

DAME EDNA EVERAGE

Dame Edna Everage is probably the most popular and gifted woman in the world today. Housewife, investigative journalist, social anthropologist, talk show host, swami, children's book illustrator, megastar, spin doctor and icon. With Dame Judith Anderson, Zoë Caldwell and Nicole Kidman, she is one of a remarkable succession of female stars to emerge from Australia. During the 1970s Dame Edna's success in Australia was repeated in Britain with London stage shows including Housewife Superstar and A Night with Dame Edna.

Subsequently, she has performed at London's Royal Albert Hall and at the prestigious Theatre Royal Drury Lane and the Theatre Royal Haymarket. Television credits include two critically acclaimed UK specials, "An Audience with Dame Edna" and "Another Audience with Dame Edna." She has also hosted two series of her own innovative chat show, "The Dame Edna Experience," where her past guests have included Jane Fonda, Charlton Heston, Liza Minnelli, Sean Connery, and Mel Gibson.

Most recently, Dame Edna: The Royal Tour received a Special Tony Award for Live Theatrical Event. Outer Critics Circle have also bestowed a Special Achievement Award. Dame Edna has also recorded TV specials, the last of which, "A Night on Mount Edna," won the foremost European TV Entertainment Award, the Golden Rose of Montreux in 1991.

Edna's other notable awards include first prize at the San Francisco International Film Festival, a Gold Award at the New York Film and TV Festival, and a British Academy Award Nomination for "The Dame Edna Experience." Her books include Dame Edna's Coffee Table Book, Dame Edna's Bedside Companion, and her seminal autobiography, My Gorgeous Life, which is translated into many languages and which has, on Government orders, been placed in hotel bedrooms throughout Britain and Australia. Possibly Jewish, Dame Edna is a widow, with three grown children.

She spends her time visiting world leaders and jet-setting between her homes in Malibu, London, Melbourne, Switzerland and Martha's Vineyard. She is the Founder & Governor of "Friends of the Prostate" and the creator of the World Prostate Olympics. She is a noted collector of Tiffany windows and Tamara de Lempicka paintings. Her recent play, Chagall at the Chock Full o' Nuts, in which Chagall, Tom Stoppard and Buddy Holly play metaphysical Scrabble, has been hailed by critics as a moving testament to her intellectual range and her language skills. Her hobbies are counseling Royalty, addressing gender issues, redefining cultural strategies and posing for photographs with refugees.

BARRY HUMPHRIES (Devised and Written by)

Dr. Humphries is not only a successful character actor in Europe and Australia, but also one of Australia's best-loved landscape painters. His pictures are in innumerable private and public collections, both in his homeland and abroad. He was educated at the University of Melbourne, where he studied law, philosophy, and fine arts. It was at the University of Melbourne where he held his first Dada exhibitions - experiments in anarchy and visual satire.

These have become a part of Australian folklore. After writing and performing songs and sketches in University revues, Humphries joined the newly formed Melbourne Theatre Company. In 1956, he created the character of Mrs. Everage, a Melbourne housewife who has subsequently become internationally celebrated, and has evolved into the hugely popular Dame Edna. In Sydney in the late '50s, Humphries joined the Philip Street Revue Theatre, Australia's first home for intimate revue and satirical comedy. After a long season in which he developed his newly invented characters, Humphries appeared as Estragon in Waiting for Godot.

This production marked Australia's first ever production of a Samuel Beckett play. In 1959, Humphries sailed to Venice. During the '60s in London, Barry Humphries appeared in numerous West End productions. Most notable were the musicals *Oliver!* and *Maggie May* by Lionel Bart, and stage/radio productions by his friend Spike Milligan, in particular *The Bed Sitting Room*. He also worked in productions with Joan Littlewood at Stratford East, and played Long John Silver at the Mermaid Theatre. In 1967 he starred as Fagin in the Piccadilly Theatre's revival of *Oliver!*, Phil Collins played *The Artful Dodger* in this production. Between West End engagements he regularly returned to Australia with a new one-man show, presenting a wide range of characters, including one female character, Edna, whose popularity was fast developing. In the early 1970s, with his friend, director Bruce Beresford (*Driving Miss Daisy*), Humphries brought to the cinema the character of Barry Mackenzie, a character he had invented in the Sixties in a cult comic strip he wrote for Peter Cook's satirical magazine *Private Eye*.

