



The Journal of
The American Academy of Dramatic Arts

Fall 2010



**Dennis Haysbert (1977)
Makes His
Broadway Debut**

Celebrating in

Hollywood

On July 25th, the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce sponsored a day-long celebration saluting the fiftieth anniversary of the Hollywood Walk of Fame. The festivities included open houses, tours, live performances, movie screenings and a peek into iconic production centers that are rarely open to the public. AADA

played its role in the celebration by producing an original musical revue, *Music of the Stars*, featuring songs made famous by Academy Walk of Fame stars and performed by an ensemble of AADA students and alumni. The show was written and directed by Perry Hart, choreographed by Theresa Hayes, and performed at the Ricardo Montalban Theatre in Hollywood.

Alumni of the American Academy of Dramatic Arts are represented on the Hollywood Walk of Fame with more than thirty stars, including Lauren Bacall, Cecil B. DeMille, Kirk Douglas, Nina Foch, Frank Morgan, Pat O'Brien, Don Rickles, Rosalind Russell, Spencer Tracy and Claire Trevor.



& In New York...

The city of New York honored the Academy on the occasion of our 125th anniversary with the lighting of the Empire State Building for three consecutive nights in the Academy's colors. Mayor Bloomberg proclaimed October 3, 2009 *American Academy of Dramatic Arts Day* and the proclamation was read at the lighting ceremony, at which alumna Lauren Bacall did the honor of throwing the switch on this marvelous occasion. Parties were held for the Academy communities on both campuses.



Ms. Bacall throws the switch lighting the Empire State Building in the Academy's colors.

Lauren Elder



“The Academy was my first real taste of acting class”

The Journal had the opportunity to catch up with Academy grad **Lauren Elder (1998)** who was in New York playing a tribe member in the Broadway revival of *Hair*. We got to know Lauren and find out what it was like to make her Broadway debut in this seminal rock musical and how her Academy training helped her to land this role.

“My entire life I have wanted to do musical theatre and my life’s goal was to be in a Broadway musical,” she enthused. “I always wanted to sing and dance and I did a lot of musical theatre before I came to the Academy, but I didn’t have any real training. The Academy was my first real taste of acting class, and I didn’t know what the heck I was doing. One of the things I remember from Betty Karlen’s class was ‘do not go to the traumatic.’ I still use that.” [Ms. Karlen’s teaching refers to not using something, for emotional obligations, in a given scene that was traumatic in your life.] “I also made a lot of great friends in that class who are still my friends today.”

In September of 2007, Elder went on an open call for what was supposed to be a three-night concert of the musical *Hair*, to be performed in Central Park’s Delacorte

Theater. “I was going to take two weeks off from waiting tables,” she laughed. Three years later the show and Elder made their way from Central Park to Broadway’s Al Hirschfeld Theatre and to London’s West End.

“I never, ever, ever expected this. Anna Wintour’s assistant saw the show, and we ended up in *Vogue* and performing at the Costume Institute Gala. We’ve been on David Letterman, Carson Daly and Conan O’Brien.” But despite all the hoopla surrounding the production, Elder maintains, “Central Park was the most amazing experience; it was just incredible performing under the stars. There’s a moment in the show where we say, ‘look at the moon,’ and everyone literally looked at the moon.”

In spite of *Hair* being an iconic musical, Elder concedes, “I knew *Let the Sunshine In*, but other than that I didn’t know anything about the show. My first audition was an open call with hundreds of other actors. Then they brought us back in, and I had to learn a song from the production. We auditioned in groups and on our own; it was a very nice audition experience. Mine was a short audition process, because it was just for the concert; it wasn’t yet a Broadway show.”

When the production moved from Central Park to Broadway, “We talked about the transfer in our rehearsal process. We thought maybe the hippies leave the park and become squatters in the theatre. We ran with that idea and worked that into our characters. We all had to come in and do character presentations with song and dance, and we had to talk about what our characters had done to the theatre to make it their own.”

