



In 1925, eight actors were dedicated to a dream. Expatriated from their Broadway haunts by constant film commitments, they wanted to form a club here in Hollywood; a private place of rendezvous, where they could fraternize at any time.

Their first organizational powwow was held at the home of Robert Edeson on April 19th.

"This shall be a theatrical club of love, loyalty, and laughter!" finalized Edeson. Then, proposing a toast, he declared, "To the Masquers! We Laugh to Win!"



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FRED ESMELTON



NED A. SPARKS



JOHN SAINPOLIS



ROBERT EDESON



ROBERT SCHABLE



GEORGE E. READ



WARNER BAXTER



ALPHONZ ETHIER

The Masquers Founders
May 12th 1925

WE
LAUGH
TO
WIN

WE
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TO
WIN



The Masquers Creed

WELCOME! THRICE WELCOME, ALL-
Behind these curtains, tightly drawn,
Are Brother Masquers, tried and true,
Who have labored diligently, to bring to you
A Night of Mirth-and Mirth 'twill be,
But, mark you well, although no text we preach,
A little lesson, well defined, respectfully, we'd teach.
The lesson is this: Throughout this Life,
No matter what befall-
The best thing in this troubled world
Is LAUGHTER, after all!
And that's the slogan of our Club-
From cradle days to shroud,
It brings the sunshine back again
And drives away the cloud.
So-now, tonight, let joy be yours,
Let LAUGHTER ring out clear!
I pray-be not too critical, in judgement, too severe!
These are all our pals we're here to see,
Their shafts of wit have zest! But should they
Touch a tender spot, remember-'Tis a Jest!
And, as you leave our house tonight,
Midst Music, LAUGHTER, Din,
Remember, friends, our slogan-
We Laugh-WE LAUGH TO WIN!

The Masquers Oath

I swear by Thespis; by
Dionysus and the triumph of life over death;
By Aeschylus and the Trilogy of the Drama;
By the poetic power of Sophocles; by the romance of
Euripedes;
By all the Gods and Goddesses of the Theatre, that I will
keep this oath and stipulation:

To reckon those who taught me my art equally dear to me as
my parents; to share with them my substance and to comfort
them in adversity.

I will love The Theatre-not as a building of brick or stone,
but as a temple of plays that have in them the stuff of Life;
be they pleasant or unpleasant; comedy or tragedy; farce or
a play of manners.

I will live my life and practice my art with decency and fair-
ness; and I will revere the memory of those Masquers who
have taken their final curtain.

Whatever I may see or hear in the lives of men which ought
not to be spoken abroad, I will not divulge. I will not envy a
colleague greater success than my own. I will not betray a
brother Masquer.

This above all: I will dedicate my soul to the true worship
of Him who is the Great Playwright, and in whose Theatre
we are all humble.

Mission Statement

Section One, Article Two, of the Masquers By-Laws reads:

The purposes of The Masquers shall be:

- a) The promotion of good fellowship and social intercourse among men engaged professionally in the theatre, motion picture industry, radio, television, music and the fine arts, as well as the friends of those professions; and*
- b) The collection and preservation of objects of interest to those so engaged professionally.*

During the Club's first 70-years, it emphasized the first part of the above Section almost entirely. The Club promoted good fellowship among men (and later, of course, women), in the creative professions by offering a refuge in the form of a Clubhouse at 1765 N. Sycamore Ave. in Hollywood (a place where, among so many other things, you could eat all of your meals, play cards into the wee hours, drink, tell jokes, and even reside) where legendary testimonial dinners took place, shows were staged, and history was made (for example, the Screen Actor's Guild was conceived in the Masquers tavern).

But now, as the Masquers slowly rebuilds itself after years of struggling with its seeming inability to meet the needs of those who once clamored at its doors, the emphasis of the Club's purposes has become quite deliberately balanced. And though the Masquers will once again have a place to call home, a place where it can carry on its grand tradition of being "a social sanctuary for actors and the theatrically inclined," its chartered obligation to collect and preserve objects of interest to people of the professions it serves (and interested members of the public at large!) shall forever more enjoy the attention it deserves.

