

**Remembering
NOEL COWARD**

Friends of the USC Libraries
University of South California

Program Participants

Hal Kanter, Program Host
Hermione Baddeley
Jeremy Brett
Ron Rusmann
Moirra Lister
Mary McCarty
Leonard Spigelgass

Mary Martin
Murray Matheson
Patricia Morison
Graham Payn
Lynn Redgrave
Roddy McDowall
Marti Stevens

USC Chamber Singers
Jack Latimer and Harper MacKay, pianists

Remembering NOEL COWARD

Following dinner Stanley Musgrove, President of the Friends of the USC Libraries, introduced Trustees and other University dignitaries, including USC President John R. Hubbard.

Dr. Hubbard, after presenting a silver bowl to Alvista Perkins in recognition of her outstanding service to the University, introduced Master of Ceremonies, Hal Kanter.

Hal Kanter:

My plan is to introduce some enchanting people who remember Noel Coward and who have graciously consented to share some of their memories with us. It was never my personal good luck to meet the man himself, but, like anyone who ever fell under the spell of magic he cast with his work, I remember Noel Coward, too. I remember him from my boyhood in Savannah, Georgia, where my parents introduced his published work in our home and I became his fan long before I could correctly pronounce his name. Years later, we moved from the Deep South - to the shallow North. (Laughter) And there, the fancy Yankees I ran into smirked when I said, Noel Coward. They pronounced it "Nul Cahd." (Laughter) But Coward or Cahd, the genius of the artist was that he could hold hostage the attention and the admiration of a sophisticated theater audience of British nobility, or a Park Avenue poseur, or a Georgia Cracker like me. He remains the most prodigious figure in the modern theater - actor, playwright, lyricist, composer, biographer, essayist, café performer, director, poet, musician, novelist, singer, dancer, producer, painter - have I left anything out? He didn't. Coward was what's known as a Renaissance man - or to the envious, a greedy pig. (Laughter) Apparently, from what I've read and heard, he had another blazing talent, a talent for friendship. We'll hear more about Sir Noel Pierce Coward, who was born December 16, 1899 and died March 26, 1973, but who lives still wherever the English language is spoken or music is heard. We'll hear from people who speak the language better than I and who sing the music almost as well as you. They were his friends. I'm here to listen to them. I can assure you I didn't come for the food. (Laughter) I mean I was here last year but, at that time, I thought the meal was simply Stanley Musgrove's idea of a practical joke. (Laughter) I had no idea that the kitchen staff of the Sybil Brand Institute for Women catered parties like this. (Laughter) If anybody from this kitchen is listening, I'm only kidding. (Laughter)

Anyway, getting back to Mr. Musgrove- when Stanley invited me back this year, he discreetly avoided mentioning the dinner, I must tell you. What he said was that our producer, Ralph Levy, would repay me for my appearance by having me named an honorary alumnus of USC. Flattered, I checked with Dr. Hubbard to find out precisely what that would entail. The good doctor said it would entitle me to have tea in the Faculty Lounge and once a year, contribute five or ten thousand dollars to the Alumni Club. (Laughter) I declined the offer - I don't drink tea. But as the British say, we do have a full plate tonight, so let's have at it.

Earlier this evening, during the cocktail hour, I trust that many of you admired the portrait of Sir Noel on display in the bar. I know that while I waited for the besieged barman to decant some white wine, I studied that elegant photograph of the face that launched a thousand quips and as I was warmed by it - as warm, I recall, as the wine was - I remembered an anecdote - an anecdote reported by the peripatetic confidante of our theater's royalty, Radie Harris. Miss Harris recalled the suicide of an actor whose I. Q. was considered by his colleagues to be not much larger than his hat size, and when Coward learned of it, he asked, "How did he kill himself?" "With a gun," he was told. "He blew his brains out." Whereupon Coward said, "He must have been a marvellous shot." (Laughter)

I repeat that by way of introduction because the photographer who snapped that splendid picture in the bar is also a marvellous shot. He is the first of Coward's friends we welcome tonight. Moreover, on either side of the camera, he also happens to be quite a brainy old boy. Because of his long association with the gentleman center stage this evening, I asked him to begin this beguine. Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr. Roddy McDowall. (Applause).

Mr. McDowall:

Thank you. Well, you see, it was a very lovely day; it was brisk and it was sunny and it was a quarter of a century ago. I took Noel Coward to see his dentist in New York City. (Laughter). Now our means of transportation was my motor scooter, and the master seemed to enjoy his outing as we whizzed along Park Avenue. At one point, we stopped at a traffic signal and he leaned forward and he asked me, "What do you want to do next, professionally?" I attempted to confide over the roar of the engine that it was my secret desire to sing in a musical comedy. He quickly retorted, "Not my songs."

[Mr. McDowall sings "Mrs. Worthington".] (Applause)

Mr. Kanter:

That's lovely! That was lovely.

Mr. McDowall:

Thank you, thank you.

Mr. Kanter:

And you survived - you survived indeed.

Mr. McDowall:

Yes, I survived.

Mr. Kanter:

Let's also acknowledge with thanks the survival of the two accompanists at the twin pianos, Mr. Jack Latimer and Mr. Harper MacKay. (Applause) Thank you, gentlemen, and stand by. Roddy may burst into song again at any moment. One never knows.

Mr. McDowall:

No!

Mr. Kanter:

You referred to Coward as "the master," I believe.

Why was that?

Mr. McDowall:

You know, I don't know. We'll have to ask Graham. By the time that I knew Noel, it was really sort of modus operandi and I suppose this was said it didn't seem like an affectation at all. He just was - I think that's the reason one did.

Mr. Kanter:

You did a show that he wrote, in New York, I believe - Lulu?

Mr. McDowall:

Yes - Look After Lulu. He was a wonderful man. It sounds sort of an asinine thing to say in a way. I liked him so much. He was wonderful.

Mr. Kanter:

Roddy, may I interrupt? - You like everybody so much.

Mr. McDowall:

No, that's not true.

Mr. Kanter:

Why particularly did you like him?

Mr. McDowall:

Well, I remember one time that we were talking and I had figured out that the year I was born, he was writing Bitter Sweet and he quickly reminded me that he had done a great deal of work before that, so the point was that by the time I came to meet him he was accompanied by an incredible legend - a formidable one - and it wasn't in theory an easy thing to meet him. However, it was the easiest thing that could ever have occurred because he is one of the five or six most encouraging forces that I ever encountered. His curiosity and support and attention and humor and interest in the people whom he liked was so encouraging. He made you feel that you could do much more than you possibly ever entertained that you could accomplish yourself. And he kept pushing one toward those ends with a great deal of common sense. He was riddled with common sense. I mean, it was wonderful. He was a wonderful man! The play we did - he translated a farce called 'Look After Lulu' in the late fifties in New York.

Mr. Kanter:

May I just remind everyone that that show, I think, was directed by Cyril Ritchard.

Mr. McDowall:

Oh, it certainly was!

Mr. Kanter:

No mean talent himself.

Mr. McDowall:

And the sets were Cecil Beaton.

Mr. Kanter:

Yes, Cecil Beaton and the lady who co-starred was Tammy Grimes.

Mr. McDowall:

It was her first Broadway production.

Mr. Kanter:

And this marvellous talent all assembled on stage - and as I recall, the reviews were not quite what one would hope they would be.

Mr. McDowall:

Well, we were a sensational success - but only in New Haven! (Laughter)

Mr. Kanter:

Now, the reason I mention that, Roddy, is - there is something I want to get to. What was Coward's reaction to unfavorable reviews? How did he react to that?

Mr. McDowall:

Well, one of the most admirable aspects of the man was that he was able to survive rejection - and use it as gasoline. It seemed to further produce and, the opening night of 'Look After Lulu' was such a terrifying experience because after, really a wonderful success in New Haven, nobody laughed at the Miller Theatre in New York.

It was awful, just awful And, when it was over, I remember that Noel and Tammy Grimes and Myrna Loy and myself went to this party at the Miller's apartment and we walked in - we were all rather depressed - and Noel looked around and said, "I smell failure - we must leave!"

We went out and we bought the newspapers and went back to his apartment. He sat down - we were all very upset - and he proceeded to read all the reviews and criticise the syntax and their point of view about the work. But what we did was to burst the balloon and one ended up giggling. He then of course, told us that very seldom had he ever had good reviews.

