bay Playhouse, for the opening night performance of a play.

When the house lights had faded to dark and the stage lit up, act one of *Tribute*, a touching comedy/drama by Bernard Slade, began. Soon, the character, Dr. Gladys Petrelli entered, stage right, and promptly, as she delivered her lines, captured the attention of the audience. The actor playing this prominent, demanding role was also making her on-stage acting debut. Her name was Rita Corn, and she was an instant hit - a true theatrical star that would shine brightly on the LBP stage - and several others, as well - for the next twenty-four years.

After her impressive performance in *Tribute*, Rita was quickly sought after to fill a wide variety of acting roles - in comedies, mysteries, dramas - and she excelled in every genre. As the years went by (sped by!) she steadily expanded her contributions to the Playhouse - teaching acting classes, organizing and launching the Readers Theater program, serving on the Play Selection committee, directing plays and most recently, stepping in as LBP's very first Artistic/Production Manager.

With her unbounded devotion to this Playhouse and her singular impact on its rapid growth and success, it was no wonder that members of the close-knit LBP family often referred to it, affectionately, as "Rita's Theater."

Then, on the night of August 6, 2015, our beloved star made her exit from this life's drama, which she had lived so fully.

But that's not the end. Though her many friends and fans and admirers will miss her intensely, we know that Rita has simply made another entrance. This one to a vastly bigger stage in a much higher galaxy, filled with other stars. And we know that from now on for every curtain time at the Lemon Bay Playhouse, as the house lights fade to dark and the stage brightens, part of that illumination comes from a shining Star - her name is Rita Corn.

THEATER FRIENDS REMEMBERING RITA



"Rita was an incredible woman! She was a tremendous role model for me--both on and off the stage. I SO appreciated her support, encouragement, and unwavering belief in what I could accomplish. Working with her in *The Glass Menagerie* bonded us in such a way, that I always referred to her as, "Mama" and she called me, "Baby Girl". Her warmth, strength, and energy will be greatly missed. I count it a privilege to have had her in my life, and will always cherish our friendship." – Kim Fisackerly

"Going to miss her "hey hey hey" she says to get people's attention before the play then ends with y'all come back you hear." – Marilyn Barton

"I didn't have much stage experience when Rita offered me the role of Mildred in *Squabbles*. She directed the play, but she had also played Mildred opposite Ron Bupp as Abe years earlier. At rehearsals, she would gather us for director's notes and inevitably begin, "Now, Mildred...." After a few weeks of her concentrated efforts at bringing me up to snuff, I remarked, "It must be hard to direct someone in a role you played." "It IS", she quickly responded. But she never gave up on me. By the play's closing, she announced to everyone that she had heard audience members compliment my acting, and she had come to the conclusion that my interpretation was better than hers. How gracious of her to give me that credit! It only happened because she tirelessly helped me with every line of every scene. That was Rita. She told me that she would be happy to direct me again, and actually, she will. I will hear her and feel her presence anytime I am at Lemon Bay Playhouse. Can't you hear her, too? HEY, AY!" – Gloria Bandy

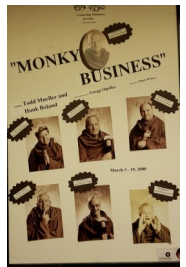


"Rita always smiled and had a good word. When I started to do the photo board, she told me that it was very important. I always loved when she did the speech before a play. So much spunk and fun! She was the heart of Lemon Bay Playhouse." – Linda Meagher

"Didn't really know Rita very well as we are snowbird volunteers, but whenever we were there when she was there she was such a pleasant lady and so perky. We are certain she will be missed." – Diane and James Ehmer

"Rita was always gracious and willing to help other actors. When I was cast for "Absurd Person Singular", I had no idea of how to play a character who became increasingly drunk as the play proceeded. While Rita was demonstrating speech patterns and facial expressions, I was laughing so hard, she had to repeat her performance. She spent a lot of time coaching me until I was stage-ready." – Ann Hanushek

"Rita--quick to laugh, quick on the wit, fast to forgive, and a really good soul. Rita was the first person I met when I went to LBP for an audition. I was new to the area and did not know what to expect. When I did not hear, I figured I did not get cast. When they cast me in *Monky Business* (2000), I was happy, and she told me they were trying to figure out how to use me, and they were able to see "this was not your first rodeo". She was always pleasant and a joy to work with. She was one of the few people who when we did have a disagreement (and there were a couple), it never got personal. It was always about the show and how to make it and LBP better. As an actress, working with her on stage was great as she was a caring actress and giving. As a director, she helped actors grow. As an artistic director, she let the directors direct, which can be rare, and why I love directing at LBP. Rita was always available to help. There will be a hole in my heart. She will be missed." – Will Horton, Psy.D. Actor, Director, Author.