By the mid-70s Humphries was no longer playing character roles in British films, plays and television shows, but starring in his own one-man show at the Apollo Theatre in London. *Housewife Superstar!*, dominated by Dame Edna, took London by storm. He has been presenting his own shows in the West End ever since, culminating in *Edna, The Spectacle* at the Theatre Royal Haymarket, arguably the most beautiful theatre in Europe.

In 1979, Humphries won the Society of West End Theatres Award for *A Night with Dame Edna* at the Piccadilly Theatre. Since then, he has collected innumerable honors for stage and television work, including the Rose d'Orde Montreux in 1991 for his television show, "*A Night on Mount Edna*," and a Sir Peter Ustinov Endowment, for his life work as an entertainer, at the Banff Television Festival in 1997. He has toured in Germany, Scandinavia, the Netherlands, and in the Far and Middle East, and recorded Dame Edna television specials for the NBC and Fox networks. Dame Edna has appeared at least twice on the "*Tonight Show with Jay Leno*," and did the New Year's Eve countdown in Times Square for this program a few years ago.

Her recent London production attracted many visitors from Canada and the USA, and Dame Edna felt the time was ripe for a state visit to this intriguing and greatly misunderstood continent. Dr. Humphries is the author of several books, novels, autobiographies, poetry and plays.

His autobiography *More, Please* won the J.R. Ackerley prize for biography in 1993, and he is the subject of two critical and biographical studies: *The Real Barry Humphries* by Peter Coleman, and *Dame Edna Everage and the Rise of Western Civilization* by John Lahr. He was given the Order of Australia in 1982, and was endowed with an Honorary Doctorate of Griffith University (Australia) in 1994. He is married to Lizzie Spender, the daughter of British poet Sir Stephen Spender, and has two sons and two daughters.

THE PRODUCERS

Leonard Soloway (Producer, General Management)

Producing credits include *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, *Gross Indecency*, *As Bees in Honey Drown*, *The Shadow Box* (Tony Award, Pulitzer Prize), Neil Simon's *Laughter on the 23rd Floor*, *Waiting in the Wings* and the critically acclaimed production of *Party*. Mr. Soloway has served as the General Manager for over 200 Broadway productions and is an owner of the Actors' Playhouse, Playhouse 91 and the Gramercy Theatre on 23rd Street.

Chase Mishkin (Producer)

In her early career, she produced regional theatre, wrote for television, produced and/or co-produced short subjects and films, including Jean Genet's *Deathwatch*, and served on President Carter's Advisory Committee on the Arts. Recent productions, Broadway: *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* (winner four Tony Awards, Best Play, Drama Desk Award, Best Play Outer Critics Circle Award, Time Magazine number one Play of '98); *The Apple Doesn't Fall*, *The Herbal Bed* and *Waiting in the Wings*. Off-Broadway: *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde* (winner Best Play both Lucille Lortel and Outer Critics Circle

Awards); As Bees in Honey Drown (Josh Gassnar Playwriting Award); Collected Stories (Starring Uta Hagan); and James Naughton: Street of Dreams (winner MAC award). London (West End): The Invention of Love (by Tom Stoppard) (winner Best Play, '98 Evening Standard Awards), Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde. In addition, Chase is an owner of the Gramercy Theatre on 23rd Street.

Steven M. Levy (Producer, General Management)
Broadway: The Lonesome West (Tony nominated for Best Play), The Beauty Queen of Leenane (four Tony awards), and Waiting in the Wings. West End: Gross Indecency, Tom Stoppard's The Invention of Love and The Boys in the Band. Off-Broadway: Things You Shouldn't Say Past Midnight, Collected Stories (starring Uta Hagen), As Bees in Honey Drown, Never the Sinner, The Boys in the Band, June Moon, Party (NY, L.A., West End) and Dame Edna: The Royal Tour (San Francisco). Management credits: Gross Indecency, Power Plays (starring Alan Arkin & Elaine May) Dinah Was, Grace and Glorie (starring Estelle Parsons), Brian Friel's Molly Sweeney (starring Jason Robards), Neil Simon's London Suite and A Bronx Tale. Mr. Levy is also an owner of the Actors' Playhouse, Playhouse 91 and the Gramercy Theatre.