Mr. Kanter:

Oh?

Mr. McDowall:

Oh very seldom. "Only the public likes me." (Laughter)

Mr. Kanter:

Well, that's much more important than critics, I would say, isn't it? Yeah, even though there are a few in the house tonight.

Mr. McDowall:

Sorry about that, guys.

Mr. Kanter:

I'm sure that we could go on for days. But right now, we do have some other ground to cover and if you'll stay with me, let's go from the song that you gave us so amusingly to something more melodic - do you mind?

Mr. McDowall:

Thank you

Mr. Kanter:

For a delicious taste of Coward's gift for operetta, here is a medley of three songs presented by two of America's finest performers, a beautiful lade in our musical theater and a handsome gentleman, recovering recently from knee surgery: the stunning Miss Patricia Morison and the recently stunned Mr. Ron Husmann. (Laughter and applause)

[Miss Morison sings "I'll Follow My Secret Heart."

Mr. Husmann sings "You Were There."

Miss Morison and Mr. Husmann sing "Play, Orchestra, Play."]

(Applause)

Mr. Kanter:

Thank you. Thank you, Patricia, Ron, Jack, Harper. We'll hear from them again later on, I'm sure. Now, Roddy, this is a sort of reunion time for you, too, so stand by, would you?

Mr. McDowall:
Uh-huh

Mr. Kanter:
The late Cole Lesley's valuable biography of his master relates that while Coward was auditioning performers for a revue he was casting in London, a fourteen year old boy came on stage to sing a verse of "Nearer, My God, To Thee," (Laughter) And before anyone could stop him, the boy immediately broke into a tap dance. (Laughter) Coward was so taken aback by that combination, he engaged the boy on the spot (Laughter) and thus began an association that blossomed into a professional relationship and nurtured the boy's growth into one of the theater's most elegant leading men, and even more, a friendship that lasted for the next thirty years. We are fortunate to have him with us this evening and delighted that he has come from his home in Switzerland to join us in remembering Noel Coward, for nobody knew him any better than Mr. Graham Payn. (Applause)

Welcome back to California after too long an absence, and, incidentally, thank you for bringing all the sunshine with you.

Mr. Payn:
Oh, thank you

Mr. Kanter:
We've had some rather beastly weather here.

Mr. Payn:
Yes, I heard about it. Wasn't good, was it?

Mr. Payn:
I'd like to just put one little thing right, if I may - about "Nearer, My God, to Thee" - I did sing it, but I did the tap dance at the same time. (Laughter)

Mr. Kanter:
Precocious little boy, weren't you?

Mr. Payn:
He thought it was rather funny, so he engaged me for the show.

Mr. Kanter:
Had you been in the theater before - had you done something else before that?

Mr. Payn:
Well, yes, I had. Can I say that here today?

Mr. Kanter:
Certainly.

Mr. Payn:
I had made a gramophone record.

Mr. Kanter:
Oh, you can say that easily - yes.

Mr. Payn:

- Of that song and on the label, it said, "Wonder Boy Soprano with Organ." (Laughter)

Mr. Kanter:

And I thought the British had a talent for understatement. (Laughter) Incidentally, Graham, excuse me - before we go on - that photograph of Sir Noel there - was he really quite that angelic?

Mr. Payn:

No - no. (Laughter) No - he said it was very nice and that it was a wonderful gift of friendship. But, he was fairly selfish and determined to get his own way. I think you have to, to get on, and he just did that, frankly. Anyway, to get back to our relationship

Mr. Kanter:

Yes, please do.

Mr. Payn:

I didn't see him again for many years after Words and Music. It was many years later, and I was playing juvenile leads in revues, and then I got into an operetta with Alec Domino and he asked somebody - he said, "What's Graham like in it?" and they said, "Well, if you like somebody who sings very loudly, laughs a lot, you'll like him." (Laughter)

So he came to see this extraordinary thing, and he said he had never seen anybody learn so many bad tricks in such a short time. (Laughter) And "get back on the track at once." But in any case, it was alright, I think, because he asked me to be in his next revue, Sigh No More. And we were rehearsing a song I had written called "Wait a Bit, Joe" and he said, "You know, a bit of charm wouldn't hurt in that number," (Laughter) - so, I thought, oh all right, I'll tease when I come in and I did it and there was a terrible pause, and he said, "I said a little charm, not sweetness and light like Mary Rose." (Laughter)

Anyway, the next song was really beautiful, and for some reason or other he wanted me to dance after it. I knew that would kill the song and it was such a good one, and I was surprised that he didn't realise that himself and he was insistent. So, all right, I rehearsed it, but I rehearsed so badly on purpose that he had to cut the dance. It was the first time I pulled a fast one on him - and got away with it. And the song was really terrific, and he said to me, "All right, no dance. You do it but keep a good steady tempo and don't put in the expression."

I didn't, and it went marvellously, and I was thrilled to death with this because I could go out here, walk right around the stage, right to the dressing room over there, and the applause would still be going on. That was very gratifying, naturally. But after a couple of months, I found I was walking a bit quicker because the applause wasn't lasting so long. (Laughter) I thought, that's funny; the microphone isn't turned up enough? - orchestra's too loud? - it couldn't be me, could it? (Laughter)

Anyway, I asked Noel to come in and have a look to see what was the matter. And he said, "It may interest you to know you have added a minute and half to the running time of that song." He said, "Cut out the expression and get back to tempo, you stupid little clod." (Laughter)

Mr. Kanter:

Yesterday, we were talking with Roddy, and you said you were about to open in a show that he had written, and he came back to wish you - he said something

Mr. Payn:

Oh yes, yes. Oh yes, that was much, much later, and we'll come to it after, in a minute, but on the first night he did put his head around the dressing room door and say to me, "Good luck. Don't be nervous - it all depends on you." (Laughter)

Mr. McDowall:

I think that was his favorite thing to do to all of us - and then giggle and go off -

Mr. Payn.

But it did help - to relieve the tension, don't you know?

Mr. McDowall:

I have always been fascinated at the joy he must have felt, in the late sixties, when the plays - when Hay Fever and Private Lives - when everything began to be done on a major level again after all those years of sort of being -

Mr. Payn:

In the doldrums -

Mr. McDowall:

Yes, He was so thrilled. He had a great time over that, didn't He?

Mr. Payn:

He had a lovely time. He called it "Dad's Renaissance." (Laughter) And they really were good, too. I mean, at the National Theatre, they did Hay Fever. It was wonderful - very, very good indeed.

Mr. Kanter:

Let's skip some of the theatrical history for a moment and get to the man himself. For a while, you lived in Jamaica.

Mr. Payn:

That's right, yes.

Mr. Kanter:

And some of the things I've read about the house there - you had a lot for eminent guests. Did you once not have the Queen Mother come and pay a visit?

Mr. Payn:

That's right. She came for lunch, and he had ordered a lobster mousse to be sent in from Kingston and it arrived, made of steel, I think, (Laughter). And he said, "Well, that won't do at all. Put it outside in the sun by the kitchen door." I said, "But you can't, the cats will get it." He said, "Then send somebody to stand by and watch it so that the cats don't get it until it gets a bit softer." Anyway, it got a bit softer. He put his thumb on it and it went right through, made an enormous hole in the thing - ruined the whole thing and he made some awful pea soup to replace it. (Laughter) So that's that little story, anyway.

Mr. Kanter:

He, himself, made the soup? You mean he went into the kitchen and made the soup?

Mr. Payn:

Yes, out of tins. (Laughter)

Mr. Kanter:

Was he a handy hand in the kitchen?

Mr. Payn:

He was terrible! - awful cooking - oh my God, yes! We had a great time in Jamaica, but when he bought a house in Bermuda, there was a problem of domestic staff. You certainly couldn't get a cook, and he said, "Oh, that's no problem at all, I'll do the cooking!"