The new Masquers Club is passionately committed to fostering good fellowship and social intercourse among men and women engaged professionally in the theatre, motion picture industry, radio, television, music and the fine arts . . . and preserving and enhancing the history of such people and their professions by:

- making comprehensive, and heretofore unseen, archives of historical documents, photographs, and other significant objects available to the public by way of the Internet at masquersclub.org
- establishing and maintaining a new clubhouse, open to members, and to the general public, as a central place for ongoing events such as stage readings and acting work shops, as well as to house the growing historical archives owned by the Club
- holding special public events such as film festivals and walking tours of historic Hollywood landmarks
- re-establishing the time-honored Masquers tradition of working with charitable organizations
- offering new membership in the Masquers according to the guidelines set forth in the By-Laws of the Masquers

Fast Facts About Our History and Culture

Founded: May 12th, 1925

Founding Members:

Ned A. Sparks	Warner Baxter
Robert Schable	Robert Edeson
Alphonz Ethier	John Sainpolis
George E. Read	Fred Esmelton

Original Addresses:

6735 Yucca Street, Hollywood, CA (First two years)

1765 North Sycamore Avenue, Hollywood, CA

George Spelvin Award: In 1949 the Masquers created an award known as the “George Spelvin; the actors award for actors.” The name “George Spelvin” is traditionally used as an alias for an actor who occupies more than one role in a production and was borrowed by the Masquers, as legend has it, from a superstitious showman who had only hired 12 actors for a production that required 13. The first George Spelvin was given to Milton Berle in '49 and was later bestowed upon performers such as: Fred Astaire, Humphrey Bogart, Lucille Ball, Judy Garland and Sir Laurence Olivier.

Anthony Caruso Award: As a character actor, Mr. Anthony Caruso worked for years in Hollywood and also became an important member of the Masquers organization. He worked tirelessly to preserve the club and traditions in its last twenty years. In his honor, this award has been created to recognize the achievements of others who continue to preserve film history.

Stage Productions (Revels): Hailed by the press as “Models of wit and drollery,” these star-studded live stage performances were written, directed and performed by Masquers, and presented at Hollywood venues, including the Pantages Theatre and El Capitan. The Revels were recognized for elaborate casts, costumes and sets that “Rivaled Broadway.” A few of the titles included: The Modiste Shop, The Feud, Such is Fame, The Coast, Farewell to Dickens and The Black Crook.

Film Shorts: In the tradition of other professional acting fraternities, the Masquers co-produced film shorts with R.K.O. Eleven two reel comedies were produced between 1931-1933, and they are considered by critics such as Leonard Maltin to be the best of their genre in the 1930's. Titles included: Wide Open Spaces (1932), Rule 'Em and Weep (1932), The Bride's Bereavement (1932), The Moonshiner's Daughter (1933), Lost in Limehouse (1933), Stolen By Gypsies (1933) and Thru Thin and Thicket (1932.)

Testimonial Dinners: Large-scale banquet dinners comprised of performers and people of the trade honoring their peers and colleagues. Guests and honorees included: Johnny Carson, Jimmy Stewart, Charlie Chaplin Jack Benny, Nat King Cole, Debbie Reynolds, Pearl Bailey, Bob Hope, Red Buttons, Liza Minnelli, Cher, and many, many, more!

Screen Actor's Guild (SAG) Origins: Spurred by an eight week salary cut announced in March of 1933 by producers through the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts & Sciences, a group of prominent Masquers joined together to build a respected organization to protect actors.

The Masquerettes: Female auxiliary members added in November of 1965 at the urging of Harlequin Joe Brown to "Bring progress and prosperity and to help the Masquers Club go onto to bigger and better days." Qualifications for membership included that she be a friend to the Masquers and the arts and willing to be of service to the club. Prominent Masquerettes included: Maureen O'Hara, Jane Wyman, Gena Rowlands, Jane Wyman, Edith Head and Lee Meriwether.

