

GOODSPEED MUSICALS

AUDIENCE INSIGHTS



MAME

the musical sensation!



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The Max Showalter Center for
Education in Musical Theatre

MAME

Goodspeed Opera House
April 20 - July 1, 2012

MUSIC AND LYRICS BY
JERRY HERMAN

BOOK BY
JEROME LAWRENCE
&
ROBERT E. LEE

BASED ON THE NOVEL BY
PATRICK DENNIS
AND THE PLAY "AUNTIE MAME" BY
LAWRENCE & LEE

LIGHTING DESIGN BY
CHARLIE MORRISON

COSTUME DESIGN BY
GREGG BARNES

SCENIC DESIGN BY
JAMES YOUMANS

CHOREOGRAPHED BY
VINCE PESCE

DIRECTED BY
RAY RODERICK

PRODUCED FOR GOODSPEED
MUSICALS BY
MICHAEL P. PRICE

MAME

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Audience Insights for *Mame* was prepared by
Joshua S. Ritter, M.F.A, Education & Library Director
and Christine Hopkins, M.A, Education & Library Assistant

SHOW SYNOPSIS

On December 1, 1928, a woman and a young boy walk the streets of Manhattan. Patrick, a newly orphaned 10 year old from Iowa, and Agnes Gooch, Patrick's nanny who is delivering him to his only living relative, Mame Dennis, arrive at Mame's penthouse apartment on 3 Beekman Place. There is a bustling party taking place at her lavish apartment. Mame introduces Patrick and Agnes to the party guests and takes the young boy in as her ward. Patrick is quickly introduced to Mame's liberal lifestyle.

Patrick's father, however, left a will stating that the Knickerbocker Bank would share responsibility with Mame in deciding where Patrick will go to school. The will states that Patrick should attend a conservative school, but Mame disagrees. She pretends to agree with the will and enrolls Patrick in the Laboratory of Life, an experimental school where it is acceptable for the students to be nude. Dwight Babcock, the Knickerbocker Bank's representative, finds out that Mame has deceived him and immediately removes Patrick from the school, enrolling him at a boarding school called St. Boniface, Babcock's alma mater.

The stock market crashes in 1929 causing the beginning of the Great Depression and Mame loses her fortune. After trying her hand at many different jobs, Mame accepts the role of Moon Lady in a musical which stars her best friend, Vera Charles. Mame's sole responsibility in this role is to straddle a crescent moon as it rises for the climax of the last act. At the show, Mame's performance is a complete disaster and it ruins the production.

Patrick, meanwhile, has hitchhiked to New Haven to see Mame in the musical. After the show, he goes backstage to offer his congratulations. Based on her disastrous performance, Mame knows she's lost another job and deems herself a failure. However, Patrick encourages her and expresses how proud he is of her.

It's early December now and Mame decides to throw an early Christmas to lighten the sorrowful mood caused by the onslaught of the Great Depression. Mame, Gooch, Patrick, who is home from school for the weekend, and other household staff exchange gifts. As they celebrate, an old flame of Mame's, Beauregard Burnside, shows up at Beekman Place and treats everyone to a Christmas dinner. Beau expresses the desire to marry Mame, but explains that he needs his mother's consent first. Beau takes Mame and Patrick to Peckerwood, his mother's home, and meets many people from Beau's life including his mother and his ex-fiancée, Sally Cato. Sally is determined to make a fool of Mame and tricks her into declaring herself an expert horsewoman. Beau has his doubts, as do many others, but he confidently states, "Whatever Mame says she can do, she can do." Beau's faith in Mame rings true as she becomes the first horsewoman in the Southern aristocracy to bring a fox back alive from a hunt. Mame proves herself, wins the hearts of the Burnside family, says yes to Beau's proposal, and is warmly welcomed to the South.

Patrick, meanwhile, has returned to school and writes Beau and Mame as they travel on their endless honeymoon.

Years pass and Patrick has grown into a young man. Sad news arrives from Babcock, the conservative bank representative, saying that Beauregard has passed away from falling off "an alp." Mame calls Patrick from overseas and Patrick comforts her.

Back at Mame's New York apartment, Vera prepares a new life for the recently widowed Mame. Vera convinces Mame to write her memoirs. As they write, the two reminisce and make a promise that whenever all else fails, they will always be there for each other.

Mame and Vera also decide to makeover Agnes Gooch. They give Agnes a low-cut dress, high heels, and lipstick and send her off to start making the most of her life. Agnes returns six months later looking like she did before the makeover, but also clearly pregnant. Seeing her friend in need, Mame takes Gooch back into her care.