Uh, God! His idea of cooking was to get every spice and every herb. possible and throw it into whatever it was he was mixing up. (Laughter) Oh, it was a terrible time we went through! But he loved it. It was very hot, as you know, in Bermuda in the summer and when he was in the kitchen, he didn't wear any clothes at all, virtually nothing, except a little apron - a plastic thing - here in front - was all. (Laughter) And one day he was busy in there and there was a knock on the kitchen door and he went and answered it and it was the vicar. (Laughter)

And he said, "Oh! hello. Oh, how nice to see you. Do come in, do come in, but please, wait one minute. I'm about to see what's in the oven!" He went around, turned over (Laughter) "Oh drat! Oh, it's all right. It's perfectly well, thank you. He's gone!" (Laughter) Frightened the hell out of the vicar. (Laughter) I hear he was a nice chap but we never saw him again. (Laughter)

But also, he was a great speed merchant, you know. He drove his cars very fast and he bought a speedboat and this he loved. He used to zoom across the sound to Hamilton, go to the supermarket, buy more herbs and spices to come back and zoom back to make another awful dish for us to eat. (Laughter)

Anyway, we had a lovely time there, but he said this really wasn't the place for him. He wanted to get back to Europe. So he bought this house in Switzerland which is beautifully situated on the side of a mountain with a view right across the lake to France. Though it may sound as though these were just holiday times, he was working.

Mr. Kantor:

That's what I was going to ask you. Somebody said - I believe Roddy said - he was always working. Is that right! He was always working, no matter, even on holiday - or did he have some sort of a regular routine?

Mr. Payn:

Always, always, on the go. Meantime, he had written Relative Values.

Mr. Kanter:

Would you talk just a bit about his writing habits, Graham, please. How did he write?

Mr. Payn:

Well, he had the most marvellous discipline. He'd get up very early in the morning, start work by about 7.

Mr. Kanter:

What is getting up early to you? To some people here, getting up early is 10 o'clock.

Mr. Payn:

Oh! To me, it's 9 o'clock - that's early. No, he'd get up around 6 and get to work at 7 and work right through to lunchtime. And if he was in the flow, he'd go right through the afternoon or just recap it in the morning and fix things up. But a terrific disciplinarian, he was.

Mr. Kanter:

Silly question - did he write by hand or did he type?

Mr. Payn:

Mostly by hand, but some of the plays that he said he wrote so quickly, like in three days or four days or five days - that did happen, but what he didn't say was that he'd had the thing on his mind for quite a long time, really. So he'd really been prepared and he could sit at the typewriter and put it straight on the script - like that, on the paper, I mean, because he could read what the dialogue would sound like better in typescript.

Mr. Kanter:

Did he have a neat handwriting?

Mr. Payn:

Tiny, tiny, tiny writing - very difficult to read.

Mr. Kanter:

Oh really. Did he wear glasses when he wrote?

Mr. Payn:

No.

Mr. Kanter:

Is that why it was so tiny? - he thought it was big? (Laughter) What kind of cigarettes did he smoke? He was always smoking a cigarette, every picture I ever saw.

Mr. Payn:

Oh, he didn't care. It didn't really matter - Salems, I think. But he smoked far too much and ate far too many chocolates, too. (Laughter)

Mr. Kanter:

Chocolate cigarettes - terrible combination. (Laughter)

Mr. Payn:

At any rate, for some of those plays, when he was going through the "holiday time" I called it, he had written Relative Values for Gladys Cooper, Quadrille for the Lunts, and Nude with Violin for John Gielgud, later played by Michael Wilding, and then Noel, himself, played the part here in Los Angeles and in New York.

Mr. Kanter:

And I believe you played something here in Los Angeles, too, didn't you?

Mr. Payn:

Oh yes, I did, yes. Tonight at 8.30 with Gertrude Lawrence.

Mr. Kanter:

Was that your last visit to Los Angeles?

Mr. Payn:

No, I've been here since then. I was allowed back in. (laughter)

Mr. Kanter:

You were.

Mr. Payn:
Just ... (Laughter)

Mr. Payn:
No, actually, we were a nice success here but when we got to New York, we weren't a success at all, really. It didn't run at all. Whereas the first time, when Noel did it with Gertie, they were sold out for the season, and the critics said that he was wonderful, and Gertie was wonderful, but the plays were no good. When I came in, in his part, they said the plays were terribly good and I was no good. (Laughter)

Mr. McDowall:
Why do you suppose he had so little critical praise? Did he ever explain it?

Mr. Payn:
He never got bad personal notices. It was his writing. And you know, he always did his best and was naturally disappointed when they slammed him, but he had a marvellous sort of resilience and would come up again - bounce back. Get on with the next thing; come on, can't sit back on that. That's finished, that's over, go on. And that was it.

Mr. McDowall:
It's that very quality that was the most riveting to me, that nothing got him down seemingly. He just pressed on.

Mr. Payn:
He was upset. Because when darling Mary Martin came over to London, we were all thrilled to death. He'd written this operetta called Pacific 1860, and we were excited, and Mary came, and we all adored her. She sang beautifully and was enchanting in the show, a great personal success, but, I'm afraid, this time the book was not good enough, and the show was not the success we'd hoped.

Mr. Kanter:
We're going to discuss that a little bit more in detail a little later on, but at the moment it seems to me that among the many friends whom you've often entertained, and by whom Sir Noel was in turn entertained, was an American musical comedy star he called affectionately "the blonde beast."

Mr. Payn:
Oh, yes!

Mr. Kanter:
She is one of those coveted people in life who gives, and, good news, tonight she is with us to give some memories and some music. Ladies and Gentlemen, please welcome Miss Marti Stevens. (Applause)

Miss Stevens:
Thank you. Noel realised early on that he could afford to indulge everything he liked, really, and he not only could afford to do that, he should do it, and he did do it. He hopped a freighter for Hong Kong, anything that would float to get him away from it all. He knew that he would always occasionally need time alone and enjoy it in order to recharge the batteries, but work was the answer, and only in work would true contentment be found. Any other happiness was a bonus well earned. Good old geographical distance, that'll do the trick, he'd say, and for him, it did.

He brought us presents from these trips, presents of music, presents of lyrics, A Room with a View written on a banana plantation in Hawaii and a whole Design for Living written aboard a tramp steamer, and this, a joyous, loving wave to the musical theater in his show:
[Miss Stevens sings "Sail Away".] (Applause)

Miss Stevens:

Oh dear, oh dear, I forgot "addictions." It drove me almost mad. It was standing up there - "He could afford to indulge his addictions." I forgot it all the way in the car and I forgot it tonight (Laughter)

Mr. Kanter:

That's all right. We'll look it up later. Don't worry about it.

Miss Stevens:

That's why he called me "beast." (Laughter)

Mr. Kanter:

Blonde beast, lovely beast. Would you repeat again for us that marvellous story about the time your friend, Sir Noel, was taken to dinner by the Wildings, I believe it was, - in London?

Miss Stevens:

Oh! when they sprung for the dinner. Oh yes, that's the dinner at Wilton's. Wilton's, you probably know, is just about the most expensive restaurant in London, isn't it, Graham? So old Michael figured he'd fork out the lolly and ask Sir Noel, and he very nicely said - he mumbled - Michael mumbled a lot, so he often missed his turn and Maggie was the translator. "Mikey says you should have the woodcock, Noely." But actually, Noel was longing for fish, but he was the guest, so he said, "Okay, fine."

So now he gets this bird, old bird, and he's sawing away at this thing and the maitre d' came by and he said, "Sir Noel, I hope you find this satisfactory. I hope you found no shot in it." Noel looked up and he said, "No, no thank you. The bird died a natural death!" (Laughter) The maitre d' goes away and poor old Noel is still sawing away at this old bird, you see, and finally looked Maggie and he said, "You see, darling, the whole problem tonight is there's far too much wood and not enough cock!" (Laughter)

Mr. Kanter:

Thank you, Marti. I've just received a covert signal from our producer that he's ready now with a pleasant surprise. It's a bit of film. A black and white kinescope, actually, of a television special, the Ford Star Jubilee. It was first aired in color on CBS in October, 1955, and it co-starred the very British Noel Coward and the very American Mary Martin. I took the trouble to search out the Nielsens for that show, incidentally, and I was pleased to discover it beat the competition on one network by 0.5 of a rating point. The competition was the Lawrence Welk Show.

In fairness, I should point out that both shows were beaten, by an hour featuring Jimmy Durante. As Jimmy himself often said, "Dem's da conditions dat prevail!" (Laughter) Tonight, other conditions prevail, so let's enjoy some moments from that extraordinary evening. The film, please.

