



**Smithsonian Institution**

*National Museum of African American History and Culture*

## **Playbill for Porgy and Bess**

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Ironically Tammy Grimes does turn out to be a registered Republican. "In my heart I'm a Republican; in my head I'm a Democrat," says Tammy in that inimitable Grimesian voice. I supported Ramsey Clark. He was an idealist, and a man of great integrity. It was a difficult choice because I feel Bella Abzug is a real gusty lady." What does she think about actors speaking out politically? "Why not? I don't honestly think any serious voter casts his or her ballot for some potential candidate just because star X endorses him. But I do think it might make people view a particular candidate more closely. Personally I'm always interested in hearing serious voices like Jane Fonda's."

Many of Broadway's campaign stalwarts seem to be absent this year and that's because most of them are on the road or in rehearsal whipping up their own new shows.

Richard Adler, the producer of galas for both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations plus the famous JFK Madison Square Garden birthday party is in Seattle with his new musical, Music Is, due later this season. David Merrick is holed up at the Ritz Hotel in Boston with The Baker's Wife, his new musical which is aiming for a November opening at the Martin Beck. Merrick, you'll remember, showed off not only his theatrical éclat but some cagey political aplomb when he sold Lyndon Johnson the idea of using "Hello, Lyndon" as his official 1964 campaign song thereby having it played every five minutes at that year's Democratic Convention.

And surprisingly too, not even loyal Democrat Carol Channing is waving the banner for any special candidate. Suddenly, this year, she's mum on who she'll support. Miss Channing, rehearsing her new comedy, "The Bed Before Yesterday, explains her non-political involvement this way. "When I was in Washington in Lorelei, I met Mrs. Nixon at a luncheon with some Congressmen's wives. I gave Mrs. Nixon one of my 'diamonds' and as everyone knows it's the sentiment of the gift that really counts, not the value." Carol's wide eyes seemed to move. "The very next day I was on the President's 'list.' All I can surmise is that the President had the stone appraised!"

But what one found most disturbing doing this article was the amount of political apathy among the young Broadway casts. When you mention this to playwright Jack Gelber, an apolitical animal himself, whose latest effort Jack Gelber's New Play: A Rehearsal is currently at the American Place Theater, he says he's not surprised. "The war boom economy of the 60's allowed for revolution. Now people are worried about what are you going to do with that degree or how to keep the job you have, or where that next part or chorus job will come from. Remember most actors are soldiers not stars."

On a lighter note: Of all the people I talked with, only one Broadway figure urged reform: none other than Producer Alexander Cohen, who is readying a full line-up of productions - Comedians, Hellzapoppin, and Anna Christie - for the new season. "I think the theatre community should stage a rally calling for the repeal of the law that closes the bars on Election Day. If everyone had three or four drinks before going to the polls, they would see problems in a clear light and might elect a better class of public officials. We certainly couldn't do worse."

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