Patrick, now engaged to a well-to-do girl named Gloria Upson, arranges for Mame to meet his new fiancée's parents. Mame's recent decision to take in Agnes Gooch, a fallen woman, could be risky for this engagement but she doesn't mention the subject to the Upsons.

At Patrick and Gloria's engagement party, Mr. Upson suggests that, as an engagement present, Mame buy Patrick and Gloria the plot of land next door to the Upson's property so they can build a home there. Mame is nervous for what this could mean for Patrick; but, he states that he wants this kind of life and is tired of all the flighty people he's had to associate with as a result of being Mame's ward. He states that he would like to protect Gloria from people who choose not to conform. Mame and Patrick argue and Patrick runs out, leaving Mame behind.

Mame hosts a party in her newly redecorated apartment. The decorator, Pegeen Ryan, along with the Upsons, Babcock, Vera, and several other friends have joined together for the party. The Upsons leave abruptly, however, after Agnes Gooch comes downstairs, disheveled and pregnant, and Mame announces that she has bought the plot of land next to the Upsons' for the Beauregard Burnside Memorial Home for Single Mothers. As the Upsons leave, Patrick ends his engagement to Gloria. He has developed an eye for Pegeen Ryan and rediscovered his appreciation for his Auntie Mame's lifestyle.

Several years later, Patrick and Pegeen have a newborn baby boy named Peter. Years pass and Mame is off traveling the world again. She returns from India and teaches Peter many things from her travels. Peter requests that his mother allow him to travel with Mame. At first she won't hear of it, but after a convincing argument from Mame, Pegeen changes her mind.

CHARACTER SUMMARY

The History of Mame

The boisterous heroine of our story, Mame, has been a staple in American fiction since she was first introduced in Patrick Dennis' novel, [Auntie Mame: An Irreverent Escapade](#). In 1955, this best-selling novel sold over two million copies. In 1956, the book was transferred into a play with the same title. Adapted by Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee, the play was a huge success running for 678 performances on Broadway. Nearly ten years after the premier of the stage play, Lawrence and Lee collaborated with Jerry Herman to create the musical, *Mame*. With Herman's new lyrics and a tweaked book from Lawrence and Lee, *Mame* was an even bigger success on the Great White Way, lasting three and a half years.

AUNTIE MAME: A glamorous and eccentric woman who takes her nephew, Patrick, into her care after his father has passed away. Mame has a bohemian and opulent lifestyle in which she hosts frequent parties in her Manhattan apartment, goes on a lengthy trips, and has an expensive taste for fashion.



CLICK HERE to watch Angela Lansbury's interview about playing Auntie Mame

AGNES GOOCH: Patrick's nanny and Mame's personal secretary. Agnes is also a dedicated friend to Mame and Patrick and frequently joins them on their many adventures. Agnes has lived a relatively sheltered life and, after some convincing from Mame, agrees to go out and experience the world.

PATRICK DENNIS: Mame's ten year old nephew who, after being orphaned, becomes her ward. Patrick received a conservative upbringing, but is quickly introduced to Mame's free-spirited lifestyle after his father passes away.

VERA CHARLES: Best friend to Mame and an actress of the stage. Vera is a helpful friend to Mame when she loses all of her money after the stock market crash. Vera does not like children; however she eventually becomes an important person in Patrick's life after he begins living with Mame.

BEAUREGARD BURNSIDE: A wealthy southern gentleman who marries Mame. Together, they travel across the world on a very long honeymoon. Burnside, however, passes away suddenly leaving Mame as a wealthy widow.

GLORIA UPSON: A well-to-do girl from an upper class family. When Patrick has grown, he becomes engaged to Gloria. She is an unexpected choice for Patrick because, in all of her conformity, she represents everything that Mame is not.

PEGEEN RYAN: A young and pretty decorator that Mame hires to remodel her apartment at Beekman Place. After meeting her, Patrick falls for Pegeen and breaks off his engagement with Gloria. Patrick and Pegeen get married and have a son named Peter.

DWIGHT BABCOCK: A stuffy and meddlesome bank representative who supervises Patrick's father's estate and his upbringing with Mame.



*Louise Pitre as Auntie Mame at Goodspeed.
Photo by Diane Sobolewski*

THE NOVELIST

Patrick Dennis

Patrick Dennis was born in 1921 in Evanston, Illinois. A truly prolific writer of the 1950s and 60s, Dennis wrote 16 novels under three different names. Virginia Rowans and Patrick Dennis were his most common pseudonyms. Under his real name, Edward Everett Tanner III, he wrote several novels about foreign affairs. Between 1951 and 1971, he wrote 12 books using the name Patrick Dennis and 4 books using the name Virginia Rowans. As a result, Dennis became the first novelist to have 3 books on the *New York Times* bestseller list at one time.



