

# Former Resident Has Lead In "The King and I"



Former Westfield resident, Kate Hunter-Brown, portrays Anna to Yul Brynner's King on the national tour of "The King and I."

by Donna Feeney  
Many would agree that one of the magical moments in the American theatre is the scene in the "King and I" when Yul Brynner as the King of Siam, looks into the eyes of the actress who plays Anna, the governess to his children, holds out his arms and the two glide across the stage to the lively strains of "Shall We Dance." For a former Westfielder this is an eight-times-a-week occurrence as she is currently playing Anna to Yul Brynner's King in the national touring company of "The King and I."

"The dance brings everything together and the audience really responds to it," says Kate Hunter-Brown, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Phillip Brown of Wychwood Rd. She adds, "When I first began doing the role I was quite nervous before the dance, but now it has become familiar enough that I'm not so awe-struck. It still is exciting though."

Miss Hunter-Brown has been with the road com-

pany for 18 months — 14 as Anna. She recalls, "I tried out for the show and was selected understudy for the part. When the leading lady left, I took over the role."

The attractive, honey-blond thespian who was graduated from WHS in 1972 appears to be too young for the part which traditionally has been played by a middle-aged actress. She points out, "Although older actresses usually have played Anna, the book "Anna and the King of Siam" from which the play originates depicts her as only 26. With my make-up on people tell me I look as though I'm in my mid-30's." Not exactly middle-aged, but more mature than the youthful Miss Hunter-Brown.

She was in town recently for a visit with her family and a brief vacation before going back on tour. Thus far, the company has performed in several large cities including Boston, Chicago and Philadelphia. The play has broken attendance records in Detroit

and Houston and has received generally rave reviews. When the tour resumes the company will head south and then to the West Coast.

Because the visits to each city are for a period of four weeks or more, Miss Hunter-Brown usually stays in an apartment and searches for a voice teacher and a place to work out. If she is unable to find a teacher, she carries tapes with her so that she can practice her singing.

In assessing her co-star she says, "He is very professional and expects everyone else to be the same. When I started in the role he was especially helpful to me. And the women in the various audiences are absolutely crazy about him."

Born in Baltimore, Miss Hunter-Brown moved to Westfield at the age of two. She attended Grant, Wilson and Roosevelt Junior High Schools before entering WHS. A lyric soprano, she studied voice locally with Genevieve Hill. She sang in the school choirs but

relates, "Although I tried out for dramatic productions at the high school, I rarely got a part."

She has always wanted to perform. "I had an active fantasy life as a child," she asserts. Performing ability runs in the family. Her grandmother was an actress and a singer and her siblings have musical interests as well. Her older brother, Robert Brown, is a professional musician and composer. Older sister, Paula Brown Edwards, now works in Washington non-musically, but younger sister, Patricia Brown Zimmerman, although enrolled in nursing school has "a lovely singing voice" and is married to a musician.

Miss Hunter-Brown attended college where she studied acting but claims her major training ground was the Celebration Playhouse in Cranford — the forerunner of New Jersey Public Theatre. She progressed to local dinner theatre engagements, and appeared as a member of the chorus for "Show Boat" at Meadowbrook Dinner Theatre in Cedar Grove. Needing an Actors Equity card to perform in Equity productions, she received it following a one week stint in a children's theatre production, "The Stephen Foster Story."

She has been able to support herself with her craft, only occasionally resorting to retailing or the role of a soap opera extra to help "pay the rent." The role of "Anna" has been a big break. She explains, "I have grown in the role. Playing the same part eight times a week is not boring or dull because I learn something new with each performance."

Her goals? She replies, "I enjoy doing musicals but I would like to do some straight acting as well — including Shakespeare." Her eyes brighten as she adds, "And I would love to appear on Broadway."

## Welcome Wagon Schedules

The Wine and Cheese group of Welcome Wagon will be holding its August social this Saturday at the home of Kathy Hughes at 8 p.m. The group will try to beat the summer heat by tasting a variety of cool and refreshing summertime drinks. Madeline Reagan and Virginia Anderegge co-chair this activity.