"The first time I performed in a full running play was October, 2014, at Lemon Bay Playhouse in *Ladies in Retirement* as Miss Fiske. I was such a rookie and was having an anxiety attack. Rita was one of my favorite actors. I loved her flair, sassy comic attitude, and was in awe of her talent. So I asked Rita for some tips. Always ready to help, without hesitation, she said "absolutely", sat me down, asked me some questions about the part, how I saw it, she read some of the lines the way a pro saw them. She asked me to read the same lines, critiqued me constantly, and finally said, "You are ready!" My anxiety dissipated. She gave me the confidence to step on to the stage." – Jennifer Furey



"*Moon Over Buffalo* was the first show I did at LBP, and I was thrilled to co-star with Rita. Rita prided herself on never "losing it" on stage. In the second act, I was supposed to be drunk, so I dressed up as Cyrano de Bergerac wearing a prosthetic nose, while everyone else on stage was performing *Private Lives*. Just as I was about to walk on stage, the top part of my nose came loose so that it was hanging from my lip. I had no choice but to make my entrance. I crossed the stage in front of Rita and could see that she was barely holding the laughter in. Then Michelle Neitzel, who was playing my daughter, walked over to me, pulled the nose off my face and stuck it down her bra. Need I say more? To my knowledge that was the first and only time Rita "lost it" on stage." – Steve Horowitz

"Our little Theater will never be quite the same without that diminutive actress/director called Rita Corn. She may have been small in stature, a fact that I loved teasing her about (we were Mutt and Jeff you see) but she was a giant in talent alone. The rolling of her eyes, her facial expressions were absolutely priceless. When she had to deliver a welcome speech to the patrons, no one but Rita could quite rouse the crowd with a HEY, HEY, HEY like she did. I had a special bond with her and I will miss her immensely. She's just irreplaceable. In loving Memory." – Mama Mia Schneider

"I will always remember and admire Rita's humor, generosity of spirit and boundless energy and feel so fortunate to have acted with her in two shows. Watching her dance blithely offstage to retrieve a missing phone in *Harvey* and hearing her bellow "What the hell happened to Broadway?" in *Don't Talk to the Actors* are priceless memories to me. She was an inspiration, a mentor, and a friend. She once told me, "Charlie, I always feel comfortable onstage with you." I cherish those words." – Charlie Tyler

"Actress and friend, Rita Corn took a final bow and exited this life. She left us with tears in our eyes, applauding so hard our hands hurt. We kept yelling more, more, but she didn't return. She had an eternal date to make and she couldn't be late. The words of John Donne fill my head: Death be Not Proud, though some have called thee Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so.



THEATER FRIENDS REMEMBERING RITA - Continued



A woman with short blonde hair is posing in front of a dark wooden door. She is wearing a black long-sleeved top, a black skirt, and a floral vest. She has her arms outstretched, holding a black hat in her right hand and a black shoe in her left hand. Above the door is a colorful archway decoration with a blue, red, and yellow design. The wall is pink.

Donna Hadley

"I will always be there for you, whether you're in the car, in the house, or in the hospital."

“As a 50-50 partnership, we have known her and

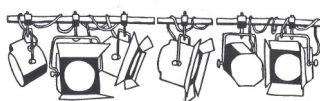
SNAPSHOTS OF RITA'S LIFE AT LEMON BAY PLAYHOUSE





96 W. Dearborn Street
Englewood, FL 34223

PLAYBILL PAGES FROM "TRIBUTE" JANUARY, 1991 - OUR 4TH SEASON



January 4, 5, 11, 12, 17, 18 19 8p.m.
6, 13 Matinees 2 p.m.

1991

Lemon Bay Playhouse
353 W. Dearborn, Englewood

Tribute

By Bernard Slade
Directed by Lee Linkous
Assistant Director Leslie Gilt
Produced by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc.

CAST OF CHARACTERS (In Order of Appearance)

Lou Daniels..... Jim Huit
Dr. Gladys Petrelli..... Rita Corn
Scottie Templeton..... Ed Cummings
Sally Haines..... Mary Pasieka
Maggie Stratton..... Leslie Gilt
Jud Templeton..... Josh Williams
Hilary..... Dawn Carpenter

PRODUCTION STAFF

Stage Manager..... Vernon Davids
Assistant Stage Manager & Props..... Jean Scudder
Set Construction..... Paul Hyatt
Set Painting..... Gretchen Barney

THE SETTING

Living Room of a New York Townhouse and one stage of a New York Theatre

ACT ONE

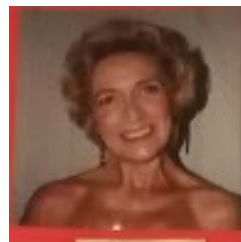
Scene 1 - The present and a morning three months ago
Scene 2 - That Night
Scene 3 - Later That Night

Intermission - 12 Minutes - Refreshments will be served

ACT TWO

Scene 1 - The next morning
Scene 2 - Earlier this afternoon
Scene 3 - Tonight

RITA'S BIO FROM THE SHOW "TRIBUTE"



RITA CORN has been a permanent Englewood resident for the past 3-1/2 years. Originally from Indianapolis, Indiana, she served 20 years as credit manager for Indiana National Bank. She is now retired. Rita's hobbies include cooking, basketry, dancing and walking the beach. Because her husband and two of her three sons are professional musicians, she greatly enjoys music. Previous experience as an entertainer includes pantomime and dancing, both at private parties and in clubs. This is Rita's acting debut.

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LBP Box Office is open Monday-Friday, 10:00am to 2:00pm. Phone 941-475-6756

Visit our website at: www.lemonbayplayhouse.com (or scan the QR code)



"It is the mission of Lemon Bay Playhouse to enrich Englewood and surrounding communities through theatrical productions, volunteer opportunities, education and training in the performing arts, and to provide a venue for other cultural activities."