Dennis wrote many classics including [Auntie Mame: An Irreverent Escapade](#), [Little Me](#), [Around the World with Auntie Mame](#), and [The Loving Couple](#). [Auntie Mame: An Irreverent Escapade](#) and [Little Me](#) were both adapted into works for the musical theatre and ended up on Broadway.

[Auntie Mame: An Irreverent Escapade](#) was on the bestseller list for 112 weeks and sold more than two million copies. It wasn't, however, a bestseller from the beginning. Before the book's publisher, the Vanguard Press decided to take on the book, Dennis received rejections from 19 other publishers.



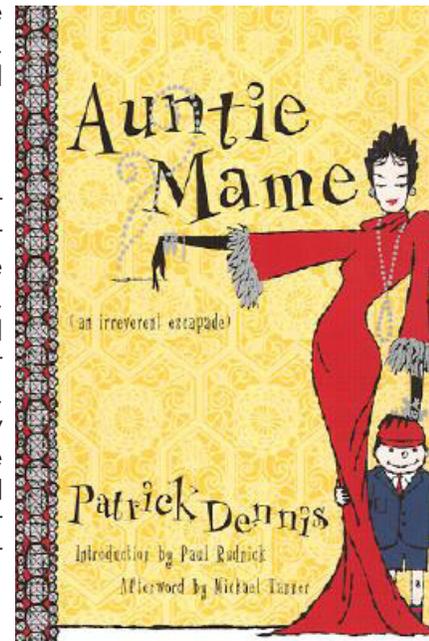
CLICK HERE to read portions of Dennis' novel, [Auntie Mame: An Irreverent Escapade](#)

EXCERPT FROM THE INTRODUCTION TO [AUNTIE MAME: AN IRREVERENT ESCAPADE](#) by Paul Rudnick

"The novel was originally constructed as a series of short stories centering on Mame, but a savvy editor suggested linking the vignettes with a device thieved from that most sedate and suburban of publications, the Reader's Digest. In the Digest, individuals would often recall a Most Unforgettable Character. Patrick Dennis gleefully and maliciously subverted this cozy format, as his Most Unforgettable Character is Mame Dennis, a sparkling, chain-smoking, often inebriated Manhattan socialite for whom 9 A.M. is considered "the Middle of the Night." ...Auntie Mame is a drunken fairy tale, and Mame is a Cinderella with many princes and an independent income."

PATRICK DENNIS ON THE PLAY, [AUNTIE MAME](#)

"Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee...have caught - far better than I - the moments of heartbreak that are in [Auntie Mame](#) and placed them on stage so deftly that, between the guffaws and giggles, sniggers and snorts, there are audible sobs and visible tears at each and every performance. That is what I meant to do in the novel and, am afraid, failed. To me, comedy is measured not only by its laughs, but by its tears. With every pratfall the heart should also ache. In this play it does, and I still cry just as hard when I drop into the Broadhurst Theatre now as I did on the night the play was out in Wilmington."



MEET THE WRITERS

JERRY HERMAN was born in New York City on July 10, 1933 and began his career early as a self-taught pianist. His professional work began long before he went to college but, after attending the University at Miami where he studied drama, Herman started playing the piano at cocktail lounges. Shortly after, he began writing musical reviews and had his first success, titled *Nightcap*, in 1958.



Herman's Broadway career began in 1961 with the Tony and Grammy Award nominated *Milk and Honey*. Herman was nominated for writing the music and lyrics. In 1964, following his Broadway debut, Herman won the Tony Awards for Best Composer and Best Lyricist for *Hello, Dolly!*. He won the Variety Award in both categories for *Hello, Dolly!* as well.

After his success with *Hello, Dolly!*, Herman was asked to write the music for *Mame*. His compositions for *Mame* won him the Variety Award for Best Lyricist, a Grammy Award and a Tony nomination.

In 1969, with *Dear World* opening on Broadway, Herman became the first composer-lyricist to have three productions on Broadway running simultaneously. Later, in 1974, *Mack and Mabel* opened on Broadway followed by *The Grand Tour* in 1978.

In 1981, an off-off Broadway review of Herman's work, titled *Jerry's Girls*, opened and ran for two years. After that run, it was transferred to Broadway. Meanwhile, Herman had written the score for *La Cage Aux Folles*, which debuted on Broadway in 1983.