Other activities for the upcoming week are:

- Monday Morning Bridge on the 9th at 9:30 a.m. The August chairwoman, JoAnn Bifani, has hostess information.
- Community Service will once again be hosting a bingo game at the Westfield Convalescent Center on Tuesday between the hours of 1 and 3. Contact Ursula Heidfeld to help.
- Coffee and Conversation meets Wednesday at the home of its chairwoman, Eleanor Schofield, at 9:30 a.m.

• Beginner Bridge is scheduled for Thursday mornings during August and will be meeting at 9:30 a.m. on Aug. 12. Contact Joan Catania for more information.

• Tennis meets Aug. 12 at 9:15 a.m. at the Memorial Park Courts. Players of all levels are invited to play. Interested members are asked to contact either Olga Jansen or Joyce Subjack.

• Those planning on attending the Welcome Wagon Family Fun Day, Saturday, Aug. 21 at Echo Lake Park must let Ginny Pope know if they are coming by this Tuesday.

• The Baby-sitting Co-op secretary for the month of August is Nancy Crowell.

## Collegians

Annette Roscoe of Westfield was named to the dean's list at Russell Sage College in New York.

## Pattern Alteration Series Set

A pattern alteration series will be given on Thursdays, Aug. 12, 19 and 26 from 1 to 3 p.m., at the Extension Service auditorium, 300 North Ave. East for nominal registration fee. Registration may be made by calling the extension service.

Mrs. Carolyn Y. Healey, extension home economist, will teach the series. She says it is important to judge the type of alteration necessary as it applies to the design.

Each class member will be measured for size, learn how to relate body measurements to pattern measurements, and learn

to make the easiest adjustments in the pattern.

Those attending the first session should wear a poor-fitting garment for evaluation. Also, they should bring a tape measure, a 40-inch piece of string, and wear suitable undergarments for body measurements.

## Jewish Singles Dance

A Jewish singles dance for ages 19-39 will be held on Sunday, Aug. 15 at 8 p.m. in the main ballroom of the Holiday Inn, Kenilworth (just off Garden State Parkway Exit 138).

## Collegians

Jane Kolker, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Kolker of 916 Summit Ave., is one of more than 100 Indiana University students serving internships this summer. Miss Kolker, a junior, is a junior programmer/analyst with the Federal Home and Mortgage Corporation in Washington, D.C. The main campus of Indiana University is in Bloomington.

## MARRIAGE STRAIGHT TALK

**The Restless Redecorator**

Anne L. Burton, MTS

Q: My husband is always redecorating the house, or at least rearranging the furniture. Sometimes, in the middle of the night, I trip over things, forgetting where the furniture is this time. (I thought this was usually a husband's complaint, that the wife always wants to re-decorate). My husband says that I should be more open to changes.

A: If he's always trying to change things around the house, it may well represent a desire to change things in his life, possibly within the marriage. You, on the other hand, probably like the security of a well-ordered home, with things staying dependably the same.

Presented as a community service by K. Hartley Sulston, Ph.D. and Anne L. Burton, MTS, psychotherapists at 131 South Euclid Avenue, Westfield, 233-9637.

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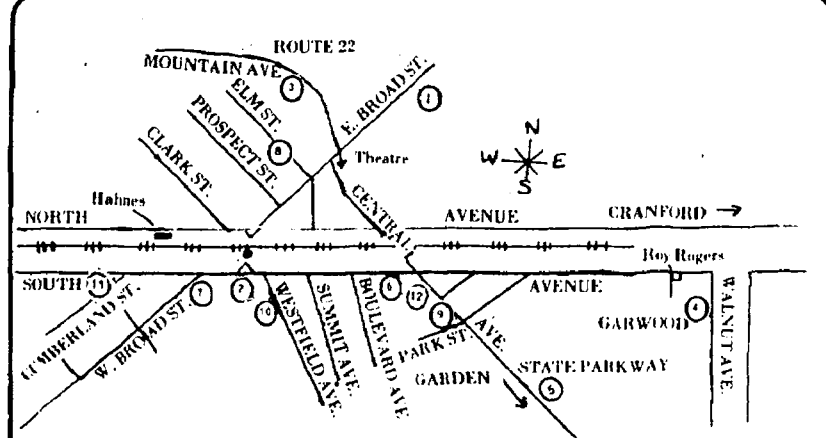
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