[Kinescope of Mary Martin and Noel Coward on Ford Star Jubilee singing "Together with Music," "London Pride" and "Deep in the Heart of Texas."] (Applause)

Mr. Kanter:

And now rejoice, friends, for here is the radiant lady who sailed from "Deep in the Heart of Texas" to deep in the heart of theater-goers everywhere, Miss Mary Martin. (Applause)

Miss Martin:

Honestly! How would you all like to see yourselves 22 years later! (Laughter) Ye gods, I was so skinny! Oh, my, wasn't that marvellous to hear him sing! You don't mind if I talk over here' cause if I use of one of those, I talk with my hands and they won't hear a word! (Laughter) Is this all right?

May I tell you just some things about Noel from my standpoint, because the first time I ever saw Noel Coward, I was sitting on the front row in the Palace Theater in Weatherford, Texas, and there he was up on that silver screen, and he was playing - and starring in - *The Scoundrel* and I was captured for the rest of my life by this wicked, fascinating, scintillating star.

And I just sat there, and I thought - I was all of thirteen - I thought "We're going to meet - one day, we are going to meet," and we did - years later. I was performing in New York, at last, on Broadway, and apparently he saw the show. It was *One Touch of Venus*. And it must have been some chemical reaction because he must have felt the same thing. Later on, I was in a show called *Lute Song* and it happened. It was on a matinee day between acts and I was up in my dressing room and there was knock at the door. My maid went to the door and came back with a cable and handed it to me and with trembling hand. I opened it - I had never received a cable in my life - and looked at it, read it, looked down at the signature and nearly dropped dead! It was signed, "Noel Coward." Now, I said to my maid, "Would you please hand me a cigarette" (Laughter) And she said, "But Miss Martin, you don't smoke!" (Laughter) I said, "Well, I start now. I have just heard from Noel Coward - Crowd." (Laughter)

So what happened - he said in his cable that he was writing a new operetta and he would like to introduce me to London audiences at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. Well you know, this is just unbelievable. I mean, here I am, from Texas, and he wants to introduce me to Drury Lane? So, in due time, this all came about and darling Graham Payn and I performed in *Pacific 1860* at the Drury Lane.

It was a beautiful score and also, a really charming book, but that master, Noel Coward, had his work cut out for him when he cast me as Madame Elena Salvador, a diva of great renown, who had travelled all over the world and spoke seven languages! (Laughter) Well, it's true. I was a soprano - (Laughter) - But I was no diva. (Laughter) I had been in Texas, California, Tijuana (Laughter) and New York, but I had not seen the world.

I did speak English, but not English English, so darling Noel said to me he was going to teach me word by word, syllable by syllable, how to speak English English and my first line in the play, in the operetta - do you remember, Graham? - it was "She wouldn't laugh nor would she be angry. She would be touched and very grateful." Now Noel said, "No, no, darling, no, no, no. You have to learn to speak in our rhythm. It has to be - no, no, no - it has to be like this and with his finger going up and down, it was grateful." (Laughter) I said, "But, Noel, I don't understand a word I'm saying." "Never mind, darling - she wouldn't laugh nor would she be angry, she'd be touched and very grateful." (Laughter) Oh, my Lord, you can't believe what happened. We had such fights. We had such tears. We kissed. We made up. We fought again, and darling Graham had to go through all of this with us and finally, we fought so much that we didn't speak for two years. (Laughter) The show wasn't a mad success, but we were so mad at each other, it really didn't matter. (Laughter) But what happened was that I came back to the United States, and oh, it was just devastating. It really just destroyed me and my darling husband, Richard, would wake me up in the middle of the night saying, "You're crying again. It's over Noel." - And it was. I couldn't stand it.

Eventually, I was doing *South Pacific* and one day, - it was a matinee day again - I had this huge box of white lilacs which were my favorite things and he said, in a note "I shall be back tonight to see you." - signed, "Noel! You know, here we go again. Absolutely a wreck. But he came back and we made up. And oh, it was so wonderful, because I really loved this man, deeply loved him, and I learned more from Noel about timing, about emotions, how to release one's emotions, than from anyone else ever in the world! And then one little last note. That night - we lived in Connecticut, and we took him home to Connecticut. This is kind of naughty,, but I'm goin' to tell it anyway. (Laughter)

And we had a guestroom and we were just so happy with each other and oh, Richard and Noel and I were so glad to be together! And Noel Coward had given me a beautiful painting - when we were speaking - (Laughter) of *White Cliffs of Dover* and I loved it very much, but when I was mad at him, I would just not want to see it so I put it in the bathroom of the guest room. (Laughter)

Well, naturally, I had completely forgotten that, so he went in and when he came out, he said, 'Darling, you could have put it where ladies saw it.' (Laughter) Will I be thrown out of the University? Oh, but I tell you that this was a joyous period in my life, and what you just saw, really, this is deeply touching to me, because it is 22 years ago, and he wrote that song, that show, together with music and we were together, we were destined to be together - Texas, London and United States for always, and I am so thrilled to be here tonight and be part of this salute to that great, wonderful man. Thank you. (Applause)

Mr. Kantor:

That is wonderful. It's a wonderful reunion with the two of you, Graham. Graham, I'm talking to you, now.

Mr. Payn:

Oh, oh, sorry! (Laughter)

Mr. Kanter:

There was a song he wrote for you about America.

Mr. Payn:

Oh yes, yes! That's right.

Mr. Kanter:

What show was that from?

Mr. Payn:

That was from Ace of Clubs actually. Uh-huh.

Mr. Kanter:

Do you remember the lyrics?

Mr. Payn:

I hope so. I'll try. (Laughter)

Mr. Kanter:

Do you think these gentlemen remember that? Please do. (Laughter)

[I Like America" is sung by Mr. Graham Payn.] (Applause)

Mr. Kanter:

Thank you, Graham. If we'll turn toward the screen, we'll be treated to some more footage of the legend himself, this time from the collection of Dick Cavett, a celebrated celebrity collector.

[Film clip of Dick Cavett interview with Noel Coward is shown.] (Laughter) (Applause)

Mr. Kanter:

Because the author so enjoyed Private Lives himself, let's continue remembering Noel Coward with a bit of his play. The once-married Amanda and Elyot, having just re-married others, are both honeymooning in the same French resort. They soon find themselves facing each other on a common terrace overlooking the sea. In this scene, a few moments after that startling discovery, the role written for Gertrude Lawrence will be played by Miss Lynn Redgrave and the role Coward assigned himself, by Mr. Jeremy Brett. Imagine a curtain, please, and moonlight.

[Scene from Private Lives with Miss Lynn Redgrave and Mr. Jeremy Brett, off-stage voices of Murray Matheson and Moira Lister. Background piano playing "Someday I'll Find You" which is then sung by Miss Redgrave and Mr. Brett.] (Applause)

Mr. Kanter:

Thank you, Miss Redgrave, for making this house call. (Laughter)

Miss Redgrave:
Thank you very much.

Mr. Kanter:
And that's the last TV show we're going to plug tonight. (Laughter) Mr. Brett, apart from the skill of your playing, one suspects that you may have more than a passing acquaintance with Private Lives. Is it true that you remember who played Sybil in Sir Noel's original production?

Mr. Brett:
Yes, one of my dearest friends for many years. She was a dazzling, beautiful juvenile and she's still a glorious, glorious person, a very, very beautiful woman. The original Sybil in the original production - Miss Adrienne Allen. (Applause)

Mr. Kanter:
May we have the lights up, may we have the lights up? (Applause) Is she seated with Mrs. Hammerstein?

Mr. Brett:
What also rather brings it nearer to home is the fact that she had a boy. I am the father to her grandson. (Applause)

Mr. Kanter:
Do you, Miss Redgrave, do you recall by any chance, what happened to the fourth member of that original cast, the young man who played Victor?

Miss Redgrave:
Yes, I think I do. As a matter of fact, when I worked with that fourth member of the cast, who is, of course, Lord Laurence Olivier, I had the great good fortune and pleasure and delight of being in Noel Coward's Hay Fever with Dame Edith, and we talked about it before and he was absolutely wonderful. You know, he sent down this edict from Switzerland, from the top of the mountain, that we must all be word perfect before we came to rehearsal and we were all very, very frightened, because, you know, here was the master himself, coming to direct us.