When asked if The Tribe members really are as close as they seem on stage, Elder responded, “We are like a family, all of us. For instance, we all went to DC to march for marriage equality. That was something we wanted to do together, not something we had to do. It’s really amazing - all the love that’s there.”

*“Staying true to the moment,
the moment is everything.”*

Meet the New Guy...



Michael Mosley

When ABC television re-imagined the popular sitcom *Scrubs* last year, they changed locations and added new characters including Drew Suffin, played by AADA alumnus **Michael Mosley (2000)**. We caught up with Mosley and asked him what it was like to be the new guy. “Joining *Scrubs* was amazing. Everyone was very accepting with the appropriate amount of hazing. We laughed all day.”

In addition to this role, Mosley recently shot an indie film in Crawford, Texas, entitled *Restive*. “I’m extremely proud of it, and can’t wait to see a cut. It’s about a woman and her son who escape into the woods after attempting to poison her husband. AADA alum Ivan Sandomire (2000) and I play the husband’s friends who are tapped to chase her down. The script was amazingly written, reading like a novel, and we shot on the RED HD camera so the picture quality is amazing.”

In addition to having many television and film roles, such as the fireman hosing down Uma Thurman in *The Accidental Husband* on his resume, Mosley is no stranger to the theatre. Last year he played Adam in *Back, Back, Back* Off-Broadway at New York’s City Centers Stage II and earlier this year he played the Gentleman Caller in the Roundabout Theatre’s Off-Broadway production of *The Glass Menagerie*. “I like theatre and film equally. I need a dose of one or the other if I’m starved of either. Theatre is more physical to me. It’s movement and shape and energy. There are certain rules in theatre (turn down stage, project, etc.) that are not necessary in film. In theatre one gets to live a character’s whole evening, or summer, or life. It can be very cathartic. If theatre is a marathon, film is a sprint. You capture moments. And, if you forget about

Roundabout Theatre Company's
The Glass Menagerie
Michael Mosley and Keira Keeley



the camera, lights, makeup and hair people scurrying around dabbing your forehead, then you open yourself to extremely personal and fulfilling moments. The kind of thing you don't get to see from the back row at Lincoln Center."

"On *Scrubs* we didn't get a lot of information up front. Often we would get the scripts the day before we shot. Sometimes Bill Lawrence, the creator, came on set during rehearsal and changed the whole scene. It's incredibly exciting. It keeps you on your toes. Unlike the theatre where the play is gospel, so much of television work is egalitarian. Everyone is committed to getting it right, and if that means it's something slightly different than what's on the page, so be it."

When recalling his student days at AADA, Mosley expressed, "The Academy taught me a lot, like staying true to the moment; the moment is everything. Don't show up with an idea and lock yourself into that because you're denying yourself and your audience half of the conversation. There are wonderful little miracles that spring up between two actors whose minds are wide open. Let that stuff in, and when it's done, forget it, do something else. There is an endless plethora of ways any one line can be said. The script is a fraction of the story."

"Believe it or not one of my favorite roles, to this day, was playing Prior Walter in *Angels in America* my company year at AADA. So much of professional life can be creatively unfulfilling. When starting out, you rarely get to sink your teeth into roles as well constructed and proven as the ones allocated at school. A lot of the plays and films you get when you're starting out are from first time writers and directors and often have problems. The role of Prior Walter was an amazing flurry of valor and fear and sarcasm. To face one's death and insanity, alone and

outcast, is a strange and vulnerable walk. I still think of all the things I would have done differently, but it was rewarding just the same. I hope students don't find it depressing that I've been in the business for ten years and my favorite role is still something I played at AADA. I just mean for them to chew up the parts they are getting now."

But above all, acting is still a business, and Mosley explained, "You have to be prepared to hustle. There are a lot of people out there who want that gig just as badly as you do. You have to stay sharp, and do more work than the next guy. There were a lot of teachers at the Academy who expected a lot out of us. We had to come to class prepared and ready to work. No excuses. I feel like that's the way it is in the business. You never get a second chance to make a first impression."