The Little Red Piano: (in reality a miniature studio rehearsal piano, and not really red but more orange) came to the Club as a gift of former Harlequin Alan Mowbray, who owned it for 17 years, and who one day got the idea that it would make a nice "guest book". So, as host he autographed it, burned the letters in afterwards and according to Himself "That's how the whole ruddy thing got started, Luv!" The Little Red Piano... with its filigree of signatures covering the top, sides, breastplate, yes, even the piano bench, of famous and near famous people: Ronald Colman, Sir Cedric Hardwicke, James Cagney, Fanny Brice, Gladys Cooper, Philip Merivale, Basil Rathbone, Nigel Bruce, Sir Sydney Lawford and his son Peter, Sid Fields and many others.

The Little Red Piano is now on permanent display at the Hollywood Entertainment Museum at 7021 Hollywood Blvd, walking distance from the location of the Masquers Clubhouse on Sycamore St.

A California Corporation: The Masquers Inc., established in 1925, is one of the oldest corporations in California.

Original purpose of the Masquers Club: "A social sanctuary for actors and the theatrically inclined."

What happened to the Masquers Club? This is a complex issue, and there are many opinions and theories explaining why the Masquers went from being a major benevolent force in the entertainment world to an almost-forgotten relic. Probably the most important reason for the Club's demise is that there came a time when actors no longer socialized with one another as they had in the early days of Hollywood — and socializing was the basis of the Masquers activities; and its financial well-being hinged on it. By the 1970s, when many old-timers had already passed away, there was simply no one "on deck" to take their place. By the 1980s, when almost all of the original members had taken their Final Curtain, the Club was forced to sell its beloved clubhouse of almost 60 years, without which the Masquers could no longer function as it had.

New Purpose The New Masquers Club: The Masquers Club that was once a *social sanctuary for actors and the theatrically inclined* is now a sanctuary for anyone who genuinely cares about the Golden Age of Hollywood.

Masquers Presidents Throughout History

Robert Edeson	1925	Distinguished stage, and silent-screen, actor. He is the man most responsible for the inception of the Masquers
Douglas MacLean	1926	Silent film comedian (as he put it, “the Jack Lemmon of the 1920s”) turned producer of films including <i>So Red The Rose</i> (1935)
Milton Sills	1927	Leading man on Broadway whose stalwart personality and handsome looks brought him a following in films as well.
Sam Hardy	1928, ‘29, ‘32	Screen actor and writer starting in films in 1915
Mitchell Lewis	1930	Broadway leading man, and charator actor in films. Played the captain of the Winkie Guards in <i>The Wizard of Oz</i> (1939)
Antonia Moreno	1931	Career spanned 40+ years playing Latin lovers opposite Greta Garbo, Pola Negri, Clara Bow, and Gloria Swanson
Joe E. Brown	1933	Well known for his loud yell, his infectious grin, and his cavernous mouth, Joe was one of the Ten Top money-making Stars for 1933 and 1936
Lowell Sherman	1934	One of early films’ fine actors who later turned to directing. Had he lived longer it is thought he would have been a formadible director
Frank Morgan	1935	Character actor best remembered as Professor Marvel/The Wizard in <i>The Wizard of Oz</i> (1939)
Pat O’Brien	1936	A kingpin of Hollywood's "Irish Mafia," this gregarious, stocky performer starred in 80+ films including his finest <i>Knute Rockne, All American</i> (1940)
Charles Chase	1937	One of movie comedy's unsung heroes, Charley Chase was a great talent, and a popular star whose work has yet to be fully appreciated
William Collier, Sr.	1938	Distinguished playwright, and actor in silent and sound films from the 1910s to 1940s. Step-father of Wm. Collier, Jr.
William B. Davidson	1939	Strapping leading man in US silent films, later a portrayer of men of authority in character roles
Robert Armstrong	1940	This slickhaired, doughy-faced actor uttered one of the most famous exit lines in movie history, "It was beauty killed the beast" (<i>King Kong</i> 1933)
Alan Mowbray	1941, ‘50	Dignified looking British character actor equally proficient at dramatic and comedic roles. A founding member of the Screen Actors Guild
Lou Costello	1942	One half of the legendary comedy team Abbott and Costello
Edward Arnold	1943	Screen, stage, and television actor who entered films in 1915 with the Essanay Co. He was President of Screen Actors Guild from 1940-42
Charles Coburn	1944 - 45	A cigar-smoking, monocled, swag-bellied character actor known for his Old South manners and charm