So I went off to Majorca on a holiday with some friends and I learned my entire part and I thought, "What shall I do - I've got to - how do you impress Noel Coward the first reading?" He hadn't seen me since I was very, very little, and I decided that Jackie who I was playing, should have a lisp, because she has to say "Mrs. Bliss" so many times and to pass up that many sibilant S's was really too much of a chance. (Laughter) So we got to the first rehearsal and I said, "Yeth, Mrth. Blith, ith abtholutely ekthrrdinary" and "appendithith" and everything like that (Laughter) and afterwards, Larry told me that Noel came to him and said, "The little Redgrave girl is very clever, but has she got a speech impediment?" (Laughter) He was absolutely adorable. He did discover that, in fact, I hadn't got a speech impediment and I was terrified tonight that he would look down and think, "Yes, she really has", (Laughter)

Mr. Kanter:
I think he's cleared that up by now.

Miss Redgrave:
Oh, good. Well, he was very, very kind to me. He made one feel absolutely that one could do anything. He said to me one day, he said, "You're a very, very clever little girl, if you can make me laugh." He had discovered that the last act of Hay Fever actually only runs fifteen minutes without all the laughs and the business and everything. So he said, I'll give you two minutes to make me laugh, and if you do anything, if you can make me laugh, you can keep it in and after that, you've got to do something my way. You have to time a joke my way and count three, and I know you don't like it but you're going to do it."

So I did manage to make him laugh, which was absolutely heavenly, and he did let me keep it in and he was the most wonderful audience, because he'd sit at the dress rehearsals and he'd say, 'Ooh, what a funny line! Oh my goodness, this is a good play!' (Laughter) And we'd all feel so good and it was so nice. He just cheered us up and we, in fact, did it for about a year and a half in the repertoire and we called him "Dad" because of "Dad's Renaissance."

He came, I think, to every play that I did after that, and the first play he came to - my first with a big starring role in the West End - I got a huge, beautiful bouquet of flowers, and there was a little note, and I opened it and it said, 'Marling Lynn, please speak clearly and with great beauty. Love, Dad.' I nearly fainted, and there he was indeed, and he used to come, and he sent me "Good Luck, Love, Dad," and he always called himself "Dad" to me thereafter. Bless your heart, Dad. (Throws kiss) (Applause)

Mr. Brett:

The first time I met him, it seems so hard to think back that he's dead. I really can't believe that he is dead, but anyway that's beside the point. It was when I was doing a musical at the Savoy Theatre and he came into my dressing room and he gave me the most marvellous piece of advice. Straight off, he said, "Dear boy, don't boom out to the audience. Don't go out. Bring them to your teeth." (Laughter) "Make them come to you." That was the best advice I ever had in my life. This is rather what he might disapprove of, but I -

Miss Redgrave:

Yes, I think he would, yes. (Laughter)

Mr. Kanter:

Well, we've been talking about his plays. In one of his earlier revues called *On With the Dance*, I believe it was a young woman appeared and began a lifelong friendship, not only with Sir Noel, but with audiences everywhere, who appreciate her superb gift for comedy. How fortunate for all of us that she is now in our country, her stylish practice flourishing to lighten our lives, I am delighted to introduce, and I'm sure you're delighted to welcome, Miss Hermione Baddeley. (Applause)

[Miss Baddeley at the piano plays and sings "I'm the Wife of an Acrobat." I (Applause)

Mr. Kanter:

Thank you, Hermione. I can think of no higher praise than to say that was "Baddeley" done. (Laughter)

Miss Baddeley:

He's as witty as Noel Coward, of course, isn't he? (Laughter)

Mr. Kanter:

Oh, certainly! would you like to sit with me and chat for a moment or two?

Miss Baddeley:

I wonder who sat on his dollar bill or something? (Laughter) Puts me off the stage! Don't give me the end of the line. Terribly excited! (Laughter)

Mr. Kanter:

Would you like to ah - (Laughter)

Miss Baddeley:

Do you think this is going too far? (Laughter) It was quite sort of slick at one time.

Mr. Kanter:

Do You wear that party hat everywhere?

Miss Baddeley:

No, thank you. I think it would suit you far better. Don't you? (Laughter)

Mr. Kanter:

No. It's delightful.

Miss Baddeley: Okay.

Mr. Kanter:

Tell us a bit about that early tour that you took when you were sniffing your way through the provinces or whatever they called them in the old country ...

Miss Baddeley:

Well, that was at Christmas time. I was a child, one of those terrible child actresses, and I was allowed to work only at Christmas time, and Noel Coward was doing a kind of Christmas play. It was called *The Night of the Burning Pistol* and Noel was this most charming, wonderful, new actor. In those days, you see, we thought of him just as an actor. And he had an enormously long part and was absolutely brilliant in it, but unfortunately, in a way, for him, I was given the part of a terrible little boy who had a very flat hat on and I was told that I must have a terrible cold all the way through, and the director made me sniff right the way through.

He gave me all the places where I must sniff, this awful sniff, right the way through. And of course, when the papers came out, we read the papers the next day. It was absolutely full of this sniff. They said it was recklessly funny, you know. But in a way, it really rather upset Noel's performance, I think, because Noel was really absolutely wonderful in it. But they have a little, strange way, critics, don't they, sometimes, of pinning on something and you know, liking it so much that they work it into something that interferes with the play.

Mr. Kanter:

I've been fortunate in that largely they've ignored everything I've done. (Laughter) How long was it between that time and the next time you saw or worked with Noel?

Miss Baddeley:

Well, Noel then wrote a wonderful song called "Poor Little Rich Girl" for me which was the big success of one of his first revues for C. B. Cochran, and that was a wonderful dramatic number. In those days, I had started as a very dramatic young actress, but I was so young they couldn't find the big parts to put me into, so I went into revues and Noel provided this wonderful thing which stopped the show.

Mr. Kanter:

Could you recall the last time that you were with him or the last time you saw him or worked with him or talked with him?

Miss Baddeley:

Well. He was very cross with Miss Gingold and myself. Sorry about this, but (Laughter) I was asked to revive his *Fallen Angels* which many years before had not really gone over very well. Tallulah Bankhead did it with Edna Best, and somehow it just didn't work, and it didn't run. Then I was asked to repeat this play, and we conferred. It was a very young, amusing management that was starting off. So we decided we'd get Hermione Gingold to come to New York.

Mr. Kanter:

Was this in New York or in London?

Miss Baddeley:

No, in London. So we sent for Hermione and she sent back a message to say "which part." Now the parts are completely equal, so Noel sent a telegram, "The best." (Laughter) "The best." So she came over - the parts were absolutely equal - and, of course, it was the most enormous success, but the only thing was that I'd been told that Noel would come to every rehearsal - which he didn't. He was very, very busy, and Gingold was exploding overall like we did in revue, and we'd done four revues together. So I said to the producer that I felt that we should just tone this play down a bit. After all, it was a Noel Coward play. He said, "Not at all! You must do your funny stuff with her as you do in revue and that is how this play will go over." So I agreed and I said, "All right," for me and Noel came to see us on tour, and I'll never forget it. He said, "I didn't expect it of you, of YOU of all people. You're spoiling my play. This is very upsetting!" So Gingold looked ashen, and she was terribly upset. We went to London with it. He said, "You've got to tone it down, you've got to tone it down, somehow!" We went to London. It was such a magic success, and the bookings were miles ahead so Noel forgave us, you see. (Laughter) He didn't seem to mind when we overdid it and played and you know, did everything we could with it and that's what happened. (Laughter) (Applause)

Miss Baddeley:

A friend of mine, an American friend, said, "You've got to do it in New York. It'll run forever!" But Hermione had said, "Well, I'm going back to America." So we stopped the play while it was still, you know, bookings miles ahead, and she said, "I must go to America" and we thought she had some wonderful lover there. (Laughter) So we let her go, and we took the play off reluctantly. And then the next thing I heard was that she'd opened in Los Angeles in *Fallen Angels*! (Laughter) Well! (Laughter) Somehow it didn't go well. (Laughter) (Applause) But some very clever person saw it, cut Hermione right out poor darling, and put Nancy Walker in it and it really went quite well, but it wasn't quite like it was in London. (Laughter) And so I always feel I was denied doing the thing I really adored by Noel Coward here. I was just denied that and that's that.

Mr. Kanter:

Well, we were denied, too. I'm sure we'd all have given almost anything to see the two *Hermiones* playing *Fallen Angels* here in this country.