With demands on his career, Mosley finds encouragement from his wife, actress Anna Camp, who starred opposite Daniel Radcliffe in Broadway's *Equus*. "It's wonderful to have that kind of support and inherent understanding of what the other one may be going through. The key is to not get competitive with each other."

"Enjoy what you do," he advises. "There are many problems in the world but being a hustling actor is not one of them. Learn to love your life in the arts and learn to love the chase, because the chase is so much a part of it. You will bomb a lot of auditions, and you will nail a lot, and it may still not be what they're looking for," Mosley cautions. "Keep an even demeanor whether you win or lose. Never walk into a room thinking a part is going to change your life. Even when it does, it doesn't. Live life, fall in love, get dumped. Feel every possible emotion and savor all of it. It is all fodder for one of the many roles you were born to play."

Dennis Haysbert



“What I understood very quickly is that this is not a stage, but a courtroom, and I am being examined and cross-examined by the audience every night.”

Academy alumnus, **Dennis Haysbert (1977)**, who was in New York making his Broadway debut in David Mamet’s *Race*, graciously took time one evening before a performance to sit in the Barrymore Theatre and talk with the Journal. Haysbert, who has starred in television’s *The Unit* and *24* and in such feature films as *Far From Heaven* and *Jarhead*, has earned nominations for the Golden Globe and the Image Award. He talked about what it’s like to perform on television, film and now the Great White Way.

“It’s everything I thought it would be and everything I didn’t think it would be,” he says of making his Broadway debut in this play. “It’s a successful show and it’s a Mamet show. It’s been the best possible experience. I read the first line and I knew I had to do this play; it’s so applicable to everything that is going on in the United States right now, and possibly the world. I have just been invited to join the board of the Music Center - Performing Arts Center of Los Angeles County, and my first task is to get this play to L.A. as soon as possible.”

Having worked with Mamet on the television series *The Unit*, which Mamet created and Haysbert starred in, Haysbert said, “It’s a completely different dynamic working with him [Mamet] on television and working with him on stage. Working on the series was like being invited to his hotel suite, while being involved in *Race* is like being invited to his home. Broadway is his home, this is where he lives, and it’s a thrill to be invited here. It’s exhilarating, and the words I get to say, you can’t say on television.”

Haysbert replaced actor David Alan Grier in the demanding role of Henry Brown after nearly 300 performances. When asked if there were any particular challenges in that he replied, “No, not really, because I wasn’t expected to be David anymore than he was expected to be me. He’s a great comedian and I’m a serious actor. I saw the show once with him in it, and it was dynamite, but ours is a totally different show. I couldn’t bring anything more than my gifts and who I am to this show. I can’t be David and David can’t be me.”

Performing eight shows every week can be arduous and Haysbert noted how important it is to stay healthy. “It’s the discipline of going home and getting sleep,” that helps to keep him in shape for the demands of live theatre. “It’s very important because you really do need to get your rest. You need your eight hours. After a performance you are pumped, but it’s very important to be prepared for the next day. I have a light dinner, and then I do what I can to relax

and wind down. Sometimes, it's a glass of wine, sometimes it's watching a movie or SportsCenter, other times it's setting up a tumbler in my living room and practicing my putting," replied the avid golfer. Before a performance he will 'spiritual out' and calm himself – "I have sage and incense, and in this show, especially, there are all these rhythmic exchanges, so, even though I know them, I will review my lines because I like them to come off trippingly."

"What I understood very quickly is that this is not a stage, but a courtroom, and I am being examined and cross-examined by the audience every night. The beauty of the theatre is that once it's done, it's done. The performance just sits back in the recesses of the mind and gestates there. I liken theatre to golf; no matter how well you played, you didn't play perfectly. I now know what to do and what not to do. Every time I exit the stage, I have to remain still and resist the urge to interact with the people backstage. I can't let up in this show – it's a 90 minute race."