Fred Niblo	1946	Pioneer Director of such films as <i>Ben Hur</i> , <i>Blood and Sand</i> . He was one of the 36 founders of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences
Charles Kemper	1947 - 48	Appeared in the <i>Pathé Checkers Comedies</i> series in the 1920s, remaining active in films until his untimely death in an automobile accident in 1950
Ralph Murphy	1949	Character actor who made over 40 films including <i>Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch</i> (1942), and <i>Sunbonnet Sue</i> (1945)
Fred Clark	1951	Character actor seen in many movies and TV shows. Notable as the stuffy executor of Auntie Mame's brother's will in <i>Auntie Mame</i>
Rhys Williams	1954	Born in Wales, this boxer-turned-actor made over 80 films, and is best known for his role in <i>How Green Was My Valley</i> (1941)
Gene Autry	1955	The archetype of the guitar strumming, singing Hollywood cowboy, Autry is one of American cinema's most beloved figures
Harry Joe Brown	1952, '53, '56 - '60, '64 - '66	- A Masquer for more than 30 years, producing over 120 films including <i>Dangerous</i> (1935) and many westerns such as <i>Santa Fe</i> (1951)
Frank Faylen	1961-63	Character actor in more than 180 movies, he specialized in average-guy parts and who could be equally effective in sympathetic or unlikeable roles
Allan Hersholt	1967-69	Son of actor Jean Hersholt, who devoted himself to many humanitarian and charitable causes offscreen
Joe Pasternak	1970-78	Legendary producer of more than 80 films, as well as the three consecutive <i>Annual Academy Awards Ceremonies</i> (1965-67)
Pat Buttrum	1980	One of America's best-known comic entertainers. Most remembered as Gene Autry's sidekick in many western films
Louis Lauria	1981	Los Angeles business man who owned Lauria's Answering Service, specializing in serving the confidential and complex needs movie stars
Anthony Caruso	1982-2002	Legendary character actor appearing in over 120 films, equally as many television programs, and many stage productions
William Malin	2002 -	A film historian since childhood, he "joined" the Old Hollywood community as a teenager, becoming a Masquer at age 16

Did You Know That These Legendary Men and Women Were Members Of The Masquers ?

Gene Autry
Jack L. Warner
Will Rogers
Mary Pickford
Wallace Beery
Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle
Stan Laurel
Oliver Hardy
Charley Chase
Gary Cooper
Pat O'Brien
W.C. Fields
Bob Hope
Lou Costello
Tony Curtis
Joe Pasternak
Jack Benny
Humphrey Bogart
Cecile B DeMille
Douglas Fairbanks
Cary Grant
Judy Garland
Fred MacMurray
Ida Lupino
Karl Malden
Walter Huston
Ronald Colman
Herbert Marshall
Fred Astaire
Buster Keaton
Art Linkletter
Bing Crosby
Frank Capra
Spencer Tracy
Ronald Reagan

James Cagney
Danny Thomas
Harry Carey
Nat King Cole
Milton Berle
Frank Sinatra
Mickey Rooney
Soupy Sales
Steve Allen
Jack Dempsey
Jayne Mansfield
Carroll O'Connor
Gregory Peck
Randolph Scott
Army Archerd
Maureen O'Hara
Ed Begley, Sr.
June Allyson
Edward G. Robinson
Cesar Romero
Jimmy Stewart
Michael Landon
Jim Nabors
Red Foxx
Groucho Marx
Richard Widmark
Elizabeth Taylor
Liza Minelli
Mike Douglas
Shirley Temple
Bob Newhart
Marlo Thomas
Astronaut Buzz Aldrin
Frank Sinatra
Hugh O'Brien