Miss Baddeley:

Yes. We were funny together - I think. (Laughter)

Mr. Kanter:

You are a marvellously funny lady, too, and a marvellously gifted one and we want to thank you very much. If I may make just observation at this moment about the song that you did before. So many of Sir Noel's songs have been heard in so many contexts, but perhaps one of the most amusing contexts that I can think of - perhaps you can think of some other - is when "Some Day I'll Find You" was licensed as the theme song for a radio program here in America. I wonder if we could have that tape, please? Can you believe that?

Miss Baddeley:

Heavens, yes.

Mr. Kanter:

You listen.

[Audio tape of "Tracer of Lost Persons"] (Laughter)

Miss Baddeley:

That is very funny. Yes, that's marvellous.

Mr. Kanter:

A young radio writer was responsible for downgrading that tune and for upgrading Noel Coward's ASCAP royalties. (Laughter)

Miss Baddeley:
Yes! Oh my goodness!

Mr. Kanter:
He later became one of Hollywood's most reliable screenwriters. He is also a successful Broadway playwright, biographer, and one of the more urbane dinner companions on either coast. Because he met Coward early on, here in Hollywood, let us now hear from a gentleman who is no stranger to the platform either, my colleague, Mr. Leonard Spigelgass. (Applause)

Mr. Kanter:
You've met? Sit, sit, my dear, and have a chat. Have a microphone. There's a microphone for you, Leonard.

Mr. Spigelgass:
I did do that. I did do that, you know, with 'Mr. Keen, Tracer of Lost Persons.'

Mr. Kanter:
Yes, I know.

Mr. Spigelgass:
I persuaded them to use "Some Day I'll Find You." I don't suppose they ever paid him a nickel. But I got to know him fifty years ago, forty-nine years ago, - long before practically anybody else in this room. It was when he had written a play called Cavalcade, and I was a young man, eight or nine years old, (Laughter) working at the Fox Film Corporation - which was not then Twentieth Century-Fox, even - headed by Mr. Winfield Sheehan who bought Cavalcade for \$200,000. I think you could translate it into \$2,000,000 today, and he had a contract. He decided that since he was going around the world and he was rather bored with the Indian Ocean, that he'd stop off in Hollywood.

Mr. Kanter:
This is Coward - not Sheehan. Yes.

Mr. Spigelgass:
Coward, yes. Mr. Coward would stop off in Hollywood and discuss Cavalcade with Mr. Sheehan. Unfortunately, Mr. Sheehan was fired and was replaced with two other gentlemen. Now these two gentlemen read the contract of "Clavaclade." (Laughter) And one of them said to the other, "It's not "Clavaclade," it's "Calvacade" (Laughter) And they said, 'Well, this contract is quite impossible. He has approval of everything. He has approval of cast and approval of director. He has approval of script. It's impossible. We can't possibly go on with that and he's coming here and he'll be here this afternoon at 2 o'clock, so what we must do, of course, is to let him cool his heels. We'll just let Mr. Coward wait.'

And so at 2 o'clock, Mr. Coward arrived on the dot, resplendent in plaid - looked a lot like the young Prince of Wales. I had an office, right here, and the secretary said, "They'll be with you in just a moment." Well, it was almost an hour and a half later and during that hour and a half, he came in and sat in my office and we chatted. We discovered we had a lot in common.

Now, let me tell you, I was absolutely out of my mind with excitement, because, even though I had met stars like Will Rogers, Sally Eilers, Jimmy Dunn - NOEL COWARD sitting there talking to me! Finally, he was called into the other room and ten minutes later, my buzz rang and I was asked to come in and there was Noel and two quivering executive producers. (Laughter)

And Noel said to me "I've called you in so that you can act as translator." - (Laughter) - "Or to put it another way, interpreter, because I don't think we speak the same language, these two gentlemen and I. You tell them that the contract provides (this was written by Fanny Holtzmann - who died, by the way, only two weeks ago - his attorney) that I have absolute authority over everything that goes into the picture

'Clavaclade'. (Laughter) There's no point trying to get them to say it. They won't." And I said, terrified that I'd lose my job, "Well, Mr. Coward." He said, "Please say 'Noel'." I said, "Well, Noel, they've heard you say it." He said, "Say it again in American English. Maybe it'll get through." (Laughter) So I said it again. He said, "Now, we will go outside to your little office, and we'll sit down, and we shall cast it and put the writers on it, and we'll use-oh my God! Clive Brook! Dullest man on earth, but absolutely right for the part!" (Laughter)

Mr. Kanter:

At that time, you mean.

Mr. Spigelgass:

Yes. (Laughter)"And Diana Wynyard, and Una O'Connor and we'll get some ugly director. Whom do you recommend?" I said, stuttering, "Frank Lloyd, maybe. Frank Lloyd." He said, "Oh, I rather-like him. He does rather largish pictures. That's what I like, you know, really. Do you think they'd give me a job?" And I said, "I don't know. I don't think you're in their hearts tonight. They looked terrified of you!" (Laughter) But let me tell you, Hal, they were always terrified of him. They never gave him a job. He never made a film here, and he loved making films, and he was a marvellous filmmaker, and he loved films almost more than he loved the theater, because he said, "It's so much harder to make a picture and that's why it's so exciting. Why it's harder is that you have no response from anybody except that imbecile called the director!" (Laughter)

Mr. Kanter:

But isn't it true, though, Lenny, that in the theater, he could do it all himself. He really had no place to go. But in film, it's so much more collaborative. You're so dependent on everyone else. Was he aware of that?

Mr. Spigelgass:

Right! He was aware of it, but, of course, he could do any of those things, except paint the scenery and I suspect he could have that as well. Yes. I worked with him on this picture. Then he went back and of course, it was rather a success. He hated, he absolutely hated it because he did a lot of jazzy things to it, and fortunately, the two people for whom I was translating were fired and so I was spared. I got another week in.

Mr. Kanter:

Do you suppose that experience could have been the basis for a remark I read somewhere that I've written down here. He is said to have commented once, "I'm not very keen on Hollywood. I'd rather have nice cup of cocoa, really." (Laughter)

Mr. Sigelgass:

I wasn't going to tell you this, but he came over to my house one night in the late forties and he-

Mr. Kanter:

For cocoa?

Mr. Spigelgass:

He decided that he would make salad dressing and he did all sorts of things, every herb, every oil known to mankind and it came out rather like a pousse-cafe. (Laughter) Nothing would join with anything else. (Laughter) No matter how much he shook it, how much he sopped it. He said, "I bet nobody could ever do that again!" (Laughter)

It was a couple of nights later - I have two or three Coward stories. I'm going to tell them whether you like it or not. (Laughter). He was staying with Clifton Webb and he called me at half-past eleven and he said, "For

God's sake! Come and rescue me!" And I got in the car and I got there and I said, "What is the matter?" He said, "I've just been to not a marvellous party." (Laughter) And I said, "What kind of party!" He said, "A birthday party."

I said, "Well, that sounds right amusing." and he said, "For Clifton's mother, Maybelle." So I said, "Well, that's rather sweet, don't you think?" He said, "Yes, except she's been dead for five years!" (Laughter)

Mr. Kanter:

This all leads up to some film we've going to see.

Mr. Spigelgass:

Okay. Well, I'll tell you one quick thing about Hollywood, something terribly important about it. He was the absolute darling of every hostess in town. Everybody wanted him. Every party that was given for him, and there were dozens of them, everybody in town was there and nobody would give him a job. And that's why he really came to dislike it.

Mr. Kanter:

Oh, dear, well.

Miss Baddeley:

I'm so glad he couldn't cope because he could do everything else, couldn't he! (Laughter) Marvellous to hear he couldn't cope.

Mr. Kanter:

It is nice to know there was one thing that he did poorly, isn't it? Yes, that gives me great comfort, too.

Mr. Spigelgass:

We are going to see some pictures, are we, Hal?

Mr. Kanter:

Yes, we do have some film. This is just a couple of samples of Mr. Coward on film, some of Coward's work.

Mr. Spigelgass:

Is this with Celia Johnson?

Mr. Kanter:

No. Let's see what it is. Roll the film, please. [Film clips of *Hearts of the World*, *The Scoundrel*, *In Which We Serve* are shown.] (Applause)

Mr. Kanter:

He was indeed a little bit more than song and dance and clever dialogue.

