

Former Festival Actor Is Lawyer In Broadway Production 'Saratoga'

By WILLIAM WOLF

New York—Appearing in a Broadway musical isn't really so different from doing Shakespeare, says Richard Graham, veteran actor at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland.

Graham, who has spent many years of his life performing all 37 works of the Bard, is now getting his first crack at a Broadway musical comedy. He plays the featured role of a villainous lawyer in the current "Saratoga," with Howard Keel and Carol Lawrence.

"You might say I'm a kind of a New Orleans, Philadelphia lawyer," Graham quipped, commenting on his role as the conniving attorney in old New Orleans who plots to complicate life for the heroine.

Comparing his Shakespearean acting with his current work, Graham said: "There is really not a great deal of difference in approach. You're playing in a big theater. Your characterizations are not very deeply written. You have a presentational style of working to your audience. It is the same kind of situation we have on the stage at Ashland."

Acting Job

Graham's role in "Saratoga" is strictly an acting job. He doesn't do any singing, except offstage "where nobody can see me," when the cast vocalizes to back up some of the chorus on stage. "Not singing is just as well," he said emphatically. "I used to sing in church choir in Ashland, but had the courage

because I was singing along with others."

Offstage, Graham still wears his hair long, slanted sideburns which he had to grow for the show, and aside from his impeccable up-to-date suit, he looks as if he might have stepped out of the era depicted in the musical. "I notice people looking at me, and I expect someone to ask at any time, 'What kind of a beatnik is that?,' he said. "Once when we were doing the show in Philadelphia a boy passed me, nudged his friend, and exclaimed, 'Elvis!'"

The chance to get into "Saratoga" came when Graham was performing in New York's famous free Shakespeare theatre in Central Park. The theater was a subject of much controversy last summer, when public opinion compelled the park commissioner to reverse a decision barring the Shakespeare productions because of the cost to the city.

Similar Production

"Although the stage we used in Central Park was different, the style and the production is very similar to that we have done in Ashland," Graham said. He kept coming back to how high a calibre of work was done at the Oregon Festival.

"When I first came to Ashland in 1948," he said, "I fell in love with the festival. I really had been planning to go to the Stratford festival in England, but I saw that the

Family Dinner Honors Mayor

Mrs. Maude Snider was hostess for a family dinner January 27 which celebrated the birthday anniversary of her son, Mayor John Snider. Guests were Mayor and Mrs. Snider and their three children; the mayor's sister and brother-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. E. H. Greenman and three children and Mr. and Mrs. Carl Schmidt. The event was held at Mrs. Snider's home, 406 Barnes avenue.

Festival in Oregon was really on the upgrade, and I got very excited about it and kept going back."

One problem a Shakespearean actor does not have is wondering whether or not his part will be cut from the script by the time the show opens.

"This is a trap you have to watch for when you go into a musical," he said. "In Shakespeare, particularly in Ashland, we use complete scripts, and in any event, you know just what your part will be. But the first thing you have to look for with a Broadway show is whether the part you have to do is essential to the plot. Otherwise, it is likely to be written out while the show is in the try-out stage."

Part Expanded

In Graham's case, his part in "Saratoga" was not cut, but expanded as a result of changes made on the road. He reports that he is enjoying doing the show, and the cast does not seem upset that the production was not greeted with great enthusiasm by the critics.

"The audiences love the show. The women especially like it, particularly the beautiful costumes and gorgeous sets. I think that the performers are giving a better show than ever, as if to demonstrate that the critics were wrong." The large advance sale of tickets for "Saratoga" assured a reasonable run even before the production opened.

This is the first time Graham has returned to Broadway since 1936, when he appeared in "St. Joan" with Katherine Cornell, Maurice Evans, Ralph Richardson and Tyrone Power. This was shortly after his first professional encounter with performing Shakespeare in "Romeo and Juliet," also starring Miss Cornell.

Telephone Call
"I was in my room at 7 p.m. when I got the telephone message and learned that I was wanted to step into a walk on the part that very night," he recounted. "I was in my pants and slippers, and I scooped up the rest of my clothes in one arm, my make-up kit in the other, rushed outside still stripped to the waist, and rode that way in a taxi to the Martin Beck theater."

Born in Detroit, Graham lived in many parts of the United States and also in Europe by the time he was nine. The family settled in Princeton, N.J., where he subsequently attended Princeton university, performed in theater productions, and was bitten with the acting bug. During a summer trip to Canada, he met Rowland Stebbins, who presented the very successful "Green Pastures," and asked Stebbins' advice.

The advice was to stay out of the theater because it is a precarious type of career. However, when Stebbins saw the determination of the aspiring actor, he helped him get a role in "The Pursuit of Happiness," in which Graham made his Broadway debut.

Stock Companies
In the years since he last appeared on Broadway, Graham acted in stock companies in many parts of the United States, appeared with minor roles in a number of movies, some of which he occasionally catches on television, served with the Army Signal Corps during the war, and then participated in the Oregon Shakespeare Festival for 11 years.

He came to New York two years ago with his wife, the former Jane Schnitter, whom he met when she managed the box office at the Ashland festival. They considered themselves "very lucky" to find immediately on coming to New York, a comfortable apartment, where they live with Mrs. Graham's two children by previous marriage, Martha, age 9, and Gretchen, 13.

Dinner Planned In Jacksonville

Jacksonville — Attending the monthly potluck dinner to be held by the Odd Fellows and Rebekah lodges here on February 5 will be Stanley Oldham, deputy grand master of Lake Grove, Ore., and Ellsworth Robinson, Central Point, grand warden. Purpose of the visit is to discuss plans for the annual historical trek, which will be held Saturday, April 23.

Also expected are members of Etna Rebekah and Golden Rule Odd Fellows lodge of Grants Pass. They will furnish entertainment. Moving pictures of lodge activities taken by a Jacksonville member will be shown.

The meeting will be held as usual at the Odd Fellows dining room at 6:30 p.m. Ruth Rebekah club met at the home of Mrs. Albert Hackert January 26 with Mrs. Irvin Boyd assisting. A potluck luncheon was served.



Richard Graham, former actor at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival at Ashland, way musical "Saratoga" with leading lady Carol Lawrence. The production opened is shown in a scene from the current Broadway production, December 7 at the Winter Garden theater.

Though in New York, Graham's thoughts frequently return to Ashland, as exemplified by a recent incident which he described: "I used to be a lay reader at the Trinity Episcopal church in Ashland. Recently, I read for the first time at the Church of the Ascension in New York. It was a coincidence that what I read was exactly what I had been chosen to read the first time at Trinity church in Ashland."

Grandmothers Donate to Fund

Members of the Rogue chapter, Grandmothers Clubs of America, voted to donate to the Parkinson's disease fund during a meeting January 25. Forty-four members attended; dessert was served.

Mrs. Fred Ryde, president, conducted the meeting and Mrs. P. M. Aldredge furnished piano music. Mrs. Jennie Hutchinson, chaplain, conducted the prayer service. A report was made on community club awards. The Rogue chapter won high point and \$435. Mrs. Harry L. Cole conducted games. Prizes were won by Mrs. Elsa Walker, Mrs. Orpha Wendell and Mrs. David N. Fraysher.

Meetings Announced For Degree of Honor

Degree of Honor Protective Association will hold an executive meeting Monday, February 1 at 11:45 a.m. at the home of Mrs. Frank Gleaves, 1170 West McAndrews road.

Degree of Honor Past presidents will hold a revelation party Tuesday, February 2 at 8 p.m., in the home of Miss Adabee Sellar, 1132 West Main street.

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