

# The Observer

*From the Files of Project Quantum Leap*

FROM  
**SHENANDOAH**  
1976



TO



2006



## SCOTT BAKULA ON STAGE

**Issue 33**

**April 2006**

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## ON OUR COVER

In celebration of Scott's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of performing on a professional stage, our cover contrasts his first professional headshot (although not truly from any production) and photographs from the most recent production of *Shenandoah*, now playing at Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C. With this issue, we also embark on a comprehensive guide to his theater career.

Generally, *The Observer* is not in the habit of offering—or reprinting *in toto*—reviews; our readers are astute enough to make their own judgments about various projects based on the general analysis we provide. Once in a while, however, circumstances make us chuck that rule altogether. Our colleague Anita Balestino's review of *Shenandoah* warrants that decision.—SAM.

SHENANDOAH AT FORD'S THEATRE  
IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

Scott will be starring in *Shenandoah* through April 30, and we urge everyone to try and make the trip to see the spectacular production at least once. The show is a poignant musical statement on war and its effects, and is especially suited to families with older children. It is an entertaining and thought-provoking experience, especially in Historic Ford's Theatre, with the Civil War/Lincoln Museum housed in the basement. To make the trip even more memorable, Scott has said that for anyone who wishes to wait, he will be available outside the theater after every evening performance, to meet fans and sign autographs.

With director Jeff Calhoun's staging and exuberant choreography (co-created with Chase Brock), there is never a boring moment. Musical director Steven Landau's contemporary arrangements provide emphasis to the lyrics and lushness to the score. Tobin Ost's sets and Michael Gilliam's lighting truly evoke the Shenandoah Valley; our black & white photos cannot compare to the exquisite pinks and purples that color the hills and sky from dawn to dusk. And the overall creativity in depicting a burning train onstage is astonishing.

Curtain rises at 7:30pm every evening, Tuesday through Sunday, with 2:30pm matinees on Sundays, plus additional matinees on some Wednesdays and Saturdays. A full schedule and tickets are available at the Ford's Theatre website <<http://www.fordstheatre.org>>

By the way, it's not just our opinion. Glowing reviews have been coming in faster than Donna can keep up. See the *Shenandoah* page at the PQL website for samples.

## QL SHOUT-OUT FROM BOB SAGET

On the Monday, February 6 episode of *How I Met Your Mother*, produced by Bob Saget (*QL*'s "Stand Up") and featuring Neil Patrick Harris (*QL*'s "Return of the Evil Leaper"), two of the other characters made a *QL* reference that any Leaper would recognize.

I can't go into a complete explanation of the situation because this show is quite funny and all of the characters have pretty much equal time, so the show covers quite a lot of ground during its 22 minutes.

Briefly stated, Lily and Marshall (an engaged couple) are stuck in the bathroom together, and Lily has to use the commode, but doesn't want to do this with Marshall in the room. Explaining she had a large drink during that *Quantum Leap* marathon, she insists she really has to go. Marshall, realizing her dire situation, can only reply, "Oh, Boy!"

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## *Shenandoah, the Musical* A Commentary by Sharon Major

The musical *Shenandoah* began as a 1965 movie written by James Lee Barrett, starring James Stewart. Several years later, after seeing the movie on television, Peter Udell and Gary Geld decided it would be a wonderful story to convert into a musical for Broadway. Barrett consented to turn his screenplay into a musical book, and after try-outs in Connecticut and Boston, *Shenandoah* moved to Broadway.

### The setting is Virginia during the Civil War;

### The principal roles are:

Charlie Anderson; father and farmer, a pacifist  
Jacob, James, Nathan, John, & Henry; grown sons  
Jenny; Charlie's only daughter, 19 years old  
Robert (The Boy); Charlie's 12-year-old son  
Gabriel, 12-year-old slave, Robert's friend  
Anne, wife of James  
Sam, suitor to Jenny

Starring John Cullum (*QL's* "Catch a Falling Star"), the show opened (after 9 previews) at the Alvin Theatre on January 7, 1975. Cullum won a Tony and a Drama Desk award for his performance, and among the other Tony nominations, Barrett, Udell and Philip Rose (who also produced) won for their book. The show was a hit with theatergoers and lasted over 2½ years on Broadway, with Cullum taking a seven-month break during its second year. After closing in August 1977, Cullum returned in October for two weeks to kick off the official national tour in Chicago. But as early as the year before, a number of bus & truck tours were heading out, playing single nights and split weeks throughout the heartland of America.

The story of *Shenandoah* is set in Virginia during the Civil War. Charlie Anderson is a widower, with five grown sons, a daughter of marriageable age, and a 12-year-old son. Struggling with the loss of his wife during childbirth, Charlie's deepest desire is maintain his home and family, and to shelter his brood from the encroaching war beyond his farm, best achieved he feels by remaining out of the battle. The lengthy, upbeat first act is essential. The Anderson clan—working hard, making a home, celebrating a wedding and a birth—provides the audience with the emotional investment needed to deal with the tragedy that follows in the second act.

RCA released an original Broadway cast album with John Cullum almost immediately after the show opened in New York. Most of the songs in the show have a folksy simplicity, and since none were ever marketed as singles, it would seem that the vast majority of purchases were made by those who wished to recall their theater experience. (To waylay any confusion, the well-known 19<sup>th</sup> century folk song called *Shenandoah* is not represented.)

The heart and strength of the play lies squarely on the shoulders of its leading man, requiring a rich baritone with the stamina for five solos, plus a reprise. Perhaps for this reason alone it has not been performed particularly often by community and high schools theater groups, who prefer to balance the roles among their members. Or perhaps since the subject matter is more serious, theater groups may prefer a lighter fare. A Broadway revival, again starring Cullum, was mounted in 1989, but closed in less than a month. Could the musical's initial popularity have been, as William Ruhlman at Billboard.com suggests, due in part to its antiwar theme and our nation's sentiment in the post-Vietnam era? I suspect, part of it may have been that the musical coincided with our nation's Bicentennial, fanning the patriotic mood that was sweeping our nation.

### Songs from the original show

#### PROLOGUE

Raise the Flag of Dixie                      Confederate & Union Soldiers

#### ACT ONE

I've Heard It All Before	Charlie Anderson
Pass the Cross to Me	The Congregation
Why Am I Me?	Boy and Gabriel
Next to Lovin' (I Like Fightin')	The Anderson Sons
Over the Hill	Jenny Anderson
The Pickers Are Comin'	Charlie
Next to Lovin'	Sons and Jenny
Meditation	Charlie
We make a Beautiful Pair	Anne and Jenny
*Violets and Silverbells	Jenny and Sam
**It's a Boy	Charlie

#### ACT TWO

Freedom	Anne and Gabriel
*Violets and Silverbells	James and Anne
Papa's Gonna Make It Alright	Charlie
The Only Home I Know	Corporal and Soldiers
Papa's Gonna Make It Alright	Jenny
Meditation	Charlie
*Pass the Cross to Me	The Congregation

\*Omitted from the 2006 production

\*\*Changed to a duet, Charlie and James, for 2006

What sort of inspiration will we gather from the current incarnation at Ford's Theatre? Charlie's dilemma is ours. Just like Charlie, we cherish hearth and home and don't want our children to experience war. Charlie's last solo, "Meditation," is actually a reprise of "I've Heard It All Before:"

But in the end...

I lay the blame

At someone else's door

And so the seeds of hate are sown

That blow from war to war.

We simply need to listen.

## INTERVIEW WITH SCOTT BAKULA

By Sharon Major

March 6, 2006

Scott gave Project Quantum Leap a telephone interview from Washington, D.C. just a few weeks before previews would begin for his starring role in *Shenandoah*.

SHARON: Hi Scott, when did you get to our nation's capital?

SCOTT: Three weeks ago or so.

SHARON: Have you been rehearsing already?

SCOTT: Fast and furious.

SHARON: I've been in contact with an old friend of yours from those early *Shenandoah* productions, Robert Johanson. He sends his best regards and wishes for a successful run in this production. He told me he thinks it's a great idea, and it makes him want to return to the play, perhaps someday with you.

What I didn't know was that he was in the Ravenna, Ohio production of *Godspell* with you. Is that where the two of you met?

SCOTT: Yes, we met in Ravenna. He then hired me for his production of *Shenandoah* later that year. [At the Pocono Playhouse, August 1978]

SHARON: Ravenna was around the time of your guest appearance on the television show, *On Our Own*. [February 1978] Was that when you got your Equity card?

SCOTT: Television is a different union; I got my SAG [Screen Actor's Guild] card for *On Our Own*. I got my Equity card for the *Shenandoah* summer tour [1978], which went to a few big outdoor theaters.

SHARON: You once mentioned *Godspell* as being one of your favorite shows. What about now?

SCOTT: *Godspell* was very dear to me when I was that age—when it was a show I could do. I had fun and it was one of the first ones that I really connected with. I didn't do it as many times as *Shenandoah*, but I've done it a few times. *Sweeney Todd* and *Man of La Mancha* are probably still two of my favorite shows. I love doing this show now, and this version that we're doing now will hopefully be a favorite. It's a whole different show when playing Charlie.

SHARON: Yes, at first I thought this role might not be as demanding as *I Do! I Do!* in which it was only you and Chelsea onstage, singing and dancing the entire time. But after looking over the libretto, I now know I misjudged the part. Charlie has

five solos, plus a reprise, and is essentially father to the Anderson brood and the cast.

SCOTT: It's a big part; there aren't many parts like this. There are a few, but not many. Vocally it is very demanding and it's a big journey emotionally for a couple of hours on stage, and I'm out there a lot. It's a lot of work.



Scott as Charlie Anderson  
Photo by T. Charles Erickson

SHARON: How did you make that journey on a nightly basis as part of the company before?

SCOTT: Well, I've played many different parts and it was different every time. But Charlie carries the show. It's really about what happens to him and to his family.

When I was a part of his family, I was resting when he was out there singing. I always had fun. We always had a blast doing the show as one of the brothers. It's a great show to do when you're young and play one of those parts, because you just have a grand time. There's a different approach and energy required when playing Charlie.

SHARON: The show was such a hit back in the 1970s, but it hasn't really been produced much lately, maybe because of the reason you stated, that Charlie's role is so demanding. But otherwise, do you think that its popularity and relevance have waned?

SCOTT: It is extremely relevant now, just as it was in the 70's coming out of the Vietnam era, when [those feelings] resonated within our country. I think the real challenge with the show over the years has been that it's a big show to do and when you examine the show, it is more connected to old-fashioned musical theater. Since then, other shows like *Lion King* came along and musical theater changed a lot.

*Shenandoah* is not a typical musical comedy night—there's a lot of fun and comedy—but more than that, it's emotional, and very thought provoking and gut-wrenching in many ways, so I think [theater companies] may stay away from it for that reason.

Jeff has re-imagined it in a really wonderful way. I think it will work well for today's audience, in terms of what they expect visually when they sit down in a theater. It has a new feel, and a new energy to the whole piece, and I'm hoping will lift it and bring it back. I think it is an important piece and certainly relevant to what we and our country are involved with today.

SHARON: How did you and this production come together?

SCOTT: It was one of those things where Jeff made it all happen. He directed *Big River* here last year, which was a huge hit for the Ford's Theatre. So they basically asked him what he would like to do if he would come back again.

He said he wanted to do *Shenandoah*, and I don't know why, he said he wanted to do it with me. This process began a long time ago and when he called me, I didn't know where I was going to be or what I was going to be doing. I had a lot of things going on when he first started talking to me about this. So he instigated the whole thing. I've known him for a long, long time—although we never worked together—and he got it into his head and forced it on everybody. <laughing>

SHARON: I'm glad.

SCOTT: Well, I am too. He didn't know my history with the show. He had no idea that I had done it before or that it was the first show I saw on Broadway. He knew nothing about any of these things until we really sat down and talked.

It's been a good marriage. I don't even know if he ever saw the show [before]. He has really fresh eyes, which is very important, and at the same time, I've seen and done it ten different ways, [in case] he has any questions. It's a good combination.

SHARON: You once mentioned that your mother had been a drama coach, but we've heard little about her influence on your choice of career.

SCOTT: She was an English and Drama high school teacher in the early part of her life, so she was always interested in the theater. When I started being drawn toward it, it was certainly something she was familiar with and had an understanding about, so I wasn't in a house where it was "no,no,no,no." She certainly encouraged me and gave me a lot of private coaching at home.

SHARON: You've portrayed characters in just about every era. Is there one particular time period that intrigues you the most?

SCOTT: It's funny, but I've always been intrigued by the Civil War period. That era in our country's history was certainly a very vibrant, exciting and dramatic time for not only our country, but ultimately, for change around our planet. I've always been fascinated by that and the pre-Civil War era. Early on, it seemed to me to be a romantic era.

I'm also fascinated by Eastern cultures, especially the Shogun period when the westerners were just discovering Japanese and Chinese cultures. I've always been fascinated by those civilizations and their evolution once the westerners arrived.

SHARON: On that note, did you have any input into the "Leap Between the States" episode of *QL*?

SCOTT: Nope! That was a stretch.<laughing> As I recall I was in my great-grandfather's genes and somehow we worked it out.

SHARON: I loved that episode!

SCOTT: It was a good episode; it was a nightmare to shoot, but it was a little bit of a stretch to figure out how I made it back into that era. But it worked; nobody wrote and complained.