Mr. Spigelgass:

Yes, he was. I went to see a play with him that he'd written, oh, some time in the 1940's. I went to the second night and it was at a time when the slang in England was "It's the full marvellous. It's the full gorgeous. It's the full wonderful. And he looked around the theater and he said to me, "It's the full empty." (Laughter) And when he was knighted, I called him up and he said, "Well, my God! Now do you think they'd give me a job?" (Laughter) And I said, "Oh dear, what shall I do?" And I said, "What shall I do now? Do I bow? Do I say 'Your Highness, What do I do?'" He said, "Nothing at all, I'm very democratic but there's perhaps one little thing. When you leave the room, go out backwards." (Laughter)

Mr. Kanter:

Well, we're going to ask someone to come on forwards this time, because having returned from the screen to our stage, onto it, let us request the presence of another of Noel Coward's friends. He is a talented gentleman who has performed not only Coward's work, but he has given dignity and charm to the work of many a lesser talent as well. He is always a welcome sight to behold on stage or screen Mr. Murray Matheson. (Applause)

Mr. Matheson:

Noel had a wonderful instinct for writing plays and songs that reflected each particular world crisis that we were going through, as in *Cavalcade* when we all needed a strong dose of patriotism and *In Which We Serve*, when we badly needed our courage back, This number, I am going to attempt to remember, he wrote I think in the mid-1950's, but it's strangely prophetic because it so aptly applies to the dangerous and difficult days we are going through. It has rather strong moral tone, so I do hope it does not unduly oppress you.

[Mr. Matheson sings "What's Going to Happen to the Children?" (Applause)

Mr. Kanter:

That was wonderful. See? You pulled through fine. That's lovely, lovely. Thank you, Murray.

Mr. Matheson:

Thank you.

Mr. Kanter:

We were talking yesterday and you were telling some of us about the time that you finally met, the master.

Mr. Matheson:

Yes, I did, but I had been touring in a rather unfortunate production of *Tonight at 830* with Faye Emerson, and we rather fought the entire fourteen weeks of it and had some ghastly experiences and ended up not speaking to each other at all. But I came back and I was always rather terrified of the master because he was so quick-witted. I ran into him as we were going into Sardi's, and he said, "Oh, my boy, you've been touring in my plays. How were you?" In panic, I said, "Different." (Laughter) And he thought it was the wittiest thing he'd ever heard. (Laughter) He always called me "Different."

Mr. Kanter:

What were some of the other things we were talking about, yesterday, too? You had so many lovely, delicious moments with him.

Mr. Matheson:

Well, I was sitting next to him at a party in New York, and Gloria Swanson came in looking absolutely wonderful. She'd, I think, just come back from Switzerland and was positively stuffed with health foods and inner radiance and (Laughter) I was sitting next to Noel and I said, "My God, she does look wonderful, doesn't she!" He said, "Yes, she looks like a very, very old twelve!" (Laughter)

Mr. Matheson:

But the only other thing and I have to lead into the story –

Mr. Kanter:

When did you get back from Switzerland? (Laughter)

Mr. Matheson:

Never. (Laughter) But I have to lead into it for the slight anecdote about a very dear friend of his, Marlene, that, I want you to hear. In Australia we have a giant malaise called the press and they wait for the unwary American celebrity who is maybe two years later than he should be in visiting Australia.

Anyway, Marlene was going out, and she'd in Suba and hadn't bothered to change her clothes because she thought she was having her press reception at her suite in the hotel. But as she arrived at the airport, there were all there waiting like carrion to catch her, and as she walked into the airport, a horrible girl reporter, about 21 screamed at her, "When are you going to retire, Marlene?"

And she was so horrified, she hit the girl with her handbag and never gave another interview in Australia, apart from one in which she fell in love with the man and gave lots of interviews. But anyway, this same girl was waiting for Noel I'm sure, when he arrived and he kept rather an icy silence until he went to the hotel, but she came into the elevator with him and fixed him with a beady eye and said, "Oh, go on, Mr. Coward say something witty!" And he arched an eyebrow and said, "Kangaroo!" (Laughter) (Applause)

Mr. Kanter:

I think I should point out that Mr. Matheson is himself an Australian - or was one.

Mr. Matheson:

Yes, I am. True. (Laughter) That's about the end.

Mr. Kanter:

No, now, there was another lovely story that Vivien Leigh was doing Shakespeare. What was that?

Mr. Matheson:

Oh, I think it was Titus Andronicus, but anyway, it was the one that she had her hands cut off, and she was very nervous, and she had to build a fire with lots of faggots - which is, in England, they are sticks - (Laughter) for building anyway - the fire. And she couldn't pick the sticks up - she knew Noel was in front and she was so nervous and she only had stumps and she couldn't pick the sticks up. She kept dropping them. However, she did eventually get the fire to light and waited in trepidation for Noel to come back to the dressing room and, as he came in, he just said, "Butterstumps!" (Laughter)

Mr. Kanter:

Well, I think that you would like to sit and join me in welcoming to our stage another of your friend Noel's leading ladies. She was his co-star in Present Laughter, and she is here from her home in London, a journey we're all grateful she made. Ladies and Gentleman, Miss Moira Lister. (Applause)

Mr. Kanter:

Welcome!

Miss Lister:

Thank you.

Mr. Kanter:

Is this your first trip to Los Angeles?

Miss Lister:

Yes, it is, and I'm absolutely overwhelmed! I really am.

Mr. Kanter:

Well, I want you to know we've missed you. (Laughter)

Miss Lister:

Thank you.

Mr. Kanter:

You got here in time for some nice weather, you know.

Miss Lister:

Yes, I hear I missed all the horrors, but I've brought the sunshine for you.

Mr. Kanter:

Yes. You and Graham arrived about the same time, I believe, as the sunshine.

Miss Lister:

Yes, we did.

Mr. Kanter:

Would you tell us about the first time that you met Sir Noel?

Miss Lister:

Well, I was cast-I was only twenty years old- and it was my first big break in the West End of London and I was cast as his leading lady in a play called Present Laughter, and I was absolutely frightened out of my skull, working with him, because I was just so in awe of him. I was terrified, and the first night came at the Hay market Theatre in London, and he sent for me, ten minutes before the curtain went up, and I thought, "That's it, I'm going to get my cards, and he's going to send me away saying I've done something terrible!" So I went down to his room absolutely in fear and trembling, knocked on his door and he said, "Come in." I said, "Yes, sir." So he said, "Now, I've been very, very pleased with you. I'd like to make you a little present for your opening night." I said, "Oh, Noel, you don't have to do that, please! You know, it's such an honor." I'm so relieved, you know. So he said, "No, no, I absolutely insist!"

So he went over to his dressing table, and he took a little bottle of perfume - which I still have - called Caron Kong Kong (Laughter) - and it was about that size and there was that much perfume left in the bottle (Laughter) and he handed it to me with a magnanimous gesture, and he said, "That is for you. I have used the other half" (Laughter)

Well, we then got into the play, and I'm afraid I had to hit him across the face, and this always worried me terribly because, as you probably know, when you do a stage hit, you're supposed to relax your hand and just make a noise by cupping it slightly. Well, I practiced this and tried doing it, and I never quite got it right, so I was sort of doing it rather feebly and eventually, I thought, "Well, this is ridiculous. I really must do this properly!"

So this particular night, I thought "I'm really going to do this properly, now," and I gave him one slosh right across the face that nearly knocked him off the stage. (Laughter) I noticed he went a bit frigid for the rest of the scene (Laughter) and when the curtain came down, he turned on me like a viper and he said, "If you ever do that to me again, I will hit you straight back across the face in front of the audience!"

So, I said I'm terribly sorry and all that. Anyway, the next night, we came to the scene and I was even more frightened, so I tensed even more and I hit him even harder! (Laughter) That time, when the curtain came down, I ran! I didn't even take the curtain call, I was so frightened. (Laughter) The next night when I came in to show you the kind of man he was, there was a little posy on my dressing table of forget-me-nots with a little note saying, "You're forgiven, but don't do it again!" (Laughter) There were so many wonderful things that happened during that run. One night - have I time to tell this?

Mr. Kanter:

Surely. You never did get the other half of that bottle of perfume, though, did you?

Miss Lister:

Never. I still have the bottle though.