"Tremendously" he effused when asked how his training at AADA has helped him in his acting career. "I find myself falling back on a lot of the teachings I had at the Academy. I think it's important to know that acting is a

continuing education; having gone to AADA you know how to judge what kinds of classes are going to be good for you later on. It's all about discipline, and it's a craft that you need to keep honing. I hate to keep bringing up golf, but if you don't play you get rusty pretty quick."

"Always be working on your craft, continue to take classes," is the advice he would impart to actors just starting out in this business. "Continue to work on yourself, your heart, your mind, your spirituality. I have a philosophy that I am never out of work. I'm always working on myself to get better."

Actor Richard Thomas [who co-starred in *Race*] spoke at the AADA NY graduation ceremonies in April of 2010, and wished the following for the graduating class: a hit television series, a great voice-over contract, to stand on a Broadway stage and to have a role in a feature film. Haysbert has done it all, and has directing and producing on his resume as well. When asked what else he hoped to accomplish he replied, "Repeat it. Do it all over again. I would absolutely love to come back and get on the boards again, now that the fear has been dealt with, and the beast has been unveiled. The glorious beast that is performing live theatre eight times a week."



Haysbert with Richard Thomas in *Race*

Name Game

*"Proper names are poetry in the raw.
Like all poetry they are untranslatable."*

W.H. Auden



Match Names to Stage Names

- A - Betty Joan Perske
- B - Illeana Hesselberg
- C - Emmanuel Goldenberg
- D - Claire Wemlinger
- E - Isadore Demsky



Lauren Bacall



Kirk Douglas



Claire Trevor



Edward G. Robinson



Illeana Douglas

The Exception to the Rule...

Angie Canuel (2003) stopped by the Academy one morning last November to catch us up on her usually hectic life. She told us, "I woke up this morning thinking, 'That REALLY happened..?'"

The evening before we spoke Canuel, who has worked as a swing on *The Producers* and an assistant choreographer on *Finian's Rainbow*, was in Washington, DC, filming the Kennedy Center Honors. Canuel not only performed in a twelve minute dance medley with five costume changes, choreographed by Susan Stroman, and honoring Mel Brooks, but found herself meeting the likes of Meryl Streep, Robert DeNiro, and Bruce Springsteen. "The show was beautiful and I got to meet President Obama and I shook his hand," she exclaimed.

Her relationship with Stroman began in 2001 when Canuel was a first year Academy student. She came to the Academy from Toronto with 18 years of dance training



Angie Canuel

under her belt and an agent who persuaded her to attend an audition for *The Producers* which was about to open on Broadway. AADA has a stringent policy against auditioning for roles outside of the Academy and she admits, "I knew I wasn't supposed to audition, but my agent persuaded me and I didn't think I would get cast."

As luck would have it, she was one of five dancers called back. Although she didn't book the part at that time, Stroman, the director/choreographer and her associate, choreographer Warren Carlyle, were impressed and kept her picture and resume. Several months later, at the beginning of her second year at AADA, she was called in again to audition and this time was asked to begin as a swing on the Broadway production. "I knew I had to make a decision, but the Broadway show was an opportunity I couldn't turn down. I also knew that I would never go back to conservatory training and that was something I really wanted to finish." After much soul-searching, Canuel decided to withdraw from the Academy.

She had been an exceptional student with an outstanding record in studentship and because of her excellence in the classroom, Canuel was told that an exception would be made and that she would be permitted to attend the Academy and accept the role on Broadway. Dino Scopas, who auditioned Angie in Canada and is currently the Director of Instruction on the New York campus,

remembered, "Angie was such an exemplary student and since her professional commitment came at a time of the school year where it did not interfere with her studies, the Academy was willing to accommodate her rehearsal schedule."

Canuel stayed with *The Producers* for four years, until it closed. She covered nine tracks, or dance sequences, until she had a permanent track of her own for the last four months. Her role in the stage production led to a role in the feature film and to the assistant choreography position on *Finian's Rainbow* for Warren Carlyle.

In addition to working with her production company, Working Artists Theatre Project, Canuel is part of the team that produced the Broadway show *Superior Donuts*. "It's been quite a year," she laughed, "between performing at the Kennedy Center Honors, meeting the President, choreographing a Broadway musical and producing a Broadway play."