SHARON: Not me, I absolutely loved it. As I mentioned to you in an earlier interview, *Marilyn: An American Fable* was one of my all-time favorite musicals that you did.

SCOTT: Jeff Calhoun actually saw it and said, "I love that show!" You and he are among a small group.

SHARON: This time I want to tell you how much pleasure I've gotten from a little revue called *Accentuate the Positive* that ran at The Bottomline. I swear that if Johnny Mercer had had a front row seat in heaven, he would have been honored and had a grin on his face by the performances that the five of you gave.

SCOTT: That was fun; it was a great group, my gosh!

SHARON: From the ad I found, it looks as if it ran only three nights. Could that be true?

SCOTT: I don't think that's true, but I think it was a limited run. The Bottomline was a sort of club, but I don't remember how long it ran. I'm sure the hopes were that it would be mounted [on another stage]. [As with any show] if it were well-received, then maybe it would have stayed or moved somewhere else.

SHARON: It seemed like a lot of work and a great show for only three nights.

SCOTT: It was a lot of work, but it was fun.

SHARON: Can you give us a few words about the late Charles Rocket?

SCOTT: It's a terrible loss and a shame he's not here anymore.

What was funny to me about him was that he played heavy parts, but he was such a funny guy. He was out of left field. He reminded me of [Bob] Saget a little bit sometimes, where the persona that you see on the screen doesn't necessarily match who they are off-camera.

He was a real character and a joy to work with and certainly wonderful on the show. “A Little Miracle” was Michael Watkins’ first episode as a director, and Charles was very generous and easy-going with Michael as we helped him get through his inauguration—and very successfully, I thought. The rest is history for Michael, since he’s been directing and producing up a storm ever since.

Charlie was a great guy and very funny. We laughed so much during that silly scene where I was measuring his trousers and crawling around on the floor. We barely ever made it through that scene. The cameras kept rolling and we were just having such a great time.



Sam’s Leap-In for “A Little Miracle”

SHARON: Are you seriously considering the role of Professor Callahan in *Legally Blonde*?

SCOTT: Yes, I am. I’ve done two readings and I’m considering it, but it’s not something that has been offered to me. It’s in the wind.

SHARON: We’ve heard there is a workshop in May.

SCOTT: I won’t be a part of that. They asked me, but I’m still here and the timing doesn’t work out.

SHARON: So the run will be extended past April?

SCOTT: The run is, but I’m not going to be in it after April 30<sup>th</sup>. The reading in New York starts before then, so there’s a conflict, and I wouldn’t have gone directly from here to there anyway. The timing didn’t work out for this reading, but they did ask me to participate.

So I’m definitely considering it, but again, it hasn’t been offered to me. It’s not as if it’s mine if I want it. It’s a great show and they’ve done a wonderful job of putting it together so far. It’s going to be wonderful.

SHARON: How about the possibility of doing *Man of La Mancha* with Chelsea?

SCOTT: That is something we would love to do, it’s just finding someone who wants to do the show.

SHARON: Do you recall anything about your college production of *Man of La Mancha* at Jefferson College (in July 1976)?

SCOTT: Yes, I do. Mostly I remember that it was outside, it was summertime, it was hot!—if you are familiar with St. Louis in the summer. It was very hard to keep all of the appliances, mustaches and assorted materials in place. I remember being underneath the stairs trying to glue stuff back on, but I also remember how wonderful the show was and how great it was to do.

SHARON: Do you recall any discontent from the women in the cast over the rape scene?

SCOTT: No, I don’t think there was anything like that.

SHARON: A local production here was well-staged and choreographed, but still I was disturbed by the scene.

SCOTT: In what sense were you disturbed?

SHARON: Perhaps it was just that I was seeing it performed live instead of watching it on tv. I suppose theater is more immediate, as if I were actually witnessing it.

SCOTT: Yes. I think that is the power of it. It must have been done well if it affected you that way. Of course I didn’t see the one you saw, so perhaps I would have agreed that it was too graphic. People can certainly go too far in the theater, when they could suggest things without making it distasteful.

That show is such an interesting piece because it flits between reality and imagination, role-playing and all the things Cervantes’ brain was creating to keep himself going.

There is a certain immediacy about that rape scene which is very powerful, but to me the story was always about this woman starting to take this journey with him, with his idealistic visions—his noble view of the world—and his strange Quixote imaginary world. She was knocked down for it and ultimately he was knocked down for it also. To me it was much more about those things.

SHARON: One final quick question: Have you been approached about voiceover work on the videogame of *Enterprise*, coming out in September?

SCOTT: No.

SHARON: We’re sorry to hear that, but thank you so much for giving us an interview. I’ll be down in a few weeks to see you, along with Margaret and Rosie.

SCOTT: I’m glad you’re coming and I appreciate that. And I appreciate this too.

## *Shenandoah*: Impressions from the Preview and Opening Weekends

By Anita Balestino

March 17 through March 26, 2006

I recently returned from seeing *Shenandoah*'s preview performances at Ford's Theatre in Washington D.C. the weekend of March 17, then on Monday I went to hear Jeff Calhoun (director/choreographer) and Tobin Ost (scenic/costume designer) speak at a Ford's Member Event about how they remounted the show. Calhoun and Ost are intelligent, articulate, incredibly creative and committed professionals. With loving attention to detail and a desire to modernize and bring this show back to life, they traveled to Virginia in order to drink in the sweep and curve of the Shenandoah hills so that they could recreate them on stage at Ford's. They visited historic Gettysburg to acquire a hat or buckle from the period to give their Civil War uniforms authenticity. They conceptualized every detail of their production before anything appeared onstage—and every detail serves to advance the larger production.

What is there to comment but, "**Wow!**"

This re-imagining of *Shenandoah* is amazing: spare, elegant, graceful—quite simply beautiful. Set design and lighting, even costuming, constitute theatre magic that has to be seen to be believed.

The cast is absolutely wonderful—very talented and charming, high-energy actor/singer/dancers that look and feel every inch a family on stage. It's hard to pick favorites from among these talented young performers but the two young juveniles in the cast (Kevin Clay and Michael Mainwaring), local youngsters, have acting and singing ability to burn and will surely steal an audience's heart. The two women, though greatly outnumbered by the strapping sons of the family, more than make their presence felt. Megan Lewis as Jenny, the sole daughter of the family, not only has a pure and crystal clear singing voice but shines with an inner light of innocence and goodness that comes from the actress, not solely from Michael Gilliam's masterful lighting design. Garrett Long as Anne, wife of second-eldest son James, shines in her own way as the earth mother one imagines Charlie's deceased wife Martha must have been.

Already a standout on the very first preview performance, the show simply got better with each passing night and every little change the cast and director made. In addition, there is a perfect symmetry about seeing this courageous, and exceptionally timely and relevant, Civil War play in historic Ford's Theatre.

And Scott Bakula ... Bakula, as patriarch of the family, is nothing short of magnificent! He's a total revelation in this

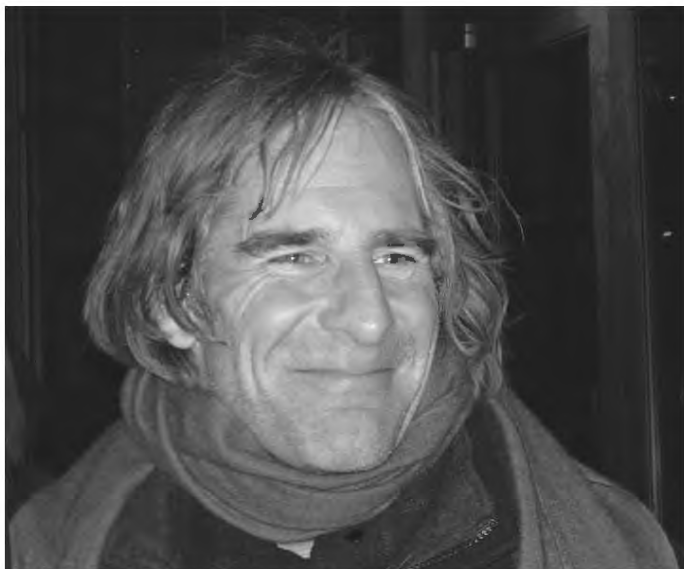
role, even for those of us who have followed him and his career for years now and know (or at least believe we do) the kind of superb performances he makes so effortless. Scott's singing voice is stronger than I've ever heard it—dynamic, rich and powerful—in this extremely demanding singing role and equally challenging dramatic one.



Scott's Charlie Anderson, although stern, disciplined and toughened by hard work, still reveals a wicked sense of humor, flashes of light-hearted fun and moments of palpable tenderness for his family (even his great, tall sons) that *leaps* right across the footlights and into your skin. Bakula has an uncanny ability to intimate this tenderness by such subtle means that clearly articulate the habits of a lifetime, even across the distance of a stage and to the back of the house. That tenderness appears as Charlie straightens the glasses of one son, or slaps the back of another, or unceremoniously hauls the youngest son from a prone target after a rambunctious brawl in which the family stands-down Confederate dragoons. It's there in the slow, stunned way he removes his hat as he first catches sight of his daughter, Jenny, in her mother's wedding dress, and the reverence with which he kisses her hand as he relinquishes her to her perspective bridegroom, and more still in the melancholy touch of his hand on her face as he smooths her hair while they sit on the railroad tracks and he sings to her what amounts to a lullaby, "Papa's Gonna Make It Alright." The tenderness spills over into the limitless, grieving love of a father for his deceased progeny in the lingering, reluctant movement—more caress than displacement—as Charlie straightens the splayed arms and legs of his dead son, Jacob, or cradles his orphaned, infant granddaughter, Martha, in his arms. This is the kind of tenderness that only Scott Bakula can convey. *Brilliant!*

**Don't miss this show!** It's that good.

And what is there really to say about a star who takes time out to have a leisurely, lingering chat with his fans **after** a preview performance at night (having autographed their mementos the afternoon prior to the show), and then **before** both rehearsal the next day and another preview performance that night? Words simply do not suffice. *Extremely classy? Unbelievably gracious? One-of-a-kind? A true gentleman? Our very own Scott Bakula!*



*Scott outside of Ford's after a preview performance  
Photo by Amy Sydnor*

### A Further Report After the Official Opening Weekend

Having seen *Shenandoah* several times now, I do have to say that Scott is right about there being definite parallels between his character in this show and a Star Trek Captain.

Charlie Anderson, Scott's character in *Shenandoah*, faces some serious personal losses and a real moral crisis as the play unfolds. Some of us, who are big-time *Enterprise* fans, talked after seeing the *Shenandoah* preview performances and couldn't help but see a hint or two of third season Archer in "Papa Charlie."

Scott's Mom and Dad were there this weekend. There were also two largish contingents of "Red Hat Ladies" at the Saturday and Sunday matinees. It seemed as if they waited outside the "stage door" for a while, hoping to see Scott emerge, then gave up when he didn't come out after a bit of a wait.

During Scott's meeting with his fans after the show Saturday night, we learned that his Mom was concerned

about him running or exercising while he's doing *Shenandoah*. However, Scott feels he needs to run to keep his energy level *beyond* the needs of the show rather than just *at* the level required to do the show. We also learned that Mrs. Bakula was a little disappointed that Jeff Calhoun cut the song "Violets & Silverbells." Scott explained the decision saying this was yet another 'list' song after the show had just featured a 'list' song in "We Make a Beautiful Pair." Scott noted that there were numerous other flower references in other songs, I believe he may have referenced "The Pickers Are Comin'," commenting something to the effect of: "I don't know what it was with these guys [the lyricist and the writer of *Shenandoah*] and flowers. Maybe they were smoking flowers or something."

Scott said that it can be difficult for him when he hears the audience cry during the sad parts of the show – that the audience response somehow intensifies the emotional impact of the scenes. But then Scott said that if an actor accepts the laughter as part of an audience's response to the funny parts of a show, he must also accept its sadness over the tragic scenes.

There was so much more that Scott said. He was his usual extremely gracious and generous self during the talk with the fans, for which his Mom and Dad stayed in the theater. But he also had back-to-back matinee and evening performances on both Saturday and Sunday this weekend. YIKES!

One of the volunteer ushers told me that *Shenandoah* has already been extended to May 21, and one of the other ladies heard on the radio that Craig T. Nelson may be taking the part of Charlie Anderson after Scott leaves at the end of April. Between you, me and the gatepost, I don't think the folks at Ford's are thrilled that Scott is really going to leave the production before the run ends. One of them said, "It just won't be the same without any one of the cast as it is now." [A recent press release stated that the remainder of the run will star Brian Sutherland, Scott's standby for the production.-Ed.]

Helene Kaplan will be glad to know that Jeff Calhoun (possibly Scott too) & company have amended the ending of *Shenandoah* a bit so that the dramatic impact of "the Boy's" return is much more in focus and contains much more of a dramatic wallop. Boy's return no longer gets lost in the rush to curtain calls, and the gripping (and tragic) flow of this last section is no longer marred by a comic moment—however brief. It was much better, in my opinion.



Scott literally tore the heart out of the audience during Sunday's matinee. Scott's singing gets stronger every time I hear the show. But that afternoon his acting may have even surpassed his voice. Charlie's grief over the loss of Jacob; his absolute dejection at failing *utterly* to do the impossible and protect his family from any taint of the war that rages around them; his pain at losing "the Boy"—Charlie's most precious link to his late wife—was reflected so palpably in Scott's stooped shoulders, bowed head, slow stumbling gait and barely repressed sobs, that the audience first held its breath then audibly sighed to release its tension.