In 2009, Herman received the Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement in Theatre and in 2010, he was a Kennedy Center Honors recipient.



CLICK HERE to listen to an NPR interview with Jerry Herman



CLICK HERE to watch an interview with Jerry Herman on PBS' "innerVIEWS"

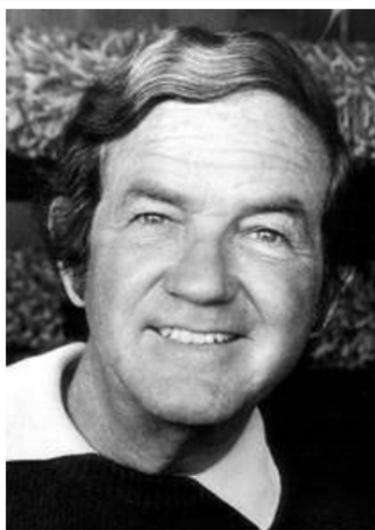


JEROME LAWRENCE was born in Cleveland, Ohio on July 14, 1915. Lawrence, a graduate of Ohio State University and University of California, Los Angeles, worked as a journalist for an Ohio newspaper for several years of his life. Later, from 1939-1941, he worked as a writer for CBS Radio.

Lawrence's major career credits were in collaboration with Robert E. Lee. Together, they collaborated on over 35 works, many of which went to Broadway. Lawrence directed the first arena production of his and Lee's famous work, *Mame*, in 1968.

Lawrence taught playwriting at the University of Southern California, won the Tony Award for Best Book of a Musical for *Mame*, and was honored with The Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee Theatre Research Institute at Ohio State University in 1986.

Lawrence spent his last years writing from his home in California up until his death in 2004. He wrote the well-known theatre biography, [Actor: The Life and Times of Paul Muni](#).



MEET THE WRITERS

ROBERT EDWIN LEE was born on October 15, 1918, in Elyria, Ohio. Lee, whose interest in the arts began when he was in high school, attended Northwestern University until transferring to Ohio Wesleyan in 1935. After graduating from Ohio Wesleyan, Lee worked as an executive at a small advertising firm, Young & Rubicam. Years into his career, Ohio Wesleyan awarded Lee an honorary doctorate in Literature.



Lee was an active director, teacher, and playwright in both the professional and academic theatre worlds. Spending several years of his career producing for the radio, he was awarded a Peabody Award for a United Nations based radio program in 1948. He also was an adjunct professor of playwriting at the University of California, Los Angeles and was committed to teaching new playwrights. His major career credits, however, were in collaboration with Jerome Lawrence with whom he created over 35 works of literature, many of which went to Broadway. Lee, along with Jerome Lawrence, was co-founder of the American Playwrights Theatre and the Margo Jones Award. He died on July 8, 1994 in Los Angeles.

LAWRENCE & LEE collaborated on many works for the theatre. They received 2 Peabody Awards, the Variety Critics Poll Award, and multiple Tony Award nominations for their work. Their plays have been produced not only in the United States, but also throughout the world.



Lawrence and Lee produced many programs for the Armed Forces and created many of the official Army-Navy programs for special broadcasts, including the D-Day broadcast. After collaborating on the Armed Forces radio, they began creating other radio programs, such as the series "Columbia Workshop," for CBS Radio.

Lawrence and Lee's first collaboration in the theatre was writing the book to *Look, Ma, I'm Dancin'!* Their second theatrical collaboration was writing the book to *Inherit the Wind* which went to Broadway in 1955 and was translated into thirty languages. Lawrence and Lee received the Donaldson Award, the Outer Critics Circle Award, the Variety New York Drama Critics Poll Award, the Critics Award for best foreign play, and several Tony Award nominations.

Later in their careers, Lawrence and Lee adapted James Hilton's "Lost Horizon" into a musical titled *Shangri-La*. Other later works include *Auntie Mame*, *The Gang's All Here*, *A Call on Kuprin*, *Mame*, *Dear World*, *The Incomparable Max*, *The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail*, *Jabberwock*, and *Diamond Orchid*. *Auntie Mame*, *Mame*, and *Inherit the Wind* were all adapted into films.

In 1990, Lawrence and Lee were named Fellows of the American Theatre at The Kennedy Center Honors in Washington, DC.

