

new books

"FUNNY
YOU DON'T
LOOK
LIKE A
GRANDMOTHER"

Based on Lois Wyse's New York Times #1 Bestseller

A Musical Revue by
Lois Wyse
Sheilah Rae Robert Waldman

"Witty, often howlingly funny,
but always heartwarming..."
Chapel Hill News, Chapel Hill, NC

"...handsome as a Tiffany window
and as nimble as the feet of Fred
Astaire... It has a score that's
gutsy and gorgeous..."
The News and Observer, Raleigh, NC

**GRANDMA finishes five month run
at Cumberland County Playhouse**

"...tender, often touching,
sometimes biting... there's rare
wisdom for viewers of any age..."
Crossville Chronicle, Crossville, TN

"...presents older women as people of
wit, intelligence, stamina and insight."
Palm Beach Daily News, Palm Beach, FL

This humorous, heartwarming revue looks at modern grandmothers in a whole new light. *Funny, You Don't Look Like a Grandmother* celebrates grandma with skits and songs about everything from her availability as baby sitter, her job, her friends, her activities, her new interest in shopping, but most of all, her relationship to that incredible new baby and its parents.

**"The show's specialty is
laughter... Musically the show is
brash and happy... a standing
ovation at the close."**

Flexible cast; minimum: 4 Women, 2 Men
(Cast could be part of band)
Orchestrations: piano/synthesizer or up to 8 pieces

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Turning Points

New books gauge the flux of art and life



**THE PLAY GOES ON:
A MEMOIR**
by Neil Simon,
Simon & Schuster,
New York.

349 pp, \$27 cloth.

"EACH PLAY WAS
the beginning of a new

life for me," Neil Simon observes of the scripts that poured out of him in the 1970s. He shares many of these new beginnings with the reader in his endearing memoir *The Play Goes On*, a modest and drolly written account of dating, marriage, domesticity and the ups and downs of writing for stage and screen. The book takes up where Simon's 1996 *Rewrites* left off, with the death of his wife Joan in 1973. During the ensuing dark night of his soul, Simon seeks comfort in work and—with much hesitation—in romance, and the book covers such episodes as his marriage to Marsha Mason, his uncredited script repairs on *A Chorus Line*, the filming of *Murder by Death* and his decision to revise *The Odd Couple* for female leads. In one particularly entertaining section, he flashes back to his Army days, the inspiration for *Biloxi Blues*.

With its low-key wit, insight into the creative process, and candid, behind-the-scenes glimpses of show-business, *The Play Goes On* may even win over non-Simon fans.

—Celia Wren



HOTEL LACHAPELLE
photographs by David
LaChapelle,
Bullfinch Press
Callaway, New York.
168 pp, \$60 cloth.

F A S H I O N
photographer David
LaChapelle, described by Richard Avedon as "the genre's Magritte," creates images drenched in drama. In *Hotel LaChapelle*, a boxed volume of his

magazine photographs, LaChapelle peels away the surface of fashion and celebrity, revealing Technicolor tales of excess and decadence.

Playing on the innate theatricality of his subjects, LaChapelle injects a sense of humor and visual irony to each image he makes. Brash, highly stylized stills are jammed with details from the cute to the truly bizarre. In one picture, we see British fashion designer Alexander McQueen wearing a ball gown, with a flaming torch in hand; behind him, an ancient English castle billows in flames. Entitled *Burning Down the House*, the image makes a witty comment on McQueen's shaking up the old tenets of Paris couture. Other pictures in the collection are less nuanced and operate purely on shock value. In *Say It with Diamonds*, LaChapelle portrays a model snorting diamonds in place of cocaine; in *Catwalk Curtain Call*, a naked Gigi struts onto the stage, proudly displaying her distinctively unwaif-like figure.

It's not high art, but LaChapelle brings humor and self-mocking to a world that too often glosses over the cracks.