I was sitting in the dress circle—the end seat of the center section. Across the aisle to the right of me, someone was sobbing audibly; I couldn't stop the tears flowing (nor the mascara running) and a friend, down in the first row orchestra, remarked that tears were running down her face unchecked. I even heard a lady say something to the effect of, "I've seen this show three times, and I cry each time." There were quite a few people wiping eyes or sniffing as they walked out of the theatre that day.

Saturday night, there was a little miscue at the end of the boisterous and extremely strenuous "Next to Lovin' (I Like Fightin')" number that is sung and danced by the six Anderson sons. John, the son who's supposed to throw the sacks of grain into Papa Charlie's wheelbarrow when Scott comes out and stops the boys' dancing hi-jinks *cold*, was so spent from the demanding choreography that he missed the wheelbarrow with the sacks, *not once but twice!* Scott didn't skip a beat. He just picked the sacks up off the stage, plopped them in the wheelbarrow and said, "Here, let me help you with that, son." No one would have known anything was amiss. But for those of us who knew what was supposed to happen, it was a stitch!



*One of the comical moments added by Calhoun has Charlie working hard while the boys horsed-around*

*Screen captures from a Maryland Public Television Artworks segment*

Here are some attributes of Scott's songs from the show that I especially wanted to highlight: Scott sings, in what he revealed was his favorite scene, the last lines of "The Pickers Are Comin',"

And the Plum that they're comin' for  
Is my little girl, my little girl,  
My little girl – no more

with such unbelievable sweetness, poignancy and longing. He has a way of caressing a lyric as if caressing the living person he's singing about. He brings the whole audience into a contemplative mood right along with his character as twilight descends and the song ends.

It's much the same with "Papa's Gonna Make It Alright." Scott makes you feel Anderson's tender devotion to his only daughter and his single-minded desire to protect her from all harm. At the same time in the undertones of Scott's voice, you hear a hint of growing despair that the situation is slipping away from Charlie and that he cannot really prevent the tragic circumstances from closing in on his beloved daughter or his family. Finally, the "anthem" songs Scott sings—the two "Meditation" songs and "I've Heard It All Before"—ring out with the incredible power of his stronger-than-ever baritone. Scott's voice literally embodies pride, love and dedication for his long-deceased wife, his family and his land and the unconditional resolve not to allow the victims of this war to become merely a body count. What is more, he stirs all those emotions in the audience. The art of Scott's role in this show isn't only about the technicalities of singing these songs but rather the emotions he engenders and the complexity of the character he portrays when he sings them. No one has the ability to sing a song with more relevant passion or dramatic flair than Scott.

*Shenandoah* ends with the entire cast grouped inside that huge, ornate, free-standing frame that sits center stage throughout the play and which bears a plaque with the slogan, "*The Nation Mourns*" on its front. I have this image in my brain of Scott, standing atop the rolling hill scenery inside that frame with the whole cast assembled below him. Scott's powerful voice still rings in my ears and he is still *totally* in character—stern, commanding, unyielding—the very image of the rugged, independent loner. Scott, as Anderson, stands there as the bulwark for his family just as those Shenandoah hills, inside and extending past the frame, are the bulwark for the surrounding countryside.

What an image to leave that theatre with! Lord, this show *needs* to go to New York after it finishes its run here in D.C!

## BAKULA ON THE BOARDS

### SCOTT'S PROFESSIONAL STAGE CAREER

By Sharon Major

With Research Assistance from Gail Erickson

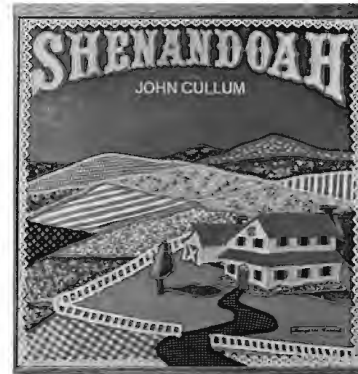
In 1991 on Rick Dee's late-night talk show *Into the Night*, Scott said his passion was singing.<sup>1</sup> Some might think this was merely a clever segue into a heartfelt rendition of "Happy Birthday" for his pal Dean Stockwell, Rick's other guest that evening, but I assert that it was a genuine declaration on Scott's part. Scott was raised in a musical family, sang the lead role in the operetta, *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, when he was thirteen, performed in a rock band and appeared in numerous musicals in high school, college and professionally ever since. Scott has appeared in stage productions of a non-musical sort in less than a handful of cases, evidence that he primarily auditioned for musical roles and that his life-long passion truly has been singing.

The pleasure that Scott's singing has given me over the years has fueled my on-going research about his stage career. In celebration of Scott's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of performing on the professional stage, I hope our readers will enjoy the fruits of my investigation. [A much more concise biography, covering many aspects of Scott's youth through his early television career can be found in Issues 7/8 and 9, written by Ann Raymont.]

#### Shenandoah, North Carolina dinner theatre tour

By 1976, *Shenandoah* was literally sweeping the nation. After its premiere in January 1975 and its win of two Tony Awards that June, bus and truck tours began to roll out giving performances, sometimes single nights and split-weeks, across America.

Scott arrived in New York City in September 1976 with as much of his belongings that he could carry and a money order for his life savings, hoping to land a job. As Scott tells it, "I got here, bought a copy of *Backstage* magazine...and read that someone was trying out people for the musical *Shenandoah*. Only it was for a non-equity dinner theater down in North Carolina. Well, I told myself, you've got to start somewhere."<sup>2</sup> The audition was his second day in town, and the very next day he was offered the role of Sam, suitor to Anderson's only daughter, Jenny.



Original program design from a quilt with lace trim by Margaret Cusack

The role of Sam is more substantial than most of the brothers' roles. Described as an upstanding and shy young Confederate soldier, Sam first appears in Act 1, Scene 6. Sam is trying to propose to Jenny, but is too tongue-tied to get out the words. Jenny sings a solo—"Over the Hill"—to him. Afterward, Sam notices Jenny's father, Charlie, sitting nearby on the porch, and asks Jenny, "Could we walk somewhere else?"

By Scene 8, Sam is ready to ask Charlie for Jenny's hand. A delightful conversation between Charlie and Sam ensues, in which Charlie imparts the wisdom he's gained about women based on his marriage and love for his dear departed wife, Martha.

In Scene 10, the wedding takes place in the farmyard with Sam and Jenny singing a duet, "Violets and Silverbells."

"Sure as the bramble and briar entwine:

So will it always be – your dreams and mine...

So will our garden grow, sweeter with time."<sup>3</sup>

Just as Sam and Jenny kiss, a Corporal runs up with an envelope, calling Sam up for duty. Sam and Jenny kiss again, and reluctantly Sam leaves.

Act 2 begins as Charlie, Jenny and three of the sons go searching for the youngest Anderson—The Boy—who has been captured by Union soldiers for wearing a Confederate cap. The Andersons stop a train carrying prisoners by laying logs across the tracks. This isn't the first train they've stopped. Although they don't find the Boy, they do find Sam and reunite him with Jenny. A tender, light-hearted moment follows (Scene 3) in which Charlie offers his tent to the newlyweds for the night.

In the final scene, Sam and Jenny attend church with the Andersons, and accompany the congregation in singing the finale, "Pass the Cross to Me."

Over ten years later in *Quantum Leap*, Scott would portray another Sam, whose demeanor is not so very different from the character of Sam here, making it not too difficult imagining Scott in the role. After three months the dinner theater tour was over, and Scott found himself back in New York, studying his craft, auditioning and making the rounds. Then came...

## Company

*Company* was not Stephen Sondheim's first solo effort as composer/lyricist but it is said to represent a pivotal change from the standard Broadway musical presentation, because it was the first "concept" show to become a hit. Not only recognized as innovative by critics and theatergoers, *Company* won the 1971 Tony for Best Musical, Sondheim won for both his lyrics and score, and George Furth won for his musical book.

Scott Miller, famous director and author, calls *Company* "a seminal piece of the American musical theater...created to disturb, to provoke thought and discussion." In a traditional plot-driven musical, such as *Oklahoma!*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, and *Shenandoah*, "the songs grow naturally out of dialogue, and the characters aren't aware of the fact that they're singing."<sup>4</sup> In *Company*, the characters step outside of the scene, as if they are addressing the audience or thinking to themselves. It makes the audience concentrate on the words, while the action takes a back seat. As with many of Sondheim's songs, the characters (and the audience) often come to some realization—emotionally or intellectually—by the end of the song. Although the musical is now 35 years old, it still remains relevant to contemporary audiences as it addresses love and commitment in a modern complex world. Yet because of its unique format, it continues to be a challenge even for an experienced professional company.

In early 1977, the Theatre Arts Group in New York City was a fairly new and ambitious non-profit non-sectarian theater group, having already produced two musicals that season. Relying on a very enthusiastic volunteer production staff, *Company* ran from March 19-27, 1977 at Temple Israel, with Scott in the role of Peter. Despite some acoustical problems with the venue, the reviews were uniformly satisfactory. "The cast is up to the musical demands, and their acting shows an understanding grasp of the individually delineated characters."<sup>5</sup>

Scott's role as Peter is a rather small supporting role as one of the five husbands who are friends with the main character, Robert, a bachelor. Although the part does not have a solo, Scott would have been part of no less than five songs, sung

either with the entire cast or with the other husbands. To those familiar with the 1993 Kennedy Center Honors tribute to Sondheim in which Scott appeared, two of these songs may come readily to mind, "Company" and "Side by Side by Side."

Hopefully having the opportunity to appear in a Sondheim show and in New York City was an incentive in itself, as Scott had yet to earn an Equity card.

Talent, perseverance and membership in Actors Equity Association are all essential to getting a job in New York City theater. During the 1970's a young performer may have thought that obtaining the union card was the most difficult of the three, since getting an audition for an Equity show required knowing directors, agents and casting directors, and moreover, was nearly impossible for non-members. Only in 1988, citing that the policy was discriminatory, were laws changed to allow non-members access to auditions and alternate routes to AEA admission.

## Shenandoah, on Broadway

As noted in the commentary about *Shenandoah* (p.2), the original Broadway run was just coming to a close the summer of 1977, and recently Scott mentioned it was the first Broadway show that he saw. Rather than dissolving the company altogether however, the production was being readied to begin the "official" tour. (Sometimes this is referred to as the National Tour, although it never really covered more than the northeastern part of the country.) Many of the original cast members were retained—with John Cullum reprising his role as Charlie—when the tour opened on October 7, 1977 at Chicago's Ariel Theatre for a two week run. From there, the company moved to Detroit's Fisher Theater (October 25 to November 26), where John Raitt took over the lead for the remainder of the tour.



Ed Sala, Robert Johanson, John Raitt  
Johanson assumed the role of *The Corporal*  
when the Broadway production went on tour

Although *Theatre World* cites Scott as having been part of the Ensemble for this tour<sup>6</sup>, he did not actually join the troupe until the spring.

### Shenandoah, at the Paper Mill Playhouse, with Ed Ames

At the time the National Tour was getting underway, Scott was actually working in a different production of *Shenandoah*; this one starring Ed Ames, at the Paper Mill Playhouse in Millburn, New Jersey, running from October 26 to December 18, 1977. Scott was listed as the Confederate Sniper and in the Ensemble. The Sniper role is a very small speaking part, with only four lines in Act 2, and did not warrant a bio in the program. However, a program bio from the following year mentions Scott having been in two productions with Ames. That other production may have been prior to the Paper Mill—perhaps during that summer when Ames was appearing in *Shenandoah* and “filling large outdoor theaters in Kansas City, Indianapolis and Atlanta,”<sup>7</sup> After the production at the Paper Mill, Scott’s career path is more well-documented and contiguous, increasing the likelihood that Scott’s other appearance in *Shenandoah* with Ames was during the summer of 1977.

### On Our Own, television appearance

With only a small part in the Paper Mill production and especially since Millburn is only 20 miles from New York City, Scott most likely remained in town for the duration of the run, still auditioning, taking lessons and making contacts during the day. One of these auditions led to a guest appearance on a television show, *On Our Own*, one of the few primetime shows still taping in New York.

A half-hour sitcom for CBS, *On Our Own* starred Lynn Greene, as an art director, and Bess Armstrong, as a copywriter, at a Madison Avenue ad agency. (Supporting cast included a co-worker played by Dixie Carter, who years later would star in *Designing Women*—and we all know Scott’s history with that show!) Two young, single women in New York means a procession of young men will follow. Drawing from the vast array of available theater actors, the show featured many up-and-coming new faces, including Scott’s. With this appearance, Scott earned his Screen Actors Guild (SAG) card, but still didn’t have his Equity card for the stage.

According to *TV Guide*, Scott’s episode of *On Our Own* aired on Sunday, March 5, 1978 at 8:30 EST, right before *All in the Family*, one of the top-rated shows at that time. Let’s hope he was near a television and didn’t miss it, since he may have been in Ravenna, Ohio at the time, preparing for his role in *Godspell*.