THE FLAME OF MAME

By Jerome Lawrence & Robert E. Lee

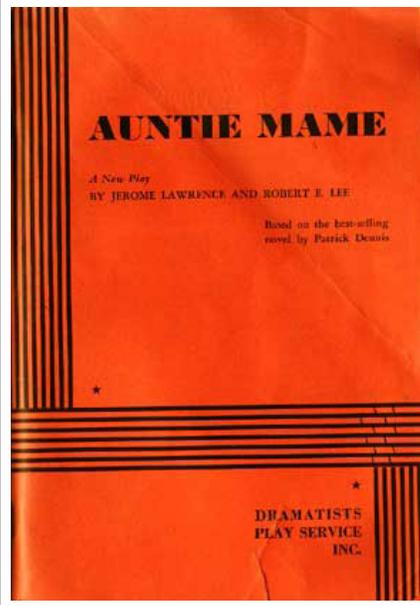
Mame constantly amazes us. This is not a lack of modesty—for, although we wrote the play *Auntie Mame* and the book of the new musical *Mame*, many minds have shaped this remarkable lady: Patrick Dennis, who created her in his best-seller, and now Jerry Herman, of *Hello Dolly* fame, who has written a musical score which would make the madcap Mame clap her own hands with delight.

Somehow it seems that Mame herself has plunged into the joyful work of making this musical. She is an almost unique figure in modern fiction: Mame refuses to be imaginary! She is not a fondly remembered Mama or a matchmaker going back to the gaslights of 14th Street. Mame is more interested in torches along the Ganges and the lightning bugs of Peckerwood. She virtually polevaults out of the gaiety of the twenties into lunar orbit—soaring high above depressions, wars and worries, taking with her a wide-eyed little boy.

We always long for what we don't have. This seems to be the Year of the Mole—a time of blindness and confusion, of fuzzy aims and fading faith. Our theatre lately has been in a Dark Age, reflecting only shadows. Mame, somehow, lifts a flaming light in that blackness. She has optimism!

Zest! Bounce! Even when she isn't quite sure where she's going, Mame knows, by God, she'll get there! All of us—even the most despondent and disillusioned—would like to be like Mame. Or we would like to have her take us by the hand, as she does Patrick's, and convince us that our planet isn't such a shabby place. We want to hear her sing "Open a New Window!"—in a decade when so many of us are pulling down the blinds and locking the shutters in pretended security. Mame is fun, by not mere escapist fare: she sings out a wish to run toward life, not away from it.

Mame is a dear friend. We have known and loved her for many years. We have seen her indomitable spirit embodied in dozens of stars in dozens of countries. Her battles with Mr. Babcock and her romance with Beau have been eloquently expressed in the major languages of the earth—but no translation could be happier than the musical language of Jerry Herman. But the audience is always the thermometer of the theatre. A blazing conception can sputter out like a match in an ice-cube tray unless it sends its singular incandescence across the footlights. The flame of Mame actually comes from everyone who is warmed by her daring and set aglow by her impudent but loving laughter.



Angela Lansbury and the Broadway cast of *MAME*.

“OPEN A NEW WINDOW”

An excerpt from *Showtune: A Memoir*

By Jerry Herman with Marilyn Stasio

Mame Dennis was the best character for a Broadway musical who ever came down the pike. I couldn't wait to start writing songs for her. I was so mad for that lady, I could have written three dozen songs for her.

“Get dressed, Patrick. We are going out. I am going to show you things you never dreamed existed.”

Well, that was it for me. Here's what I wrote:

*“Open a new window
Open a new door
Travel a new highway
That's never been tried before
Before you find you're a dull fellow
Punching the same clock
Walking the same tightrope
As everyone on the block...”*

When I finished that song, I knew that I had really found Mame Dennis's voice.

Mame is the type of woman who gets carried away when she gets an idea, and in this song she is literally carried away by her vision of the life that she and Patrick are going to have together. She takes him up this immense spiral staircase and when they get to the very top, the walls of the bedroom fly away and all the most wonderful, exciting things you've ever dreamed about start floating by.

We let our imaginations go wild, inventing all sorts of marvelous adventures for that number. Mame takes Patrick to a fire so he can ride on the fire engine. The two of them dance the tango at a speakeasy, and when the speakeasy is raided, Mame gets to drive the paddy wagon. It was glorious fun.

Once I had written “Open a New Window,” the rest of the songs just started pouring out of me. I never wrote more quickly, or with more assurance in my life, because I loved what I was writing. I absolutely loved Mame.

Young composers sometimes make the mistake of thinking they are supposed to write for the star. I certainly believe in making the star comfortable with a song. If the star is at ease with the material, you look good, the star looks good, the show looks good. But you don't ever write for the star, you write for the character.