—Shazia Ahmad



**THE THEATER AND
CINEMA OF BUSTER
KEATON**
by Robert Knopf,
Princeton University
Press, Princeton.
217 pp, \$39.50
cloth/\$14.95 paper.

LIKE ALL TOO MANY ICONIC American originals, Buster Keaton got famous fast, crammed his brilliance into a few scintillating years, and then tumbled as suddenly into the twilight world of unemployed esteem. From *The General* to *Sherlock Jr.*, all the films that set his reputation as one of the greatest, most innovative of film comedians were made in the space of

less than a decade. His only real coeval competition was Charlie Chaplin, whose star, so bright in life despite all the scandals, has only fallen in recent years as Keaton's has reignited. Both men came out of the rough-and-tumble of vaudeville, but Keaton used the technical and spectacle possibilities of film to create a brilliant new comedic universe. He uncovered the humorous possibilities of multiple exposures, found comedy in dissolves and yet knew well enough, from his vaudeville childhood, when to use a long shot and let it run on to show the full, daring acrobatics of a stunt. (Keaton's nickname, "Buster," was slang for an artful pratfall.) As he once observed, "Tragedy is a close-up, and comedy a long shot."

In his readable study, Robert Knopf, a professor of theatre at the University of Michigan, argues that his vaudeville background provides the key to Keaton's filmmaking, especially its timing and structure and its scanting of narrative in favor of a constant comic escalation. Many critics have branded Keaton's films as mere collections of gags, but Knopf calls for a new critical evaluation, noting, for example, the strong surrealist tenor of Keaton's comedy.

Haring off after interesting anecdotes and quickie analysis, Knopf's argument, as loosely structured as his subject's films, will intrigue both scholars and Keaton fans.

—William Chettle

**THE SPECTATOR
STUDS TERKEL**



THE SPECTATOR
by Studs Terkel,
introduction
by Gary Wills,
The New Press,
New York.

357 pp, \$26.95 cloth.

STUD TERKEL'S interest in sociopolitical topics is well documented, but in his latest volume, *The Spectator*, the Chicago-based writer and interviewer ventures into a different realm, introducing us to kingpins of the entertainment world from the last 50 years. An anthology of Terkel's

radio dialogues with people like Lillian Gish, Federico Fellini, Alan Schneider and Uta Hagen, to name a few, the book reflects the tapestry of motivations and ideologies that have guided a half-century of filmmaking and theatre. Terkel's extensive knowledge of drama and cinema, and his abiding interest in social commentary, help him to zoom in on his subjects' values, artistic choices and *raison d'être*s. Lillian Gish summarizes one overarching theme when she says, "We worked for a medium we believed in. A lot of us took personal responsibility for what we said in the films...It weighed heavily on our conscience."

Though some of the individual interviews seem terse and fragmented, the collection as a whole offers valuable insights into the role of the stage and screen artist in the modern era.

—Jennifer Sokolov

**PROP THTR is looking
for new plays...**

Prop Thtr and The National New Plays Network Announce Open Submissions for NEW PLAY 2000, THE THIRD ANNUAL NATIONAL NEW PLAYS FESTIVAL AND WORKSHOP — May 3 through August 15, 2000 in Chicago

PARTICIPANTS INCLUDE: **Steppenwolf**, Chicago; **Drama Dept.**, N.Y.C.; **Actor's Gang**, L.A.; **InterAct**, Philadelphia; **Woolly Mammoth**, Washington, D.C. and many others.

HOSTS INCLUDE: Chicago Dept. of Cultural Affairs, Mayor's Office of Special Events, The League of Chicago Theatres, The Field Museum, Mercury Theater, Latino Chicago and Curious Theatre Branch and others.

If you are interested in submitting a play please call, write, fax or e-mail for complete submission guidelines—PLEASE do not send a play without an application! If selected you receive a stipend plus expenses, and your play will receive a staged reading with dramaturgical support as part of the National Festival.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: **January 15, 2000**



The Third Annual National New Play Festival and Workshop is a program of the Prop Thtr Group.

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www.newplaynetwork.com