### Godspell, in Ravenna, Ohio

Scott’s next acting role was in a musical very familiar to him, and one he called “his favorite” at the time. *Godspell* was conceived, written and originally directed by John-Michael Tebele, with Stephen Schwartz providing the music and lyrics, both winning Drama Desk Awards for their work. The original New York run began in 1971 and lasted six-and-a-half years, its popularity never waning in spite of a movie version release in 1973 and as many as seven road companies touring at one time. One of its songs, “Day by Day” became a Top 40 hit, peaking at #13 the summer of 1972, and the cast album remained on the charts for 12 weeks.<sup>8</sup> In our recent interview, Scott said, “*Godspell* was very dear to me when I was that age—when it was a show I could do. I had fun and it was one of the first ones that I really connected with.” It connected with audiences as well, as demonstrated by its longevity.

The production at the Carousel Dinner Theater in Ravenna, Ohio advertised the musical as having a cast “straight from New York.” It was directed and choreographed by Charles Abbott and began a week of previews on March 7, 1978. This was followed by two more full weeks of performances, and a final performance on Easter Sunday, March 26 (with an afternoon buffet). Scott had the role of Jesus, just as he did in Kirkwood’s First Presbyterian Church presentation when he was seventeen, and Robert Browning played John the Baptist/Judas. It was here that Scott first met Robert Johanson, another member of the cast of eight. [As mentioned above, Johanson was committed to the National Tour of *Shenandoah*, but I recently learned that the tour’s stop in Boston had been cancelled, perhaps giving him the freedom to accept the part in Ravenna.]



Scott in his earliest *Godspell* role

*Godspell* is truly incomparable. On the surface it may resemble a revue or a variety show, but “it is a thoroughly entertaining way to approach serious subject matter.”<sup>4</sup> Based on the Gospel according to St. Matthew, the soft-rock score complements lyrics taken from hymns and psalms. Like the disciples in the Bible, the followers in the show (usually seven to ten) are average people, and the parables Jesus teaches are modernized. In Act 1 of the original production

Jesus wears a Superman shirt and the followers—once they are “converted” to Jesus’ teachings—are depicted as joyful clowns, reflecting the celebratory atmosphere. In the 1973 movie version the followers become flower-children, donning face-painting, and dancing in child-like abandon to illustrate the change. Act 2 takes on a more serious tone with the rendering of Jesus’ betrayal and crucifixion. As a finale the cast sings a reprise of “Day by Day”—a prayer to “see Thee more clearly, love Thee more dearly, follow Thee more nearly,” so that the experience will never be forgotten.

Staging of the musical employs the talents and special skills of each particular cast member, involving them in mime, puppetry, improvisation and sketch comedy, playing musical instruments and even juggling. *Godspell* actually encourages creative freedom, making it a unique experience every time. If you are unfamiliar with the show, the video (now on DVD) is an excellent introduction—visually and musically, a glorious delight.

Most of the songs begin as solos but end accompanied by the entire ensemble. Scott had two such songs—“Save the People” and a duet with Browning, “All for the Best,”—plus a true solo, “Alas for You.” Although it isn’t clear how much the Ravenna production varied from the original, it was well-received by the public, with one reviewer calling it “Well done by this professional New York cast.”<sup>9</sup>

## Reunion

Prior to *Godspell*, and perhaps as early as 1977, Scott created the role of John Donnelly in a staged version of *Reunion* at the Broadway Drama Guild. Described as a play with music in two acts, the show included some songs written by Carly Simon and Lucy Simon. Since Scott never appeared in the final production, there is no need to go into further detail about the writers or the songs. Eventually the show was presented Off-off-Broadway at the Cubiculo Theatre from May 12 to 28, 1978 at which time Scott was firmly committed to the official tour of *Shenandoah*.

## Shenandoah, on tour



So exactly when did Scott join the *Shenandoah* tour, warranting the citation in *Theatre World*? I only have two programs with the National Tour cover art (left), starring John Raitt. Both mention Scott as understudy for the Lieutenant and the later one also includes him in the Ensemble. The earlier is from the American

Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford, Connecticut dated April 25-30, and the other is from the Shubert Theater in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania dated May 18 to June 11, 1978. Robert Johanson recalled several other stops in Maine, Massachusetts and Connecticut before the tour ended. As you may imagine the logistics of creating a tour, filling a schedule with one-, two- or several-week runs (based upon a venue’s size and ability to fill the house seats), each city in relatively close proximity to the one before, so that travel time is minimized, is a notable talent in itself.

Scott merely remembers “it was a big summer tour that went to a lot of different theaters and a few big outdoor theaters.” More memorable for him was that he finally acquired his Equity card.

As previously noted, Robert Johanson made his Broadway debut as part of the Ensemble (soldiers) with the opening night cast of *Shenandoah* in 1975, and then stayed with the original cast production (standing by for several other roles) throughout the run. During the National Tour, Johanson portrayed the Corporal, the largest of the soldiers’ roles, which included a sweet, melancholy solo, “The Only Home I Know.” In the course of the three-and-a-half years, he must have known this show backwards and forwards, and acquired some definite ideas about how it might be staged.

## Shenandoah, in the Poconos

Robert Johanson was given the opportunity to put those ideas into a new production of *Shenandoah*, which he directed and choreographed at the Pocono Playhouse in Pennsylvania, from August 29 to Sept 2, 1978. This was not Johanson’s first turn at choreography or directing, but with a large cast and ensemble, this musical can no doubt pose a challenge even for the most experienced. Chester Ludgin, a famous operatic singer and a Pocono Playhouse favorite, starred as Charlie. Johanson, in addition to reprising his role of the Corporal, hired several actors from the tour, including Scott and the two boys. Scott was cast as Jacob—the eldest son, serious and devoted to his father. Jacob participates in most of the family scenes in Act 1, sings “Pass the Cross to Me” with the Congregation, and has an extended song-and-dance number with the other four grown brothers, called “Next to Lovin’ (I Like Fightin’),” which develops into a fight scene. Jacob also plays a crucial part in Act 2 during the scene by the railroad tracks.

Johanson’s staging (see interview, right) delineated the brothers’ characters, moved the story along more seamlessly by omitting the blackouts between scenes, and he added a dog. “Doesn’t every farm family have a dog?”

[Continued on page 14]

## AN INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT JOHANSON

By Sharon Major  
In an e-mail March 1, 2006

SHARON: Your Broadway debut was in the original *Shenandoah* production in 1975 and the National Tour followed. You then went on to direct and choreograph the musical for the Pocono Playhouse in 1978 and the Paper Mill Playhouse the following spring. This means you lived and breathed this musical for four years. While you must certainly have loved the show, this is not a particularly “happy” story. Was it ever difficult dealing with the characters’ grief on a nightly basis, or maintaining enthusiasm for a show that continues for such a length of time?

ROBERT: No. It’s easier to deal with a dramatic show that you can get caught up in each night. It’s much easier than getting up your enthusiasm for a light-hearted romp that requires a certain naive freshness every night. One has to learn to do long runs in general, but I would always prefer a long run in a dramatic show to a farce. If the company has a solid base they are operating from—in the case of *Shenandoah* there is a clear sense of their relationships within their family and community—you can plug into that each night.

SHARON: Do you recall if there were any particular things that you sought to do in directing and choreographing that differed from the original?

ROBERT: I gave much more emphasis to fleshing out all the roles within the family. Originally the three middle brothers were very underdeveloped. I wanted to be sure to clearly show the joy, the connectedness of this family, before the tragedies began to occur. Also, I moved the play more seamlessly. Originally there were 13 blackouts which caused the show to jerk along a bit. I eliminated all but 3, by continuing the storytelling thru the transitions. I also made more of an effort to keep the war, which was just outside their door, much more present and frightening. And I added a dog. Doesn’t every farm family have a dog?

SHARON: Do you think the musical’s popularity has waned, or that it is still relevant to today’s audiences?

ROBERT: I think the musical will always be relevant. The story is about one of the most interesting times in our history and about those things that transcend any period: weddings, births, and deaths—family. It is the American *Fiddler on the Roof* as far as I’m concerned. It is not an easy show to do and perhaps less than fine productions have hurt the success - but the potential is there for a great theatrical experience.

SHARON: You worked with Scott again a few years later.

ROBERT: After Paper Mill, Scott played the Pirate King for me in *The Pirates of Penzance* in a very successful production in Darien, Connecticut with Christopher Hewett. It ran many weeks and Scott was soooooo fearless. At the first tech rehearsal he had a 10 foot rock bridge to jump from into the arms of the pirates below. He ran up for the first time and just jumped. No “let’s see someone else try this first” or “can we work thru this slowly.” He just jumped and the startled pirates caught him - just barely - his head was about an inch from the floor. But Scott was always that way. As you can imagine he was a superb Pirate King.

SHARON: Congratulations on the Carbonell Award nominations for *Nefertiti*. Are you still thinking of bringing this production to New York?



ROBERT: Thank you. It is so hard to get anything new to move forward. It definitely needs to continue. It’s very moving - the audience loves it - and very romantic.

[Ed. Note: Visit <[www.NefertitiTheMusical.com](http://www.NefertitiTheMusical.com)> for more info]

SHARON: Finally regarding my research: During those early years, you wrote a play called “The Hope Chest,” which is cited on Bakula’s stage career list. However, I cannot find any substantiation that this was ever produced, and I believe it may simply have been a staged reading.

ROBERT: Scott did a wonderful job at this reading. The play was scheduled to be produced at a theatre in Massachusetts, which folded mid-season. They subsequently got back on their feet, but I’d moved on to other things. I should get that play out and dust it off.

SHARON: Thank you again for answering all of my questions.

HAPPY TO BE OF HELP. BEST WISHES, ROBERT

I'd like to think that the company had more than just this one week to demonstrate their talents, but Labor Day arrived, summer had come to an end and it was probably back to New York for almost everyone. According to the program notes, Johanson had written a play called *The Hope Chest*. His next endeavor would be to see that play produced.

### The Hope Chest

Little is known about this play, except that during a preliminary reading Scott created the role of Ben. According to my previous interview with Scott (Observer #17), *The Hope Chest* was not a musical, making this one of only a handful of non-musical productions that Scott has been involved with onstage over the years. According to Johanson, "Scott did a wonderful job at this reading. The play was scheduled to be produced at a theater in Massachusetts [The Production Company], which folded mid-season. They subsequently got back on their feet, but I'd moved on to other things."

From the program bio for both Scott and Johanson, we can only place this project at some point between the Pocono and the Paper Mill *Shenandoah* productions.

### Oh! What a Lovely War

While Johanson was readying his play, Scott went on to appear in an ensemble revue called, *Oh! What a Lovely War*, at the Queens Festival Theatre in Flushing Meadow Park, New York. The musical was presented from October 14 to November 5, 1978, opening the season for Playwrights Horizons, a theater company offering several stages, mostly through subscriptions, allowing playwrights an opportunity to stage their work without commercial pressure.

Originally, "War" was a song parody revue written by Joan Littlewood, produced in London in 1963. It was transported to Broadway for a three-month run beginning September 1964. Set in World War I, all of the forty or so early-20<sup>th</sup>-Century songs were presented as parodies, "to decry the brutality and class inequity of war."<sup>10</sup> For instance, lyrics for the last line of "Over There" were changed to, "And we won't come back, we'll be buried Over There," rallying the audience's anti-Vietnam War sentiment. The production was nominated for five Tony awards, including Best Musical.

More than a decade later, with some modifications to songs and skits, director Philip Hinberg staged his ensemble of ten with atypical flair. The setting and costumes were carnival-like, juxtaposed before a backdrop of projected images of battlefields and cemeteries; the turntable stage was used as a carousel, presided over by a jolly ringmaster; and the show opened with two professional circus aerialists performing

high above the audience. Overall, one reviewer found it to be "inventive and quite dazzling."<sup>11</sup> Others found little humor in the material but acknowledged "the performers...are agreeable and skillful."<sup>10</sup> Perhaps in 1978 the urgency for an anti-war cry was less than during the mid-60's.

### Yesterday's Flowers

Probably during the spring of 1979, Scott created the role of Leonard in *Yesterday's Flowers* in a staged reading at the Manhattan Theatre Club in New York City. He later referred to the play as *East of Kansas*, but gave no indication as to the theme or type of show, or whether the title change meant he had participated in subsequent readings. The MTC confirmed that neither title was ever presented as a full production at their facility and could offer no information on stages that were rented for readings.

### Shenandoah, at the Paper Mill Playhouse, with John Raitt

With the production of *The Hope Chest* in Massachusetts no longer an option, Robert Johanson once again looked to *Shenandoah*. In a production that may have been very close to his production at The Pocono Playhouse, Johanson directed and choreographed the musical for the Paper Mill Playhouse in Milburn, N.J. from March 21 to April 22, 1979. It is a credit to *Shenandoah's* popularity that the Paper Mill would stage the same musical in two consecutive seasons. This production also marks the beginning of what would later become a long-term relationship between the Paper Mill and Robert Johanson, who would eventually serve as their artistic director for over a decade.

For this incarnation, John Raitt was hired to reprise his now-familiar role as Charlie Anderson. Many cast members from the Pocono production were brought in as well, including Scott who now portrayed James, second-oldest son and husband of Anne. Robert Browning, a familiar face from the *Godspell* in Ravenna, portrayed Sam. Johanson reprised his role of the Corporal, and of course, there had to be a dog. This production probably seemed more like a family reunion. As Scott recalls, "We always had a blast doing the show as one of the brothers."