THE CREATIVES

Kenneth Foy (Scenic Designer)
Kenneth designed the Houston Grand Opera's acclaimed multimedia production of Carmen, Porgy and Bess, which most recently played Milan's venerable La Scala. He designed the national touring production of the Harold Arlen revue, Sweet and Hot, Celebrate Broadway for the League of American Theatre and Producers Inc., the Goodspeed Opera House productions of Can-Can; Oh Kay!; Pal Joey; and the new musicals Galileo and Both Barrels. He designed Mike, a musical about Mike Todd, The Rise of David Levinsky, and the premiere of Thomas Passatieri's The Three Sisters. He has provided sets for the Radio City Music Hall, the American Opera Center production of Handel's Xerxes and productions for the Juilliard Theatre Center, Manhattan Theatre Club, Wolf Trap, Long Wharf, Hartford Stage Company, Old Globe

Theatre and the Chicago Lyric, and Los Angeles Opera companies. Foy's credits include Broadway productions of *Candida* starring Joanne Woodward; *Macbeth* with Nicol Williamson; the David Merrick production of *Oh, Kay!*; the 20th anniversary production of *Annie*; *An Evening with Jerry Herman*; and the Tony Award-winning production of *Gypsy* directed by Arthur Laurents. Mr. Foy was represented in London with the West End production of *Annie*; *A Little Night Music* and *Madame Butterfly* for Houston Grand Opera. He most recently designed the new rock & roll production of *Romeo & Juliet* written and directed by Terrance Mann and was the art director for the Pulitzer documentary "Moment of Impact!"

Stephen Adnitt (Costume Designer)

Studied design at the Royal College of Art in the early '70s and spent a number of years working as a fashion designer both in the United Kingdom and overseas. He then moved to work in entertainment, situation comedies, and plays, both modern and period. Programs included *Royal Variety Performances*, *Live from Her Majesty's*, *Night of a Hundred Stars*, *The Brian Conley Shows*, *Blind Date* and *Gladiators*. He has had a long working relationship with Cilia Black, designing many costumes for both television and stage. In 1986, he worked with Jane Torvill and Christopher Dean, designing costumes for their ice ballet *Fire and Ice*, winner of the Silver Rose of Montreaux festival award. He continued to work with them, designing costumes for their ice shows and competitions.

Jason Kantrowitz (Lighting Designer)

Broadway: *Tru*, *Starmites*, *Radio City Music Hall's Christmas Spectacular*. National tour: *Dame Edna: The Royal Tour* (San Francisco), Andrew Lloyd Webber's *The Phantom of the Opera* (Associate Designer for Los Angeles, San Francisco, national tour), the figure skating show *Stars on Ice*. Off-broadway: *A Good Swift Kick*, *Charlotte Sweet*, *Andrew After Dark*. Theme park attractions: *Fantasmic!* (Disneyland), *Animazement* (Disneyland), *Pandemonium Cartoon Circus* (Universal's Islands of Adventure), *Journey to Atlantis* watercoaster ride (Sea World Orlando). Architectural lighting for themed restaurants, nightclubs, aquariums, and retail stores in New York, Los Angeles,

Washington, Orlando, Tokyo, Sapporo, Guam and Bangkok.
Creative Producer of live special events for Pepsi Cola, Taco Bell,
Sega Genesis and Maryland Public Television.

Peter J. Fitzgerald (Sound Designer)

Recent design includes Things You Shouldn't Say Past Midnight.
Mr. Fitzgerald's designs introduced digital and automated sound
systems to the legitimate theatre. He has designed the sound for
the Broadway productions of The Beauty Queen of Leenane, Paul
Simon's The Capeman, Victor/Victoria with Julie Andrews, City of
Angels, La Cage aux Folles, Fiddler on the Roof, Gypsy, M
Butterfly, The Threepenny Opera with Sting, Teddy and Alice,
Rags, The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas and Always Patsy Cline.
He is President of Sound Associates, Inc. New York.