Every January, Canuel evaluates where she is and what her plans are for the forthcoming year, "I would like to focus on auditioning for TV and film. I love doing the work, and I want to be someone who works consistently." With her drive, determination and her penchant for hard work, we know that Angie Canuel will always be the exception to the rule.



From Stage to Screen and Back Again...

Max Casella

On Broadway, Off-Broadway, on television, and in film, **Max Casella (1987)** has played roles ranging from Doogie Howser's best friend, the affable Vinnie Delpino, to mobster Bennie Fazio on HBO's *The Sopranos*.

"Right out of the Academy I freelanced with a couple of agents, and one of them sent me on the audition for *Doogie Howser, M.D.* I was fortunate that, although I was an adult, I looked so young." The role of Vinnie lasted from 1989 through 1992, and then he went through a long period, "where no one wanted to work with me or give me an audition," he remembered. "I had to reinvent myself as an adult even though I was an adult."

After the TV series ended, Casella had some roles in feature films, including Tim Burton's *Ed Wood* and *Sgt. Bilko* with Steve Martin. "*Ed Wood* was really exciting; I was a big Johnny Depp and Tim Burton fan. This was my first movie, besides *Newsies* [a 1992 Disney film that he filmed during hiatus from *Doogie Howser, M.D.*] but I knew *Ed Wood* was going to be something great."

Casella eventually returned to New York where he originated the role of Timon in the Broadway production of *The Lion King*, which garnered him the Theatre World Award for Outstanding Broadway Debut, as well as a Drama Desk nomination. "I'm very proud of *The Lion King* because it was such a beautiful show." When asked if there were any particular difficulties in performing the role he remarked that, "Some of the dancers had the headdresses, but I had the Timon puppet that I had to manipulate, and that had its own challenges."

He followed up his Broadway debut by co-starring in another Broadway production, this time playing Marcellus Washburn in *The Music Man*. "It was when I was doing *The Music Man* in 2000, that I was cast in *The Sopranos*," he said.

Casella played the role of Benny Fazio in the HBO series for four seasons over seven years. "I loved going there and having a job, and I loved the other actors. I could count on having something exciting to do. It was fun and light, with

people who had been working together for so long. From time to time we still have little get-togethers. *The Sopranos* was sort of part-time, so it was easy to do other work, including some film roles and the play *Souls of Naples* with John Turturro, which we performed in Naples, Italy."

In 2008, Casella played opposite Turturro once again, this time in Samuel Beckett's *Endgame* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. When asked how performing in *Endgame* compared to his earlier stage experiences, he related that "*Endgame* was more rewarding than *The Music Man* because the material is so fulfilling that you can do it every night and never get to the bottom of it. That is why I became an actor, to do this kind of material. All I ever wanted to do were artistic and interesting things that excite me. That's almost been impossible until *Endgame*. It's hard and beautiful and important and rich. If it's interesting and exciting material, then that is what I want to do." When asked how he kept his performance fresh eight times each week, he responded, "By being in the moment and connecting with the reality of the character and personalizing it. I take it day by day, whatever it is."

In addition to acting, Casella has added producing to his resume with the indie film *Scaring the Fish*. "It's a drama about relationships based upon a play of the same name," he says of the film, in which he acted alongside a group of friends including Adam Rapp of Broadway's *Rent*. "We wanted to make a movie just for fun and it was. We filmed up at Bear Mountain, and we had a blast doing it. This is the first feature length film that I have produced." When queried about other projects he may have in the works, Casella simply responded, "There are some things that are percolating in my mind."

When asked what advice he would offer to aspiring actors, Casella replied, "Persist, persist, persist; everybody's an individual and everybody's journey is different. Each person has to find their own way which will be unique to them. If you really want something and you're focused on it, and if you believe in yourself, then stick with it and keep on pushing. Be true to yourself and listen to yourself. Sooner or later you will get your chance."