During the first act, James' part is similar in scope—singing, dancing and fighting—to that of the earlier-described Jacob, and in Act 2 the role serves a critical function in the plot's development.

*Shenandoah* had become Scott's "waiter job," as he called it. Whenever he needed a paying job, the musical was around to help pay the bills. It was time to move on, yet Scott didn't stray very far from his roots.

## Magic to Do/Day by Day

Soon after the Paper Mill production closed, Scott found himself back in Ohio, appearing in the opening production for the Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park's 20<sup>th</sup> season—the world premiere of a revue of songs by composer/lyricist Stephen Schwartz. Running from June 29 to August 19, 1979 at the Robert S. Marx Theater, *Magic to Do* included 26 songs selected from Schwartz's five musicals. *Godspell*, *The Magic Show*, and *Pippin* (from which the title song originates) were such hits that at one point during the early '70s all three were playing simultaneously in New York. An early incarnation of *The Baker's Wife* and 1978's *Working*, had not fared as well, but were nonetheless represented among the selections. It is the latter that actually provided Frank Bentolucci and Ernie Zulia (who also directed) with the concept for the show—a reflection on an average person's dreams to look beyond an impersonal world and find love and identity.

The revue was presented by an ensemble of five: three women (C.J.Critt, Jill Hoel, and Valerie Karasek) and two guys (Scott and James Rich), costumed as blue-collar workers, housewives, secretaries, and teachers. The "five stars are perfect; each is a distinct stage personality with a distinct vocal style."<sup>12</sup> The sparse sets evoked a backstage aura, with costume changes draped on mannequins.



Scott in the Cincinnati *Magic to Do*  
Photo by Sandy Underwood

Scott's songs included, "Style" from *The Magic Show*, in which the three women sing backup. "Rueful Scott Bakula tears up the place with 'Style,' spicing up the rendition with homages to such disparates as Anthony Newley, Steve Martin and Walter Brennan."<sup>13</sup> "Bakula was made for the part of hyper-macho, ego-gratified dude, and his strutting self-satisfaction in the role is lesson in stage movement and timing."<sup>12</sup>

Scott also had two solos, both from *The Baker's Wife*: "Scott Bakula, a bravura singer, is quite the rakish gallant in 'Proud Lady' and gets to the tear ducts with 'If I Have to Live Alone.'"<sup>14</sup> Another reviewer agreed that with these two songs, "(Scott) reveals great sensitivity and vocal

flexibility."<sup>13</sup> As part of the ensemble, Scott would have performed in approximately half of the other numbers as well.

Reviews for the entire production couldn't have been more enthusiastic. Praise was lauded on the material, the director and choreography. "The five performers whose considerable talents carry the magic to the stage...cruise effortlessly through the range of character transformations and mood changes this production requires, with an exuberance that is absolutely infectious....They all have too much magnetism...(and) when the five occupy the same stage and share some of the same numbers, the audience is treated to an awesome display of talent."<sup>12</sup>

The audience response was "unprecedented" according to the Cincinnati Playhouse management, who extended the original run another three weeks, through August 19.

From Cincinnati, the show moved to Boston's Charles Playhouse, opening January 4, 1980 and running until February 10. The concept and order of the songs, costumes and sets remained essentially intact. Three of the original ensemble members reprised their parts for this production. "Five talented, attractive, accomplished singers make up the company. Whether working alone or as part of an ensemble, Scott Bakula, Valerie Karasek, Carolyn McCurry, Beth McVey and James Rich cannot be improved upon. They each possess the essence of the musical performer: a comedic ability, grace in movement, and a charismatic charm that endears them to the audience."<sup>15</sup>

The show continued to garner excellent reviews. Scott's solo, "Proud Lady" was called "a song of particular charm, modestly witty, nicely sung and acted, and...signifies most effectively what the show is about,"<sup>16</sup>

Immediately from Boston, *Magic to Do* moved to Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C. with previews from February 21, opening on the 24<sup>th</sup>, and scheduled through April 6. The revue was renamed *Day by Day*, probably to capitalize on the recognition value of Schwartz's hit tune. The cast and choreography were the same as in Boston, but in preparation for a potential move to commercial theaters and even New York, the show was given new costumes, sets and lights. Each cast member was assigned a persona (Scott is the Lineworker), and a couple of songs were added to Act 2, with the titular song actually only being sung as an encore.





In spite of all of the initial praise before coming to D.C., critics could summon up only average reviews for *Day by Day*. “The cast was tiny but talented, enthusiastic and professional...the lighting and set were fine, too...and the choreography was bright and clever....(Yet) the content of *Day by Day* is trifling...”<sup>17</sup> “Schwartz does not sustain a two-hour plus production with this material.”<sup>18</sup> Without strong support from the print media, the producers’ hopes that the musical would be carried to the for-profit sector quickly evaporated.

In less than a month Scott would find himself in another Schwartz-inspired production, again back in Ohio.

## The Baker’s Wife

After three unconventional musicals, all huge hits, Stephen Schwartz turned his attention in the mid-70’s to scoring a show that conformed to the traditional Broadway format. Joseph Stein (*Fiddler on the Roof*) created the book based upon a 1938 French film (originally an 1895 French tale). The initial out-of-town tryouts in 1976 were disastrous. Roles were recast, songs rewritten or replaced, and hopes for the show’s success disappeared. But the inclusion of several songs in *Magic to Do* proved that they retained their spark and appeal. Rounding out the season for the Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park was *The Baker’s Wife*, which ran from May 13 to June 8, 1980, and was hailed as a “world premiere”—presenting a new and completely revised version, mounted with the intention of finally reaching New York City.

Schwartz himself acknowledges that *The Baker’s Wife* does not have the “contemporary pop” sound that his earlier musicals did. “It seemed to me that it was inappropriate to write a real pop score for a story that was supposed to be taking place in 1931 in provincial France.” Instead the score was influenced by Debussy, Brel and French folk music.<sup>19</sup>

The tale is simple. Having had no baker for several weeks, the townspeople are elated that an experienced middle-aged baker (Alan North, in this incarnation) and his young wife, Genevieve (Krista Neumann) have decided to move to their community. Bread is baked and everyone is happy until Dominique (Bakula), the handsome and arrogant chauffer to the mayor, decides that Genevieve must be his next conquest.

In “Proud Lady” he sings:

“She gives me a smile,  
and in a voice sweet as wine  
She tells me I’m swine.  
She’s obviously mine.”



Scott as Dominique, the chauffer  
Photo by Sandy Underwood

Genevieve is persuaded and runs off with Dominique, leaving behind her distraught husband who can no longer bake bread for the town. The town must rally and convince Genevieve to return, if they ever want to be happy again.

Decent reviews prevailed for this Cincinnati production directed by Michael McMurray, especially with Genevieve’s solo, “Meadowlark,” which was cited as the best song in the show. “The problems rest in the material, not the first-rate production...a model of simple clarity. David Holdgrieve’s choreography is folksy and fun.”<sup>20</sup> The main criticism was that even with no subplot, most characters lacked a definite subtext upon which to base their actions.

Several years later the musical was taken to New York and London, with cast albums released, but none featured the cast members from the Cincinnati “premiere.” Since then, the show has been reworked and revived a handful of times—most recently last season at the Paper Mill Playhouse—but it has never become a phenomenal hit like Schwartz’s previous works.

Coverage of Scott’s stage career will continue in the next issue of *The Observer* beginning with his appearance in *Grease*, in Elmsford, New York in September 1980.

I wish to express my gratitude to the following people who helped me with the research and provided me with materials for this installment: Robert Johanson; Sandy Underwood, photographer; Shelley A. Sprang, Carousel Dinner Theatre; Patrick Parker, Paper Mill Playhouse; Cortny Helmick, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park; Kristin Miller, Manhattan Theatre Club; Mary Piero Carey, Stark Library; Dawn McLevy and Karen Scheffler for their initial research and getting me started in this pursuit; Anita Balestino for her last-minute suggestions; Gail Erickson for her diligence in tracking down leads when I felt overwhelmed; Helene Kaplan for the title; and everyone in the Bak-Pak for being there when I needed you.

<sup>1</sup> Rick Dee’s *Into the Night*, 3/4/91

<sup>2</sup> Barry Koltnow, *Orange County Register*, 3/3/89

<sup>3</sup> *Shenandoah*, Samuel French, Inc. 1975

<sup>4</sup> Scott Miller, *From Assassins to West Side Story*, 1996

<sup>5</sup> Ernest Leogrande, *Daily News* 3/21/77

<sup>6</sup> *Theatre World*, Vol. 35

<sup>7</sup> *Shenandoah* program, Paper Mill Playhouse, 1977

<sup>8</sup> *Billboard*, 1972, [Thanks, KFB]

<sup>9</sup> Fran Harper, *Ravenna-Kent Record-Courier* 3/13/78

<sup>10</sup> Eileen Blumenthal, *Village Voice*, 10/30/78

<sup>11</sup> Tom McMorrow, *N.Y. City News*, 11/2/78

<sup>12</sup> Ozzie Kleinas, *Journal-News*, 7/5/79

<sup>13</sup> Roger Grooms, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 7/3/79

<sup>14</sup> Jerry Stein, *Cincinnati Post* 6/30/79

<sup>15</sup> Joe Butler (Boston Theater Reviewer), Jan 1980

<sup>16</sup> Elliot Norton, *Boston Herald-American*, 1/5/80

<sup>17</sup> Dan Griffin, *Washington Post*, 2/29/80

<sup>18</sup> Paul, *Variety*, 4/2/80

<sup>19</sup> Musicalschwartz.com

<sup>20</sup> Tom McElfresh, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 5/14/80

## A TRIBUTE TO CHARLES ROCKET

By Sharon Major

Family, friends and fans have been heartbroken since the coroner of Farmington, Connecticut confirmed that Charles Rocket committed suicide on October 7, 2005. Tall (6' 5"), with lanky-rugged good looks, Rocket was exactly the sort of actor Don Bellisario brings to the small screen time and again. Halfway through his 25-year career, Rocket guest-starred in two *QL* episodes, and was part of the regular cast in Bellisario's short-lived series, *Tequilla & Bonetti*. Charles is survived by his wife, Beth, and his son, Zane.

Searching for information about Charles bears little fruit. Probably the best assumption one could make is that he was not a publicity seeker, at least in typical Hollywood fashion. Friends and co-workers called him Charlie and he was very funny—sometimes with a bit of a naughty streak—but always loved and respected.

Charlie was born Charles Claverie in Bangor, Maine on August 24, 1949. When he was 20 he enrolled in the Rhode Island School of Design, in Providence, R.I., where he studied filmmaking. His sense of improv was already evident as he and an artist friend, Sam Gosch, became environmental superheroes—Captain Packard and Lobo—once showing up “unannounced and uninvited” at the state's House of Representatives General Assembly.

Charlie's professional screen career began in 1974 as a news reporter for a local tv station in Providence, and he got his network television break hosting “Weekend Update” on *Saturday Night Live* in New York City during the 1980-81 season. Creating the “Rocket Reports” (with his new stage name) allowed him to utilize his off-the-wall sense of humor.

From New York, Charlie moved to Los Angeles and began his acting career, which included over 50 television guest-appearances, supporting roles in films, and voiceover work in the animation and videogame business. (see p. 20)

In the 3<sup>rd</sup>-season *QL* episode, “A Little Miracle,” (airdate 12/22/90) Rocket played Michael Blake, a dour real-estate tycoon with little interest in celebrating Christmas until Al provides the Dickensian touch. In *QL*'s 4<sup>th</sup>-season ender, “A Leap for Lisa,” (airdate 5/20/92) Rocket portrayed Commander Dirk Riker, the man accusing Young Al (and Sam) of his wife's murder. In between these two appearances, Rocket portrayed Captain Midian Knight in *Tequilla & Bonetti*, but that account is best left to Karen.

### From Karen Funk Blocher

I was lucky enough to visit the set of *T&B* once. My best memory of the day was watching Charlie Rocket shoot about five takes of one piece of dialogue, and say it slightly differently every time. I wrote him a fan letter about it, and got a handwritten reply. I wish I could find that piece of paper again!

He was also great in a couple of *QL* episodes, in *Moonlighting* and on *Doctor, Doctor*. I didn't care for him on *Saturday Night Live*, but I've admired his work in everything since then, even when he played really twisted characters.

Dang it. I don't want him to be dead.

## From Charles Rocket's Colleagues

### Don Bellisario

Of all the actors I've worked with over the years, Charlie was by far the most complex. He was funny, unpredictable and deceptively good. On the set his antics on and off camera were impossible to separate. It was only in the editorial room that you realized that those he had incorporated into his performance were gems that fit his character.

I will miss him.



### Scott Bakula

It's a terrible loss and a shame he's not here anymore.

What was funny to me about him was that he played heavy parts, but he was such a funny guy. He was out of left field. He reminded me of Saget a little bit sometimes, where the persona that you see on the screen doesn't necessarily match who they are off-camera.

He was a real character and a joy to work with and certainly wonderful on the show. “A Little Miracle” was Michael Watkins' first episode as a director, and Charlie was very generous and easy-going with Michael as we helped him get through his inauguration—and very successfully, I thought. The rest is history for Michael, since he's been directing and producing up a storm ever since.