From my earlier experience with Carol Channing I had learned two lessons: the value of making your star comfortable with a song you've written and the danger of writing that song, or any song, with a certain performer in your mind. No matter how brilliant the star is, writing for a specific performer constricts the writing.

The only honest way to write is to write for the character—and there never was a character as well-suited to the musical stage as Mame Dennis Burnside.

The first thing I had to do was give her an identifying lyric sound, because once I knew what my lady sounded like, that would also become the identifying sound of the piece. So I wrote “It's Today,” which establishes her as a madcap, fun-loving lady who has her own set of values—from when to throw a party to when to fight prejudice.

Then I turned to an early scene when young Patrick goes into his Auntie Mame's bedroom the morning after one of those big parties and wakes her up. Mame gets up in a fog, because it's awfully early and she's terribly hung over. But when she finally focuses on this kid she realizes that she has to take charge of his life. So she says to him,



**CLICK HERE to watch
Bea Arthur and Angela
Lansbury sing “Bosom
Buddies” at the Tony
Awards**

BEHIND THE SCENES

Interview with Mame Costume Designer Gregg Barnes

by Katherine Griswold

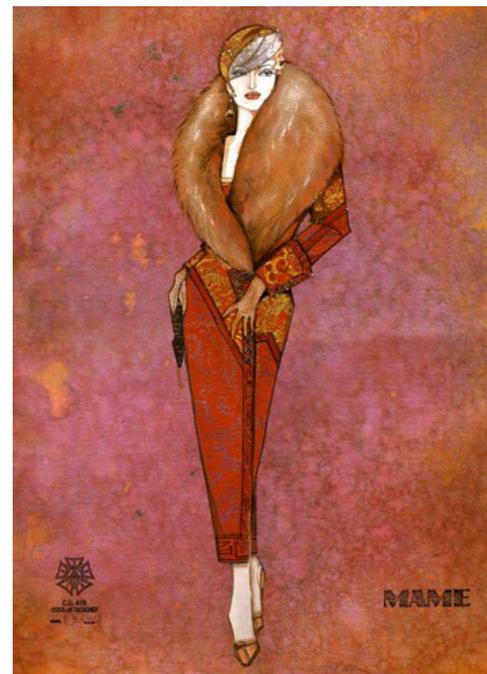
Vibrant, bold, strong, optimistic - Mame is truly a one-of-a-kind character worthy of one of the best costume designers in the business. And Tony Award-winner Gregg Barnes is certainly the man for the job. With Broadway credits that include *Follies*, *Elf*, *Bye Bye Birdie*, *Legally Blonde*, *The Drowsy Chaperone* (for which he won the Tony), *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, and *Side Show*, there's no doubt that Barnes' designs can match Mame's larger-than-life personality. Not to mention the enormous number of costumes needed to produce the show.

So how does a designer wrap his head around a production with 175 costumes spanning across three decades? First and foremost is research. For *Mame*, Barnes studied architecture, textiles, dress making, film costume, society pages and jewelry from the 1920s to 1940s. "Part of the fun is seeing these decades and the fashions they inspired play out before our eyes," remarks Barnes. "I try to use many diverse inspirations when I am sorting out the research."

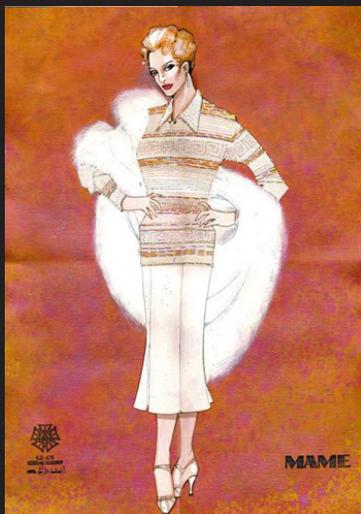
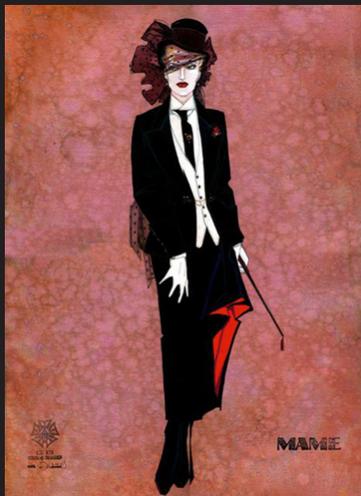
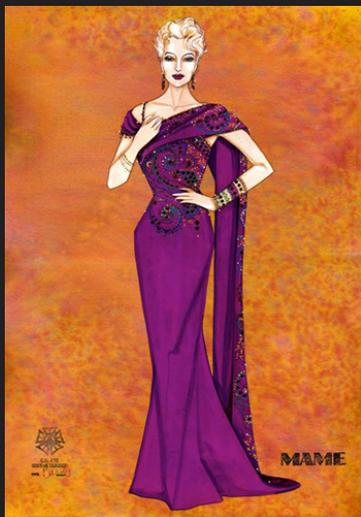
But Barnes isn't starting completely from scratch with Goodspeed's *Mame*. While the production will feature new designs, Gregg Barnes has a great foundation on which to rely, having created the costumes for The Kennedy Center's production of *Mame* in 2006. "*Mame* is a huge undertaking in so many ways and having been through it I know what a blessing it is to have a place to start!" And he's not exaggerating - with 17 costumes for Mame alone, Barnes believes that she has more costume changes than any other leading character in a musical.

