Antaeus Begins Its 15th Dream Season

By Julie Martinez

Co-Artistic Directors John Apicella and Jeannie Hackett express excitement and surprise about Antaeus Theatre Company presenting the first complete staging of Noel Coward's landmark Tonight at 8:30 since its LA premiere in 1960. "It was originally produced at the historic El Capitan Theatre and consisted of all nine published one act Coward plays," says Apicella.

Theatre @ Boston Court and The Ivy Substation.

"Our performance spaces have changed a lot but our mandate to present and teach the great classical material, both ancient and modern, has never wavered," says Apicella.

Hackett adds, "We now have over 100 actor members plus a dedicated support group of directors, designers, costumers, musicians, etc. And it feels like everyone is somehow involved in this Coward production."

Tonight at 8:30 is being performed in two sections. Part One, subtitled If Love Were All, opened Oct. 27 and includes Star Chamber, We Were Dancing, Astonished Heart and Hands Across the Sea. Part Two (opening Nov. 10) is subtitled Come the Wild and features Red Peppers, Famed Oak, Family Album and Still Life.

"Each evening is comprised of four one-acts," explains Hackett. "The two remaining plays will be presented separately during the run as special events."

To pull off this Herculean event, Antaeus is utilizing the skills of six directors: Brendan Fox, Robert Goldsby, William Ludel, Michael Murray, Stefan Novinski and Stephanie Shroyer. "When this work was first produced, Noel Coward and Gertrude Lawrence played the leads in each play," says Apicella. "In our staging, we are spreading the wealth around."

The attention of the co-artistic directors is so concentrated on getting the Coward project launched they paused a bit when asked about the rest of their season. "Of course we have a season, a great season," Hackett exclaims. "We are following Coward with the world premiere of a project created especially for Antaeus: American Tales, two one-act musicals presented as a single evening, with music by Jan Powell and book by Ken Stone. That will be followed by Mark Twain's comic tale of love via crossed telephone wires, The Loves of Alonso Fitzderrane and Rosamund Blethyn, then Herman Melville's tragic fable, Moby-Dick. And next summer we will stage our annual ClassicalFest."

Looking toward future seasons, Antaeus administrators have met with real estate developer Richard Loring of Habitat Group who has embraced the long-planned vision of a permanent facility. The Antaeus Center" Apicella says, "Negotiations are underway with the City and the Community Redevelopment Agency to secure a site in the NoHo Arts District to construct a mixed-use project that would include a 12,000 square-foot Antaeus performance, educational and administrative space. It would be leased to us for a dollar-a-year."

"The Antaeus mission has always been very simple," says Hackett, "to keep classical theatre alive in ourselves and in our community. To have a permanent home would be the culmination of all our dreams."