Charlie was a great guy and very funny. We laughed so much during that silly scene where I was measuring his trousers and crawling around on the floor. We barely ever made it through that scene. The cameras kept rolling and we were just having such a great time.

### Rich Whiteside

I just remember Charlie being as supremely confident in person, as he was with his acting choices—a true professional who came to work with a commitment to the part. I didn't really get to talk with him on a personal level, but the intensity of his performances made a big impression on me. It was a bit intimidating, and I felt that I was forced to match that intensity or else look weak.

### James Whitmore, Jr. (Director for “A Leap for Lisa”):

Charlie Rocket was one of the truly funny people I've known. I loved the guy, and if I had a role of any kind and I could get Charles, I was sure of perfection. I have no idea what happened to him, but I do know he gave joy and happiness to all of us who knew him. He leaves a large hole in this world.

***Tequila & Bonetti:*  
An Appreciation  
By Karen Funk Blocher**

*Tequila & Bonetti* (CBS, Belisarius Productions, aired January to April 1992) has the same basic problem as the Tom Hanks/Peter Scolari series *Bosom Buddies*. Each show had a fundamentally bad premise, which great casting and good writing could not overcome.

For those of you who have forgotten this show, or never saw it, an explanation is in order. Tequila is an unusual police dog, on a couple of counts. For one thing, he's a Brown French mastiff, not a German shepherd or a Doberman, typical police dog breeds. For another, the television audience can hear Tequila's thoughts in voiceover. Tequila (voiced by Brad Sanders) sounds like a streetwise police detective – like Taurean Blacque's character on *Hill Street Blues*, but with more attitude. He's obsessed with poodles and burritos, and has human intelligence and a dog's sense of smell. This makes the dog preternaturally competent. His running commentary on the action goes unheard by the show's human characters, except for a psychic named Gina (Liz Torres), who has a recurring role after the first several episodes.

"Visiting Detective" Nico Bonetti (Jack Scalia), as Captain Knight (Charles Rocket) likes to call him, is a very Italian-American cop from New York City. After accidentally shooting and killing a teenaged girl, he comes west in his rose-colored Cadillac convertible, and winds up working at the South Beach police department. Culture shock ensues as he tries to cope with the eccentricities of "La-La-Land"—and neither Bonetti nor the television audience is able to forget what happened back in New York. Bonetti's "righteous shooting" appears in both the opening credits each week and at the end of a weekly montage in which Bonetti plays the piano. His partners are Tequila and rookie cop Angela Garcia (Mariska Hargitay), who is very capable and upbeat, despite the fact that her police-officer husband died in the line of duty. Her daughter, Teresa (Troian Bellisario), thinks her mother still works at an art gallery until a sexual predator's grudge forces Garcia to tell her daughter the truth.

The precinct is run by Captain Midian Knight (Rocket), sometimes called Captain Midnight behind his back. This tea-drinking, script-flogging, pastel-wearing head honcho (with ambitions as a screenwriter) is as competent as he is eccentric. Rounding out the cast are Terry Funk ("Heart of a Champion") as Sergeant Nuzo, technical advisor Joe Vita as Officer Vita, and W.K. Stratton ("Genesis," "Good Night, Dear Heart," and the "Trilogy" episodes) as Detective Lee.

The show started off as mostly drama. What humor lay there was mostly in Tequila's not-so-funny wisecracks and leg-lifting jokes. Soon, however, veteran *Quantum Leap* writers Tommy Thompson and Robin Jill Bernheim developed a cast of

lovable eccentrics (Knight, Gina, etc.) with both humor and heart. Charles Rocket as Knight was especially fun to watch, whether he was looking for script ideas, keeping Bonetti in line, worrying about his Mercedes, "Hans," or telling the ridiculously tragic story of his dog Scruffy. His deadpan delivery and occasional displays of emotion gave real conviction to even the silliest dialogue, making it that much funnier. Liz Torres ("It's a Wonderful Leap") as Gina was another brilliant member of the ensemble cast.

The improved quality of writing went largely unnoticed, however, because the television audience had already tuned out. Nobody wanted to watch a show about a talking dog, even if he didn't talk in a way that other characters could hear him. The series lasted just 12 episodes.

How did Donald P. Bellisario come to be involved with such a "dog" of a series? It wasn't his idea. After the success of the 1989 Tom Hanks film *Turner & Hooch* (and the failure of a 1990 series based on that film), Universal came to Bellisario and asked him to do a show about a talking police dog. *Tequila & Bonetti* was the result. Incidentally, the show's original title was to be *Tequila & Boner*, with the main characters having the same names as the two thugs in "M.I.A." The joke was that the human was named Boner. However, the risqué nature of the name led to the slight change. This apparently took place at the same time that Jack Scalia replaced another actor in the lead role. Since those scenes needed to be reshot anyway, it was a good opportunity to fix the name at the same time.

What is the legacy of a failed tv series? Few people remember *T&B* at this point, and those who do are likely to lump it in with other ill-conceived series such as *Me and the Chimp*. However, this is probably a mistake. Despite the silly premise, there was a lot to like here. It's too bad that few people will ever get to enjoy what these writers, producers and actors, many of them from *Quantum Leap*, managed to accomplish at the South Beach police station in 1992.



*Captain Knight's police station is very L.A.,  
very Venice Beach*

Believe it or not, that wasn't the end of the show. It was revived in Italy for a full season of 22 episodes in 2001. Jack Scalia reprised his role as Nico Bonetti, with Alessia Marcuzzi as his partner, Detective Fabiana Pebble, and an otherwise all-Italian cast. This production also aired in Germany.

Although the show itself was ill-conceived, Rocket was brilliant in it as Captain Knight. He did a bit in one episode about his lame, deaf, brain-tumored dog, Scruffy, that was one of the most perversely funny things I've ever seen, largely because every outrageous word of it was treated with absolute conviction and emotion. The tone of the show started out mostly drama, but it got better as writers Tommy Thompson, Robin Jill Bernheim and others played up the comedic side of the show. Remember, *QL* has lots of very funny bits, from the very same people.

### The Story of Scruffy

From the episode "Fetch This, Pal" by Tommy Thompson  
(Tequila's running commentary omitted)

Bonetti: You lost a partner?



Captain Midian Knight: No, but I lost a friend. His name was Scruffy. Cute little guy. He was one of those teensy-weensy little 'yap-yap-yap-yap' dogs, you know, with the big bulging eyes, running all the time.

Bonetti: Yeah. Cute.

Knight: Yeah, he was. I'll never forget the look on his little sunken face when I used to come home from school. Hi, Scruffy. He'd flop off the couch and drag himself across the floor just to see me.

Bonetti: He'd drag himself?

Knight: Yeah. His hind legs were fused at birth. The other little kids used to call him... Drumstick.

Bonetti: Captain, what's your point?

Knight: I guess what I'm trying to say, Bonetti, is that even though that little Scruffy was a total veg, I really loved that little guy.

Bonetti: Yeah.

Knight: You know, I tried to teach him how to fetch for a whole week before I realized he was deaf?

Bonetti: What?

Knight: He was deaf. The vet says it was caused by the brain tumor. My folks told me later that's probably what drove him over the edge.

Bonetti: Over the edge?

Knight: We lived on the 35<sup>th</sup> floor. It's okay, though. The vet says that he really didn't feel a thing.



The star of our show - sort of.



Captain Midian Knight - police captain and frustrated screenwriter.



Knight is devastated to learn that his beloved Mercedes, "Hans," is on the list of "hot" cars.



Bonetti and Garcia fill Knight in about the car theft ring.



Knight remembers his dog Scruffy...



...and is still sad about the dog's tragic life and death.



Act Break title card.

Liz Torres is wonderful as  
Gina the psychic......who is freaked out when she  
hears the "Spirit"  
--(actually Tequila) talking.Rodney Kageyama plays one of  
Bonetti's neighbors.

**Another**  
**Tequila & Bonetti**  
**Flashback**

The worst part of *T & B* is one of  
the title characters.

### String Theory Redux

Feature films are underlined, TV series are in italics, TV movies are shown in regular type with (TV) after, (V) signifies video and (VG) videogame. The year in parentheses indicates date of film release or broadcast appearance. (Most information obtained at [imdb.com](http://imdb.com))

**Charles Rocket** (A Little Miracle, A Leap for Lisa) [1949 to 2005]  
*3rd Rock from the Sun*: A Dick Replacement (2001)  
*The Adventures of Hyperman*: Oceans a Leavin' (1996) (voice)  
Age of Mythology (VG,voice) (2002)  
*Batman Beyond*: Hooked Up (1999) (voice)  
*Batman: Gotham Knights*: Legends of the Dark Knight (1998)  
*Batman: Gotham Knights*: Mean Seasons (1998)  
*Batman: Gotham Knights*: Never Fear (1997)  
Bleach (2002)  
Brain Smasher... A Love Story (1993) (V)  
*California Girls* (1985) (TV)  
Carlo's Wake (1999)  
Charlie's Ghost Story (1994)  
*Cybill*: Ka-Boom! (1998)  
*Cybill*: Cybill in the Morning (1998)  
*Dances with Wolves* (1990)  
Delirious (1991)  
Descent 3 (VG,voice) (1999)  
*Doctor, Doctor*: The Terminator (1990)  
Down Twisted (1987)  
Dry Martini (1998)  
Dumb & Dumber (1994)

Earth Girls Are Easy (1988)  
Fathers' Day (1997)  
*Flying Blind* (regular,as Dennis Lake)(1993)  
Fraternity Vacation (1985)  
*Grace Under Fire*: Riverboat Queen (1997)  
*Hardcastle and McCormick*: The Yankee Clipper (1985)  
*Hawaiian Heat*: Picture Imperfect (1984)  
Hocus Pocus (1993)  
*The Home Court* (regular, as Judge Gil Fitzpatrick)(1995)  
Honeymoon Academy (1990)  
How I Got Into College (1989)  
It's Pat (1994)  
*Jenny*: A Girl's Gotta Protect Her Assets (????)  
The Killing Grounds (1997)  
*The King of Queens*: Steve Moscow (2003)  
*Kôtetsu tenshi Kurumi*[aka *Steel Angel Kurumi*] (1999) (voice: English version)  
*Law & Order: Criminal Intent*: Pas de Deux (2004)  
*Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman*: Operation Blackout(1994)  
*Max Headroom*: (recurring) (1987-88)  
*Men in Black: The Series*: The Inanimate Syndrome (1997) (voice)  
*Miami Vice*: Florence Italy (1986)  
Miracles (1986)  
*Moonlighting* (recurring, as Richard Addison)(1986-89)  
Murder at 1600 (1997)  
*Murder, She Wrote*: The Family Jewels(1990)  
*Murphy's Law*: (regular, as Victor Beaudine)(1988)

New Suit (2002)  
*Normal, Ohio* (regular, as Danny)(2000)  
*The Outlaws* (1984) (TV)  
*Parker Lewis Can't Lose*: Randall Without a Cause (1991)  
*Picket Fences*: Dante's Inferno (1996)  
*The Pretender*: To Serve and Protect (1996)  
*Remington Steele*: Have I Got a Steele for You (1985)  
*Saturday Night Live* (regular,1980-81)  
Shade (2003/1)  
Short Cuts (1993)  
*Star Trek: Voyager*: The Disease (1999)  
*Star Wars*: Jedi Starfighter (VG,voice) (2002)  
*Star Wars*: Starfighter (VG, voice) (2001)  
*Static Shock*: Shebang (2003) (voice)  
Steal Big Steal Little (1995)  
*The Steel Collar Man* (1985) (TV)  
*Superman*: Superman's Pal (1999) (voice)  
*Tequila and Bonetti* (regular, as Capt. Midian Knight) (1992)  
Tex, the Passive-Aggressive Gunslinger (2000)  
*thirtysomething*: Going Limp (1990)  
Titan A.E. (2000) (voice)  
Tom and Huck (1995)  
*Touched by an Angel* (recurring, as Adam) (1994-2003)  
*Tracey Takes On...*: Road Rage (1999)  
TV Party (2005) (V)  
Wagons East (1994)  
*Wild Palms* (miniseries) (1993)  
*Wings*: Call of the Wild (1994)  
*The X Files*: Three of a Kind (1999)  
*The Zeta Project*: Change of Heart (2001)

## Re-imagining *Shenandoah*

Friends of Ford's Theatre Member Event

With Jeff Calhoun, Tobin Ost, and Paul Tetreault

March 20, 2006

Transcribed by Jo Fox

How do you take a nineteenth-century theater and a traditional twentieth-century musical, and make a production that is appealing to a twenty-first-century audience? Fortunately this is exactly what the creators of this *Shenandoah* revival at historic Ford's Theatre have succeeded in doing. Their combined talent and expertise has achieved a strikingly inventive solution that has been delighting theatergoers since the show opened.

In 2001 and 2002, **Jeff Calhoun** directed and choreographed the Deaf West and Mark Taper Forum productions of *Big River: The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in Los Angeles, winning both Ovation and Drama Critics Circle Awards. After its success in LA, he took the show to Broadway, where it was nominated for the 2004 Tony Award for Best Revival of a Musical and won the Tony Honor for Excellence in Theatre. Last season, the production was mounted at Ford's Theatre in DC, receiving six Helen Hayes nominations, including best direction. That continued success that has brought him once again to Ford's as director/choreographer for this revival of *Shenandoah*.