As far as inspiration goes, Barnes explains, "You want to have a big idea to begin with. Something that aides in the storytelling, has wit and a point of view. It narrows the field when going through the endless research files. In

the case of *Mame*, part of the job is to make sure the focus is always on the lady with the bugle! In the spectacular world of the play and with all of the crazy characters we meet, we never want to lose sight of the heart of the story. In many ways I try to put myself in Patrick's eyes and give a sense of how Mame's world would look and feel to a child."



The character of Mame is defined as much by her words and actions as by her costumes. According to Barnes, "Mame is an original and that is the essential character trait that has to be defined." Barnes takes his cues not only from the script, but from the actress - in this case, the Tony nominated Louise Pitre. About a month before rehearsals started, Barnes and Pitre spent two exhausting fitting days getting to the heart of the character and how she should look. "The Goodspeed is in for a treat," says Barnes. "Louise is so smart and has such passion for the character and I was so inspired by our time together. Mame is the center of the cyclone and everything else is chosen in relation to what she wears. A thrilling undertaking!"



THE GREAT CRASH & GREAT DEPRESSION

THE GREAT CRASH (1929)

When the curtain rises on *Mame*, it is just before the stock market crash of 1929. Mame is living a fanciful and extravagant life. She is wealthy, unmarried, does not work, and has frequent parties. However, after the stock market crashes, she loses everything and is forced to enter the lower-working class.



The decade before the stock market crash of 1929, known as the Roaring Twenties, was a time of optimism, wealth, and prosperity. People were buying the latest fad items such as automobiles, appliances, and clothes more frequently. The Dow Jones Industrial Average

had a six-year increase and it was assumed that the stock market would stay at this high place for a long time. Unfortunately, in 1929 the stock market became extremely unstable and the price of shares on the New York Stock Exchange fell quickly and drastically.

The Great Depression was the worst economic disaster in United States history. The first economic downturn of the Great Depression occurred in early September 1929. The price of shares on the New York Stock Exchange began to quickly reduce. On Thursday, October 24, 1929, also known as "Black Thursday," prices decreased significantly, causing panic selling. The following Tuesday, "Black Tuesday," the market continued to fall and eventually crashed. The causes of the Great Depression are still debated and, while many feel it was from foolish investments in stocks and unequal distribution of wealth, we still don't know exactly what caused it. The Great Crash brought the Roaring Twenties to a halting stop in 1929 and led to a major crisis in America.



Black Tuesday was the most devastating day of the stock market crash. Wealthy investors became beggars overnight and there was a wave of suicides in New York's financial district. Thousands of investors had lost everything and there was no money to replenish what had been borrowed. By mid-November the stock market had lost nearly half of its value.

THE GREAT DEPRESSION (1929-1941)

No one realized the disastrous effect that the Great Crash would have on the United States economy. Herbert Hoover, who was President when the Great Depression began, stated in March of 1930 that the United States had "passed the worst." He didn't know that the economic crisis would not improve for another 11 years.

As investment companies, banks, and businesses failed, jobs also began to disappear. Companies began to close their doors, causing thousands to be out of work. In addition, the banks demanded repayment of all loans to keep their doors open. People who had borrowed money to buy their homes and start up new businesses suddenly found their property repossessed or their businesses bankrupt. Victims of the Great Depression who had lost their homes often lived in "Hoovervilles" and could not support their families. By the 1930s, thousands of schools were operating on reduced hours or were closed down entirely. Nearly three million children had dropped out of the schools that remained open.



By 1932, a quarter of the labor force, or 13 million people, had become unemployed and 40% of the banks in the United States closed. By 1934 a record breaking 10,000 banks had closed their doors. The Great Depression had such a significant impact on the economy that economic hardship also spread internationally.