Mr. Kanter:

Mmmm. It's lovely. (Laughter)

Miss Lister.

This night, I had this scene with Noel. We were on the stage, and Joyce Carey was playing his wife, and she was supposed to interrupt the scene that we were playing. She comes down, rings the bell, comes on stage. Well, Noel and I were playing the scene, and the stage management duly rang the bell for Joyce to make her entrance, but we'd been running about six months then and she was sleeping up in her dressing room. She didn't appear.

Noel went to open the door and there was nobody there, and as quick as a flash, he closed the door and said, "Ah, silly little boys, ringing bells and running away!" (Laughter) And then he turned to me and he said, "Now, you come from South Africa, don't you?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Right. Teach me Zulu." (Laughter) So we sat on the couch, and I brought forth all my Zulu words that I knew, and I noticed he was marking down a few as I went along. Finally, the stage management got Joyce, and she made her entrance very breathlessly, and he turned to her and he said, "Humba loppa chow wena a goz, ahma fuda, bluda soboP' (Laughter) Which roughly translated, means, "And about bloody time too!" (Laughter)

Mr. Kanter:

Have you and Murray ever worked together, before?

Mr. Matheson:

No.

Miss Lister:

No, we haven't. We had a mutual agent who has since gone up there.

Mr. Matheson:

Yes, he would get up there. (Laughter)

Mr. Kanter:

Booking them up there, now, huh? (Laughter)

Miss Lister:

Yes. (Laughter)

Mr. Matheson:

Still (Laughter)

Mr. Kanter:

Well, you may hear from him soon. (Laughter) I'm sure that both of you are familiar with the song of Noel's called "Mad About the Boy." There are many, many choruses of it and I wonder if you might do one for us?

Miss Lister:

Noel wrote this number for four different ladies who were all mad about a certain movie star. The first one was a society lady, the second one was a streetwalker, then a Cockney charwoman, and finally, a schoolgirl, and it is the schoolgirl that I'm going to do for you now. To set the scene, she's at home, struggling with her homework. Her sister, Elsie, is practising the piano and driving her mad, and all she wants to do is to get out and go to her favorite picture-drome.

[Miss Moira Lister sings "Mad About the Boy."] (Applause)

Mr. Kanter:

Thank you, Miss Lister. Thank you. Those of you who can keep your eyes off Miss Lister for a moment may notice that we've changed co-pilots up here in the cabin. The gentleman who is seated with me is no stranger to Friends of the USC Libraries. He's certainly a distinguished member of this committee that puts these evenings together. He is an Oscar award-winning composer. He is a musicologist. He is my friend.

He is one of the great living room piano players of all time. This is Mr. Saul Chaplin, Ladies and Gentlemen.
(Applause)

Mr. Chaplin:
Thank you.

Mr. Kanter:
Solly, I thought maybe we might chat a little bit about the man and his music.

Mr. Chaplin:
Just let me say one thing before we start. When I'm pressed into service at these things, it's usually to play for somebody - and that is true of tonight, too. I am supposed to, at this moment, be playing for Gene Kelly over there. Unfortunately, Gene was taken with flu today and he's in bed. So I'm forced now to talk. I'm sorry. (Laughter)

Mr. Kanter:
I might also add that we expected Sylvia Fine Kaye, but Sylvia also has the flu, and she, too, is in bed. She and Gene are in separate beds, I presume. (Laughter)

Mr. Chaplin: I would hope so. (Laughter) And at separate houses.

Mr. Kanter:
Danny's in his own bed somehow.

Mr. Chaplin:
I certainly don't qualify as a close friend of Noel Coward's but I did have two memorable experiences with him. I met him once at Gene Kelly's house. Gene gave a party for him, and as always happens, at the end of the party, I was at the piano and Noel was singing all of his old songs, at least, all of the ones that I knew. And there was only one song that he did several times.

I next saw him when Robert Wise and Bill Fairchild, the English screenwriter, and I went to Jamaica to consult with him about a film we were doing called Star in which his character played a leading role. There's just one small anecdote about that. He looked at the script and liked it, and he said to Bill Fairchild, -I'm not going to attempt to imitate him-he said, 'there's just one thing, Bill. You've used too many 'Dear boys', dear boy.'"(Laughter)

Anyhow, we had a marvellous dinner out under the stars in balmy Jamaica air, and then we went to a room where he had two pianos, and we played and, unlike the night at Gene's house, I was surprised to find he knew songs that everybody wrote. He was very generous for a songwriter. I mean, most other songwriters that I've known play their own songs and that's it. Not that they don't admire the others, but they just don't play them.

Not Noel. We played everything. We played Oklahoma and Carousel and Showboat and everything. The only song that we played of his was the same song that we repeated over and over again at Gene's house, so it's fair to say that it probably was his favorite song. Also, with some people, I have heard it said that it kind of expresses his philosophy. The song was "If Love Were All" from Bitter Sweet.

Mr. Kanter:
Ah, well. Inasmuch as I would not ask you to sing for us –

Mr. Chaplin:
What a good idea! (Laughter)

Mr. Kanter:

Let's ask one of Mr. Coward's more favorite singers and a lady who certainly is a versatile performer, who can sing the hell out of this or any song. Ladies and Gentlemen, please welcome Miss Mary McCarty. (Applause)

Mr. Chaplin:

Marvellous! [If Love Were All' is sung by Miss McCarty.] (Applause)

Mr. Kanter:

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, little Christmas friend. You've done the master proud. And before we see him again, on our screen, I'd like Dr. Hubbard to come on stage, please, because Graham Payn is going to join me again for what may be a unique gesture at these annual affairs, but a gesture which is characteristically thoughtful and generous of both Graham and his friend, Noel.

I was touched when he told me that he was certain Sir Noel would have enjoyed and appreciated this evening, and to express his own gratitude to all of us who have come together to remember him, Graham has a presentation to make to the University. It's an oil painting of a Jamaican scene done by Coward's own hand, from Graham's personal collection. Will the University educator and the Coward student please come up? (Applause) Graham, would you show us the picture? (Applause) May I read the plaque - may I read what it says?

Mr. Payn:

Please.

Mr. Kanter:

"Jamaican Scene by Noel Coward, presented in 1980 to University of Southern California by Graham Payn." (Applause)

Dr. Hubbard:

Graham, this is certainly an act of uncommon kindness!

Mr. Payne:

No, no.

Dr. Hubbard:

We will certainly display it in a place of honor. I hope it's one of your favorites, because that will mean that you'll come back to see us often.

Mr. Payn:

Well, it was one of his favorites. Thank you. (Applause)

Dr. Hubbard:

You're very kind. (Applause) While I have the mike, let me thank you and all of your colleagues for an uncommon evening. (Applause)

Mr. Kanter:

Then you, sir. Now, we're coming into the home stretch, and here's another piece of film that gives us the pleasure of sitting again in the presence of the man all of you have remembered so vividly, amusingly and tenderly this evening. Here again is the author of this quite revealing little lyric: "We're six dirty little choir boys with really frightful minds. We scream and shout and run about and pinch our friends' behinds. Nobody could admire boys with dirty hands and knees, but the countryside rejoices at our sweet soprano voices, and so we do what we damn well please!" (Laughter) The film, please, and I warn you, Ladies and Gentlemen, you're going to have to listen awfully fast!

[Film of Noel Coward singing "Mad Dogs and Englishman"] (Applause)

[Choir, Patricia Morison and Ron Husmann sing: "Zigeuner", "Dance Little Lady", "I'll See You Again"]

Mr. Kanter:

We thank the friends of Noel Coward. We thank the USC Chamber Singers, Miss Morison and Mr. Husmann, and we thank all of you, the Friends of the USC Libraries, but most of all, we thank Sir Noel Coward for having given us so much to remember. This was the last poem he wrote, and it seems a fitting way to end our evening.

When I have fears, as Keats had fears,
Of the moment I'll cease to be,
I console myself with vanished years,
Remembered laughter, remembered tears
And the peace of the changing sea.
When I feel sad, as Keats felt sad,
That my life is so nearly done,
It gives me comfort to dwell upon
Remembered friends who are dead and gone
And the jokes we had, and the fun.
How happy they are, I cannot know,
But happy am I who loved them so!
[Miss Morison, Mr* Husmann and the choir singing "I'll See You Again".] (Applause)