**Tobin Ost**, both Set and Costume Designer for this revival, previously worked with Jeff Calhoun on Broadway's *Brooklyn, the Musical*. He did costume design for *Almost Heaven: Songs of John Denver*, and set design for *Fighting Words*, both off-Broadway productions. Jeff was pleased that Tobin was available to work on this production.

**Paul Tetreault**, in his second season as Producing Director for Ford's Theatre, acted as host for the evening. Of *Shenandoah*, Tetreault wrote in his welcome letter (published in the playbill), "In this age of high-tech wars fought by all-volunteer armies, it seems difficult to imagine our own lives being so personally touched by the tragedies of war. But the Civil War left virtually no American family – North or South – untouched by the deeply personal and human toll war takes on society." At the reception held Monday evening, March 20<sup>th</sup>, Tetreault led the discussion in back-stage planning and how the current run of *Shenandoah* is very much a play for these times.

Lighting designer Michael Gilliam and musical director/arranger Steven Landau are also an integral part of the creative team that Calhoun has assembled for *Shenandoah*. Although neither was present at this event, their contribution should be acknowledged. Previously both worked with Jeff Calhoun on *Big River*.



Paul Tetreault, photo by Jo Fox

**PAUL:** Let me start off by telling you how this project got started and then I can let Jeff correct any errors. Last year, we were doing *Big River* and Jeff happened to be in town.

We were actually doing local auditions for filling out the company of *Big River*. Somewhere along the way in auditions, someone actually sang one of the songs from *Shenandoah*. Jeff said, oh I love that show, and my associate producer, who was at the auditions with Jeff said Paul loves that show also. The two of you ought to talk. We talked shortly after that audition and the next thing you know, here we are a year-plus later and we have this magnificent show on our stage. It's just those little happenstances that make these shows come together sometimes. Jeff did an extraordinary job with *Big River* and I've been a fan of his ever since I was a little boy. [This was a joke. -Ed]

**JEFF:** I think we're the same age.

**PAUL:** We have a very rough comedy routine we've been working on. But I went to Jeff and said let's work on this project and he started talking about the team he wanted to work with in putting this project together. And one of the first people he mentioned was Tobin Ost who would work on the sets and costumes. So that's where it was all born. Why don't you tell about how we started moving forward and we had the two of you on board? How do you guys start on the concept? How do you take a musical that was written over 30 years ago and hasn't had a major revival in 20 years, and get to this very relevant piece on our stage?



Jeff Calhoun, photo by Joan Marcus

**JEFF:** That's a good question. I hadn't thought about that. You read the script and mostly you think about how you don't want to do it. It read like a very old-fashioned show, and not necessarily in a negative way, so I knew I didn't want to do it the way the original must have looked. I didn't research it because I didn't want to see how the original looked.

I did the revival of *Grease!* and *Big River* and now this, and I never saw any of these shows before I did them. Inevitably, none of us are that good that we can not steal. If you see something, it just gets into your body. And I don't read reviews. There's something about seeing something in print that goes right to your soul and penetrates you. And as much as you try to erase that input, I don't think you can do that. So I didn't want to see what the original looked like.

I ruled out wagons. You know what wagons are? They push scenery from the side that has a piece of a house or something. They bring in a painted drop. That's how they used to do shows, which was fine. But this is the twenty-first century. So I wanted to figure out a way to tell the show that wasn't old-fashioned even though it IS old-fashioned. It's still structured the way it was in the golden era, and I love that and I didn't want to ruin that. But I needed to make it cinematic. Today, we don't sit in the dark and listen to the orchestra while they change scenery. We've advanced beyond that. So I talked to Tobin.

**TOBIN:** The first key was figuring out how to show the Shenandoah Valley on a stage when you have a proscenium? Because a proscenium is little. When I got this show, we rented a car and I drove for hours around the Shenandoah Valley and it's just awesome.



Tobin Ost, photo by Jo Fox

I've never seen anything like it. And I got really nervous. How do we put this on stage? Because it's so vast, it's impossible to put this on stage. Also, the first song starts with the army from the South and the army from the North. Well, you need 18

people on both sides. There are 36 people. That's cost prohibitive. You can't. No producer will ever have 36 people on stage and the Shenandoah Valley.

**JEFF:** In the course of conversation what we really wanted to do was frame a piece of history. And once we hit on framing a piece of history, that's when the frame was created. And then I realized if we just put a few actors in the frame, it would look like the cast was bigger. And that's how I came up with: if we have 18 people from the North, that's pretty good, and if those same people could be from the South, then I'd have 18 from both sides and I wouldn't need 36. When you read the first scene, it talks about brother fighting brother. And I thought we really were fighting ourselves because we are all part of this bigger world. Just what is geography? Lines drawn in the sand. So I thought it would be a nice metaphor. Let's take 18 people and when they face stage left they're the South and when they face stage right they're the North and that would be instead of brother fighting brother, we're fighting ourselves. And putting that many people in the frame, we could make the cast look bigger. And you can see that the hills, which are much bigger and the hills expanding past the frame look like we can't contain the hills. It makes it look like it's vaster than it really is. Those were the key issues. Tobin can be much more articulate about this because he really is a visual genius. But having the frame and the hills, for me was the key on the decision to do the show in a contemporary way.

**TOBIN:** So tell me what other director would say, "and they face this way and will be one side [of the war], and face that way and be another side. Plus we have the Shenandoah Valley which you need to put on stage." How do you then take that concept and that vision and begin to execute it?

**JEFF:** What did you just say? That's a terrible idea and we should do something else?

**TOBIN:** No. (laughs) I mean I wish you could see the book that Jeff keeps—it's kind of a diary. He's an amazingly visual director and that's such a blessing, because it makes the designer's job so easy. Some of the first ideas he came to the table with were already sketched out. My part is just kind of fine-tuning. The idea of the bed coming together—the family building the bed on the stage, all these things—is amazing and such a blessing to work with a director who's not just saying oh, give me a set. There's such an active involvement with Jeff in staging and blocking. I don't think you see a thing on the stage that Jeff isn't using. It has to have some purpose or get rid of it. So I'm just kind of filling in the cracks. I think some of the most brilliant things in this show were Jeff's from square one, from that little book of his where he was keeping notes of how this thing happens. As far as the nuts and bolts of it, this theatre is a very special place to design for. No matter how old-fashioned a show might be, this theatre forces you to think about how to stage things in ways you might not normally. There are very few stages in this country where the apron from the white column frame is 17 feet. You want to play most of your scene toward

the front. It's nice that you have all that space back there, but you can lose actors very easily the farther back you go.

**JEFF:** I think you need to explain what you mean by "apron."



*Stage setup for Act 1 with guns displayed on the apron  
Photo by Jenna Major*

**TOBIN:** The proscenium is what frames the stage. The apron is the part of the stage in front of the proscenium. It literally translates to everything in front of the scene. In some theaters, it's just a modest little bit. But in this one look at all we have to work with.



*Lincoln's box (draped with bunting) sits above the stage  
Note the difficulty in bringing large set pieces on stage  
from the wings, photo by Jo Fox*

**JEFF:** And you're not going to hide the Lincoln box. That's just a given. We are so lucky and fortuitous to have a show that is so topical and so perfect for this space. As far as not doing wagons and rolling things that's just a matter of course, because where are they really going to be able to come from?

So it's been an interesting space to work with. The solution that we came up with might have been very different in a different proscenium house. It's interesting to see how the space dictates what you ultimately end up with.

**TOBIN:** And look at the frame. It really looks like it fits into this theater. And "The Nation Mourns"...

**JEFF:** We found that from the funeral procession in New York in City Hall. It was on a banner.

**TOBIN:** This seemed appropriate, not only given the topical application here but in the grander sense of what the show's all about. We just kept it together and kept it relevant. And also, aside from anything else, it helps to control the space. When we were first talking about it, Jeff was talking about pieces of a frame that might come together but we never spoke about the whole frame but it helps to control the space. Because, if you have all this vastness, where's your eye going to look? You want actors to occasionally get lost on it, sure, but then you want to be able to focus on them like in a movie and the frame helps us do that as well. Certainly lighting does also, but so does the frame within a frame.

**JEFF:** I really thought the frame would fly out or deconstruct. It was Tobin's idea to let it sit there through the whole show. It was a great challenge to be told that. But throughout the show, it really was our friend.

**PAUL:** Another thing I'd say that we are not seeing, this was an edit we did, the back walls to either side. Initially those were mirrored, to give the idea that the hills would just keep going. Depending where you sat in the audience, you wouldn't necessarily see where it went.

**TOBIN:** With that being the case, we very carefully calculated a set of lines that if an actor stands here, then an audience member over there will be able to see them. Once we got rid of that idea, I was never really counting on the blocking and choreography using these hills as much as we did. And when Jeff came in with a choreographer and the team to sort of play on this I was really shocked and amazed with how much they would be used. The first time I walked out I said oh boy, what did I just create? It's steep; it's like hiking back there.

**JEFF:** It's deceptive in the audience how steep it is. Part of this set was built in Pittsburgh; I'm from Pittsburgh. And I went to look at it, and the one path you see now is like a goat path. That wasn't there in Pittsburgh. I asked Tobin, how do we... and Tobin picked up a chain saw and just started chewing scenery and chopping a hill. It helps, and the actors have really acclimated to it beautifully.

**TOBIN:** To this day, it still amazes me what they're able to do. It's steeper than it looks, I can tell you.

**PAUL:** Tobin, you mentioned something and I want Jeff to comment on it about not putting anything on the stage we don't use. There's efficiency to the design, and it needs efficiency in the way that you work, Jeff. There really isn't anything on the stage or anything in the design that isn't utilized.



**JEFF:** Well, I'm a minimalist. Sometimes people like a lot of scenery. People love stuff on stage. I like beauty on stage. I really do. Tommy Tune was my mentor and Tommy also has a great sense of visual. He worked very closely with his designers and I'm sure that's why I work the way I do. I don't know. I just don't like a stage that's all junked up with stuff. It's easy to do that. It's easy to put a lot of stuff out there and people seem to like it. It doesn't appeal to my aesthetics. Why have it on stage if we don't need it? Sometimes we work backwards. I say I have to have this in a scene and then we make that beautiful. But we do use everything on stage.

**Jo Fox:** It centers you more on the story I think.

**JEFF:** You have to have good material to do that. A lot of times people decorate a scene because there's not much of a story or depth of feeling—they try to fool you. It's easy to do a French revue. You know the French jazz it up with lots of curlicues and it's not as difficult to do that. I like that. There's nothing wrong with the cancan and all that but it's easier to hide mistakes when you have a lot of doilies and frills. It's very hard to tell simple. If you know design, it's really hard. You pare away everything extraneous. You're just left with what you need. And that's difficult to do. You don't see braces holding the frame. That kind of thing is hard to do.

**TOBIN:** One of the things we learned in this process is that simple doesn't necessarily mean cheap. You know, in one of our meetings, Jeff said simple is often more expensive because it's an element like the frame or the hills and it's got to be perfectly done. If you have a lot of stuff on the stage, you can sometimes get away with having junk up there. With this, every piece, because it's used so specifically, it really does take a lot of effort to get it right.

**JEFF:** But even if you could have everything there and that was the decision you made, you're also dealing with the pragmatics of how you get it there and how you get it off. This show evolves through a whole lot of scenes, a whole lot of locations and you don't want to bring this show to a screeching halt just so you can move things in and out.

**TOBIN:** Given the decisions we made to not have things move in on tracks, how do we block it? If we have church benches come and go, how do we do that gracefully and how does that happen? I think it's pretty deft as we have it. I can't imagine having more even if we could or wanted to.

**PAUL:** That's an interesting point. Would you talk about that, Jeff? At what point did you decide to be sparse in decorating the stage or did that come up from the very beginning? The sense of movement in the piece and the fluidity of this piece and the lack of stagehands walking furniture off and on for big scene shifts, at what point did that become part of the concept and how did you walk that problem through?

**JEFF:** At the very beginning, the first time we meet, we can't chose between A or B design, if we don't know how to get

there. Nothing's by chance. We spent the last 12 months designing this show. So before we even cast it or start having rehearsals, Tobin and I knew how this show was going to work. We knew how it was going to move. We knew we were not going to have stagehands. We knew we would stand on the hills with dead bodies everywhere. We knew the floor would rise to show the inside of the Anderson house, that the chandelier would come down. We tracked the whole thing like a ballet. My background is in choreography and so my director's eye is that of a choreographer. It's all a dance whether it's a piece of furniture or an actor; it all feels like a ballet.

**TOBIN:** I wouldn't call it a warm-up show because it was even more moving than *Shenandoah*, but a show we worked on together was *Brooklyn, the Musical*. That was the first show Jeff and I worked on together. There were five actors. All the changes were motivated the same as *Shenandoah*. You wound them up and watched them go. There wasn't one thing that happened on stage at any one time. They were all over the place like in *Shenandoah*. This is more practical scenery, but *Brooklyn* had a similar evolution from one scene to the next.

**JEFF:** Last year I drove Tobin crazy because I always asked how we get there. How does that work?

**TOBIN:** He kept me honest.

**JEFF:** And the set looks like the drawings. If I showed the original drawings, they look exactly like what you see on the stage and that doesn't happen very often. Designers like to make drawings with really beautiful and extensive sets and beautiful costumes. But Tobin's very honest. His drawings and his sketches look exactly like what you get. And I love that.