THE GREAT CRASH & GREAT DEPRESSION

HOOVERVILLES

Since so many people lost their homes due to bankruptcy during the Great Depression, after being evicted from their homes, these victims of the Depression were desperate to find shelter. As a result of this panic and desperation, "Hoovervilles" began to form which were shelters in small communities that were filled with homes made from scrap materials. These homes were often packed with many people, had no electricity, and did not offer much protection.



Hoovervilles were named after President Herbert Hoover, who served from 1929 to 1933. The name was a deliberate insult towards Hoover as many people blamed his administration for the Great Depression.

THE DUST BOWL (1930-1936)

During the Great Depression, an area called the Great Plains was struck by a drought. Terrible conditions, including lack of rain, overuse of land, and high winds, destroyed the soil, grass, and crops. Many poor farmers followed what John Steinbeck called "The Mother Road" in his novel *The Grapes of Wrath* and fled west towards California on Route 66 to find jobs on farms that were not affected by the Dust Bowl. When the farmers arrived, however, the locals were not welcoming since they were also struggling through the economic depression.



THE NEW DEAL

When Franklin D. Roosevelt accepted the Democratic nomination for President of the United States in 1932, he pledged to create "a new deal for the American people." The New Deal became a term that encompassed all of Roosevelt's efforts to help the millions of people who were affected by the Great Depression.

One of these efforts involved the creation of programs which would provide repair and construction work for Americans. The Empire State Building, The Chrysler Building, The Golden Gate Bridge, and Rockefeller Center were all built during the Depression. Another relief effort from the New Deal era included the creation of relief agencies to help the victims of natural and economic disasters, including residents of the Great Plains who were devastated by dust storms during the Great Depression.



RECOVERY

After the stock market crash of 1929, it took approximately 27 years to bring the economy back up to pre-crash levels. In the late 1930s, the Great Depression was coming to an end, but many Americans were still suffering from extreme poverty. Americans listened and watched as German military invaded and took over Poland, causing World War II to erupt in Europe.



The country's recovery from the Great Depression began when the U.S. was able to provide supplies to the countries already involved in fighting World War II. The United States government was able to stimulate the economy by providing jobs to the unemployed while offering assistance to the other allied countries. After Pearl Harbor was bombed on December 7, 1941, however, the United States entered World War II.

When the United States began to fight, more than 10 million men and women enlisted into the military. Those who were unable to enlist worked in factories to make supplies for the war effort. There was a desperate need for soldiers, pilots, and workers who could make ammunition, weaponry, and aircraft. Due to its involvement in the war and the need for war-related supplies, America's unemployment rate dropped to below 10%. The United States economy had skyrocketed and was finally on the road to restoration.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN

1928 - 1940

1920s WOMEN: ENHANCING THEIR ROLES

Women of the 1920s lived amidst a prosperous and changing time. As a result of new attitudes and laws, including the right to vote, women found themselves playing different roles in society. They were beginning to take on more responsibility at home, in the workplace, in politics, and also in education.



Just as women were becoming more visible in the professional and political worlds, they were also beginning to attend universities in greater numbers after high school. These universities, however, were not coeducational. Due to this separation, women, unfortunately, still felt unequal to men. As a result, women of the 1920s began to work for equity reforms in government and education.

Although women were becoming more educated and experienced, and fighting for their equal rights, only about 15% of women in the United States brought an income into the household. In 1920s society, a woman's typical role was to marry, take care of the children, and run the household while her husband was at work. However, the role of women would change drastically during the economic downfall of the Great Depression.

THE WORKING WOMAN



During the Great Depression, working women were the first ones to lose their jobs. Then as the Depression progressed, hardly anyone, male or female, was able to hold onto a job. Many women were forced to look for work while also maintaining their household.

Married women who sought employment during the Great Depression were often looked down upon because first, they were seen as unequal to

men, and second, these women were thought to be taking jobs and money away from more deserving men.



MAME AND CONFORMITY

In the late 1920s, the time period when *Mame* begins, a typical American woman spent her time at home taking care of her family and the household. This was a fairly common expectation for women and very few resisted this role. *Mame*, the title character of our musical, was not one to conform. While most middle-aged women spent their time caring for their families, *Mame* was unmarried and lived an unorthodox lifestyle with stylish accoutrements and fanciful parties. She did not have a job either, at least not until she was forced to acquire one after the 1929 Stock Market Crash. *Mame* stands for independence, rejecting the stereotypes of the period and standing up for women's rights.

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