AADA Offers New Joint Degree in Dramatic Arts, Film and Television

The American Academy of Dramatic Arts and St. John's University are pleased to announce a new opportunity that will allow students and alumni to earn a joint Bachelor of Science Degree in Dramatic Arts, Film and Television. This is a unique program for talented students with a passion for the dramatic arts who wish to expand their knowledge, skills and career options. Students enrolled in this new program will have the best of both worlds: The Academy's intensive conservatory training in acting and extensive training in directing, writing and producing for film and television at St. John's. The curriculum provides students with the discipline and skills to pursue many professions, such as filmmaking, screenwriting and television production.

"The genesis of this degree came from an articulation agreement with AADA we entered into back in May 2006," said Frank Brady, Chair of the Communications, Journalism and Media Studies Department at St. John's University. "This

is an historic occasion for both institutions. The Academy has sent us well-trained, creative, and enthusiastic students who we have had the pleasure of teaching, and we expect that trend to continue as more and more students come to St. John's to complete their studies and earn their degrees."

"On behalf of the American Academy of Dramatic Arts, we thank St. John's for its guidance through this process," said Christine Arnold-Schroeder, Director of Development, Media and Strategy at AADA, "and it is only fitting that AADA partner with St. John's for such a worthwhile endeavor. Our students are inspired and thrilled for this degree opportunity, and we are happy to sign on to make this a reality."

The collaboration allows students to benefit from the academic and professional resources of two respected New York higher education institutions in a cost effective manner. Students began taking advantage of this offering in fall 2010.



Academy alums **Zuleikha Robinson (1997)** and **Jeremy Davies (1990)** played integral roles on television's mega-hit *Lost*. Robinson played the uncompromising Ilana and Davies was the enigmatic Daniel Faraday. **Beth Broderick (1977)** played the recurring role of Diane Jansen, Kate's mother, in earlier seasons of this mind-bending series which wrapped up earlier this year.



You can now get your very own AADA email account! If you have not done so already, please contact the alumni office at news@aada.org and we will set you up.

Did You Know...

Hawaii Five-O, the ground-breaking TV crime drama featured all these AADA alums:

Tom Simcox,
James J. Sloyan,
Lynette Mettey,
Lyle Bettger,
William Devane,
Manu Tupou and
Charles Durning?
Max Casella has a guest starring role in the current television series.



Alumni notes can now be found on the AADA website, and are updated each month. Visit aada.org/alumni to see what your classmates have been up to. Please continue to send us your updates, we love hearing from you!

Become a fan of The American Academy of Dramatic Arts on Facebook and get updates about your fellow alumni, upcoming events and more. Want to add the AADA network tag to your Facebook profile? You will need your alumni email account to do that (you do not have to use your alumni email account to join Facebook or to become an AADA fan).

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ADAM SCOTT '93

Television roles include Henry in *Party Down* and Ben in *Parks and Recreation*. His film credits include *Leap Year*, *Piranha* and the forthcoming *My Idiot Brother*.



PAUL RUDD '91 recently starred in the feature film *Dinner for Schmucks*. His forthcoming feature films include *How Do You Know* and *My Idiot Brother*.

KATHERINE MOENNIG '98

Television credits include *The L Word* and *Three Rivers*. Her upcoming feature film is *The Lincoln Lawyer* with Matthew McConaughey.



KATIE ASELTON '04

Feature films include *Cyrus*, *Jeff Who Lives at Home* and the indie comedy *The Freebie*, which she also produced and directed.



LISA BRESCIA '91 has appeared in leading roles in *Wicked*, *Aida*, *The Woman in White* and *The Times They Are A-Changin'* and is currently starring in *Mamma Mia!* In addition to her success on Broadway Lisa toured for five years internationally with the original members of The Mamas and The Papas



TOBY HEMINGWAY '03 co-starred in the Taylor Swift music video "Mine" and has roles in several upcoming feature films including Darren Aronofsky's *Black Swan* (with Natalie Portman) and *Street* and *Playback*.

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