**TOBIN:** Speaking of costumes, the size of the stage is great. When you get six women wearing Civil War era hoop skirts, it becomes the scenery. You don't need more than that. That tells exactly where you are, even if they were on folding chairs.

**JEFF:** It's nice to work with someone who knows costumes as well as scenery. It just helps to make it all look like the same piece. I think that's why a lot of the greats, Tommy Tune, Bob Fosse, they were choreographers as well as directors. You never saw where one job description stopped and the other took over. They tried to make it seamless. Can we take questions? Let's have some questions.

**Nancy:** At what point do you look into the safety of it? I mean the action that you have there, ladders and people going up and down them, the fights...

**JEFF:** We have a lot of double casts (laughing)...

**Nancy:** Do you design that in or does that come later when you're actually rehearsing?

**JEFF:** Sometimes both. Sometimes it's all fine when they're working in the rehearsal hall where it's completely flat, and then they get on stage and suddenly it's like hmmm. But that's the builders. Like the ladder. For the first week in the theatre it wasn't safe and the actors didn't feel comfortable climbing it. So we didn't. We waited until the experts came in and made it secure. So obviously, the actor's safety is of the utmost importance. It was the same with the hills. The actors were a little freaked out at first—as was I, before the chain saw.



*Stage setup before Act 2  
Actors can enter and exit at back of the stage,  
actually coming over the hills;  
Michael Gilliam's lighting depicts the colors  
of the hills and sky from dawn to dusk*

**PAUL:** One of the interesting things about the process is when they move from the rehearsal hall where they do the bulk of the rehearsing and it's all sort of mocked up on the floor. When they come into the theatre for the very first time, the actors will actually walk through the scenery. They don't do a rehearsal, they just walk through the scenery, and Tobin and Jeff will be there to try and get them comfortable with it because, all joking aside, if the actors don't feel safe, you'll never get the performance out of them, because all they'll be thinking about is worrying about where they are. They have to be able to go up and down those hills as if they are walking outdoors, without even thinking about where they're stepping and what's coming up next. They've got to have that total comfort.

**JEFF:** It is a precarious set, but it's a precarious time in history, and that's good. It needs to be that. Like the guns we have. We have three live weapons that really fire—the safety precautions we go through—I've never had live guns in a show I've done. I've never even known how to fire them; I've done tap dance musicals. So we had experts come in and talk to the cast about safety and we had to put the cast through that before they were allowed to fire the guns. They're not really aiming at the actors. It looks like they are, but they are really firing six feet downstage of the actor, into the wings, etc. So safety is a very important thing that we pay close attention to. The guns shoot blanks. There's powder, but no cartridge, so when they shoot you see the sparks. In this show, you have to have the audience gasp. That's what this show is about. You can't do the show without that, because it makes us think.

(To a child) You haven't seen the show yet?

**Child:** No.

**JEFF:** Are you going to see it?

**Child:** Yes.

**JEFF:** It's a very good Civil War lesson.

**TOBIN:** I think what's more important about it, it's not so much the Civil War. That's the backdrop. I think what's important is how this family is caught up in it whether they like it or not. It's really what they call a domestic drama; this family is nestled in the middle of it and trying to stay out of it, but they can't.

**JEFF:** I think the best education about the Civil War for me is from a gentleman called Ken Burns who did a documentary. If you can rent *Ken Burns' Civil War*, it is great.

You won't learn about Fort Sumter here (at our show), but it's a nice little drama; come see it anyway.

**Heather:** I have a daughter about her age and I brought her on Friday. She jumped a few times, but she's studied the Civil War and it put a face on those people. Since then, she's been asking all kinds of questions about the war. So she's been able to see what it's all about.

**Jo:** And that's what theatre does. It puts a face to history.

**JEFF:** That's right. I'm going to steal that. Can I use that? I like that.

**Jo:** Feel free.

**JEFF:** This show's successful in a lot of ways. It's serious but it's also entertainment. It's a show you can bring your family to and there are very few shows like that, in which the adults are entertained along with the kids.

**TOBIN:** I think the writers were careful to keep out so many details of the Civil War; I mean they don't really give you an exact date. There are hints, but they don't really talk about a town nearby. They really focus on the family. Today was our day off and I had to go up to Gettysburg to find some very specific belts and shirts and that kind of thing. A really nice guy, who we bought all our hats from, took me out on the battlefield to have a look around, and it was monumental. As I was telling Jeff earlier, when we went out to see the Shenandoah Valley that gave us the expanse of what we really wanted. This trip to Gettysburg opened the expanse of the first scene and the epic scale of what was happening. You can see it in the movies, but to actually stand in the fields and see it—to know that you can't actually step anywhere without stepping on a body—demonstrates the immense toll of it.

**Jo:** The first thought that came to my mind when I saw it was how could they hide an entire army with cannon and horses in these rolling hills, but if you take the tour on horseback down into some of those depressions, you can visualize how that happened. It's an eye-opener.

**TOBIN:** Yeah, it really is.

**PAUL:** I have a question for you guys about the design process. At one point in the show, the script calls for a train to be on stage. But since you're not doing wagons to bring the train onto the set, how did you start thinking about that? Where did that screen design come from?

**JEFF:** That was just a nice effect that Tobin did. In the original and in the script, they played everything in the wings. It was just easier to say there was a train and you see a big light from the wings. You hear the engineer talking and then he walks on stage. That seemed pretty pedestrian. It just didn't seem very exciting. And because we had this framework actually able to frame a train, and I think, very successfully, we had a new way of showing this scene. Again, a lot of things you create come from what you don't want to do. I didn't want to do it offstage and I didn't want to fly in a painted drop and so it's by process of elimination, I think. That's just the way I work. It was the same thing for *Big River*. Part of the magic of that was just solving the challenges. How do you tell the story when half the company is deaf? It's in solving each challenge that you create something you never could have done out of imagination without solving the challenges, as with the train.

**TOBIN:** And we didn't want it to be cheesy. There's a fine line between trying to get that done in any sort of an effective way. Another designer we're missing tonight is Michael Gilliam who did our lighting and he's amazingly deft at being able to show you just enough. If you show too much it gets lost. Major kudos to him. It's amazing to have one standard sky and to be able to change it as much as he does. And let me tell you, there isn't a lot of space back there. That he was able to get that many different looks is pretty astounding. This allowed us to show a lot of things happening. I think it's more cinematic and more fun for the audience to have more than one thing happening at the same time. I just hate to bore people. It's hard not to bore people.

#### Unintelligible Question:

**JEFF:** It's so interesting because Scott Bakula, it was the first Broadway show he ever saw. He got his Equity card doing the show and I think he's played almost all of the other roles in the show besides Charlie. And I would ask him! I would say: well Scott, how did you do it? And he really didn't want to tell me anything. And I'm grateful for that, but I really wanted to know. All he said was don't worry; he was happy with the choices we were making. But he wouldn't tell me how things were done originally. He didn't share anything with me. Did he with you?

**PAUL:** No

**TOBIN:** He had meetings with me on a regular basis. (laughter)

**JEFF:** I was grateful that he didn't. But I asked. I tried to get things out of him. He was very respectful. Scott is as classy a star as I've ever worked with. He's just a real team player and a real family man and that's important in this. Not just a family man for his (own children), but for the company as well. He is like the dad of the whole show. It was really great casting. I can't imagine anyone being better in the show than Scott.

#### What about the other cast members?

**JEFF:** They're not as good. (laughter). No, I'm kidding. I don't know who else might have been in the show before.

**TOBIN:** I don't think anyone else has.

**JEFF:** No one has come to me and said well, you know I did this show. No one has come to me and said that. And we have a great cast.

**Nancy:** The cast is incredible.

**JEFF:** Thank you very much. They are all great.

**Nancy:** And the young ones...

**JEFF:** Who? Oh. Kevin is a star. Kevin Clay's the boy who plays Robert Anderson. You'll be seeing him for a long time to come. We'll all be working for him some day. He's a real star. He's one in a million.

**Unknown:** They seem to cohere like a family.



*Charlie and the Boy (Kevin Clay) enjoy an evening on the porch*

*Screen capture from a Maryland Public Television Artworks segment*

**JEFF:** That's all Scott. I've done shows where it hasn't been that way. I'm not going to mention any names but the star sets the tone. Nobody's going to misbehave because they're not looking at a star who misbehaves. That's where it starts and I'm really grateful.

**PAUL:** War is this big thing that happens out there whether it's the Civil War, Viet Nam or what's happening now. But the reality is war is very personal. If you lose someone in a war,

then the war isn't out there, it's right here for you. This show talks about how that war is very personal for this family. So Jeff and Scott are showing that love and closeness of the family and really giving you that dramatic arc. If you don't have that love and togetherness, the death of a family member to war doesn't have as much of an impact.

**JEFF:** You spend the first act having to fall in love with the family so that you care about what happens to them in the second act. That's human nature. Every night on TV they tell you how many people have died in Iraq and we just move on to our sitcoms, until there's a story about the parents. Then all of a sudden we listen. Numbers don't mean much. We have to put a face to it.

**Nancy:** Did you change the script or is it basically the same script?

**JEFF:** It's basically the same script. When it was written in 1975 it was obviously because of the Viet Nam war. Peter Udell took a lot of those wonderful words from the 1965 movie with Jimmy Stewart. That wonderful scene where Sam's asking for Jenny's hand in marriage, well that's directly word-for-word from the film. They were smart enough to take the best of that. It stayed that personal. We fine tuned it and so many years later, we know better ways to phrase and break into song and not have it be so flatfooted. You don't have to say it three times for an audience. You can say it once and then lead into song. So we trimmed like that, but this is what they wrote in 1975.

**Richard:** The show is in rehearsals and you've been making changes each night...

**PAUL:** You noticed.

**Richard:** What were you working towards?

**JEFF:** Usually it takes...it's just so hard to make a show work. It's just a miracle that it ever works. That's why you see more things that are less than good. It's hard. You roll the dice and you just don't know what works and what doesn't work. So you're tweaking—constantly tweaking. Usually the third show is when it kicks in. Yesterday was our third show. Now the show leads us to where it should be. At first, it's just about having everyone in costume. It looks like kids playing dress-up, like the costumes are wearing the actors. It takes a few shows for the actors to make them their own—to wrinkle them, get dirt on them, look like they've been worn. Now, they're wearing the costumes. There are no shortcuts. Just like baking or gardening. There are no shortcuts. It's a process and it takes time. Unfortunately, the nature of Ford's, we only had four previews. In New York, we're used to weeks of previews. So we had to work really fast. But this show will probably be at its best in 10 days or so. There's just no way to do it sooner. It will be ready Wednesday (opening night) but it just takes time to settle in. It's just like looking at a newborn. It's sheer chaos. Is it supposed to look like that? (laughter) But then they take it away and clean it up and bring it back and you say oh my goodness. It's just like that.

**TOBIN:** At first it's just: Does this actor have a shirt? Does the shirt suit him? And after that it's getting the costumes to look lived-in. We have a woman now who has worked in Shakespearian theatre. She's washing them and hanging them to dry with rocks in the pockets (laughter) to give them a lived-in look, so that the costume looks less like a costume and more like clothing. It shouldn't look like a costume. We have these beautiful dresses, but we need to have dirt on the hems because these are working women and the dresses need to look like farm dresses. It hurts to put that paint and the dirt on there, but it's necessary to really tell the story. We're tightening the screws and will be until the last minute.

**JEFF:** This is a revival show so we know it works. There aren't drastic things being done like changing an actor or taking out a song—which we normally do. Now we're about 80% there. We're still working on the ending a little bit, still working on timing. We still keep simplifying and working on (the two boys' song,) "Why Am I Me?" Little stuff like that. No big things.

**PAUL:** I'll share with you a story before we wrap up. Every night after the preview, we have "notes," where Jeff meets with his whole team of designers, associates, choreographers, and heads of departments, and we're all here. Friday night he asked Tobin if he had a note about something that was going to happen, and Tobin's response was that's not on this priority list. Meaning, it's on the list, but it's not on the first list I'm working on. There are many of those lists and that's what we're getting through during these next several days. If you've already seen the play, you really should come back and see it later on. See how it has evolved.

**Remark:** That photo scene at the end, that was remarkable. It wasn't there Friday night.

**JEFF:** Well we hadn't had time to do the bows Friday. The bows are the last thing you do.

**PAUL:** You know on Friday night, Jeff was in the back of the theatre at intermission and he looked at his associate and said we haven't done the bows! What are they going to do? And I thought, don't worry. The actors will figure out how to do that. (laughter). It won't be pretty, but they will figure it out. But now, Jeff has made it pretty.

**JEFF:** I was so worried about the show I totally forgot about the bows.

**Jo:** Thank you all for such wonderful insight and for giving up your free night to talk.

**Project Quantum Leap offers its sincerest gratitude to Jeff, Tobin and Paul for allowing us to share their remarks with our readers, and to Hannah Olanoff for her assistance.**



PHOTO CREDITS  
 Left, lower left:  
*T. Charles  
 Erickson*

Far left:  
*Playbill design*

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*Charlie (Bakula) sings 'The Pickers Are Comin' to the Boy (Kevin Clay)*



*Above and left: Charlie and daughter Jenny (Megan Lewis)*