Martha Raye
Pearl Bailey
Jerry Lewis
Charlton Heston
Michael Ansara
Dennis Weaver
Buddy Ebsen
Yvonne DeCarlo
Jane Wyman
Debbie Reynolds
Edith Head
Merv Griffin
Mia Farrow
Kirk Douglas
Flip Wilson
Gena Rowlands
Lee Meriwether
Lauren Bacall
Dorothy Malone
Zsa Zsa Gabor
Gregory Peck
Esther Williams
John Huston
Broderick Crawford
Allyn Joslyn
Jane Withers
Robert Goulet
Carol Burnett
Joe E. Brown
Allyn Joslyn
Edmund Gwenn
Johnny Carson
Jayne Meadows
Don Rickles
Mae West

1925: The Year Of Our Birth

by Allan Hersholt (Harlequin 1967-1969)

1925 found Hollywood with a population of 130,000... The reigning stars of the day were Fairbanks, Pickford, Valentino, Lloyd, Chaplin, Swanson, Negri, the Talmadge sisters, Colleen Moore, Barthelmess, Corinne Griffith and the Gish girls... Charles Farrell was supporting Rin Tin Tin at Warner Bros.... Janet Gaynor was doing bits at Fox... The average number of feature films annually was 700... And radio was being blamed for an alarming decline in movie boxoffice receipts...

Perhaps the most exciting and colorful event of the year was Fred Niblo's filming of the Chariot Race for the \$4,000,000 "Ben-Hur". The coliseum set was built on a huge open lot at Venice Blvd and La Cienega at a cost of \$300,000, and forty-two cameras were used to record the memorable sequence... In Rome, Mussolini issued an edict that for one week bimonthly all Italian theatres must show Italian films exclusively... Back in Hollywood, Sid Grauman announced plans to erect "the most picturesque and unique playhouse in the entire world" - Grauman's Chinese Theatre...

It was estimated that there were 50,000 movie houses in the world - 20,000 of them in America... And two more were soon to be added. In New York, Adolph Zukor announced plans to erect the Paramount Theatre on the site of the old Putnam Building in Times Square, and Sam Rothafel launched construction of the Roxy Theatre... Meanwhile Warner Bros., of the lesser companies, joined with Western Electric and its research unit, Bell Laboratories, to develop and promote the Western Electric sound system, which they labeled Vitaphone...

That year Will Rogers took his first flight in an airplane. His pilot was Billy Mitchell... MGM hired a Swedish actress named Garbo at a salary of \$400 a week... Irving Thalberg's salary at the same studio was raised from \$650 to \$2,000 weekly... Paramount signed D. W. Griffith at \$156,000 a year... Fox was paying Tom Mix \$17,000 a week... And Jesse Lasky offered Gloria Swanson a Paramount contract at \$18,000 weekly for seven years, but she declined to produce independently...

The Charleston became the dance of the day. And dancer George Raft was helping to popularize it at Texas Guinan's in New York... In Hollywood, Paramount had Thelma Todd among the students... Clark Gable was working as an extra in Mae Murray's "Merry Widow"... Douglas MacLean (our next Harlequin) starred in "Seven Keys to Baldpate" for Paramount... Reginald Denny was Universal's top box-office draw... Gary Cooper was doing bits in westerns...

The Year of Our Birth: Continued

Vitagraph sold out to Warners that year... C. B. demille left Paramount to make pictures for Producers Distributing Corp.... Joe Schenck's efforts to merge United Artists with MGM were upset by partner Charlie Chaplin's disapproval... Chaplin's "Gold Rush" had its world premiere at Grauman's Egyptian, with Fred Niblo serving as master of ceremonies. This was said to be the longest and costliest comedy ever made. It ran nine reels, and many critics complained of its "extreme" length...

In New York, the Durant Club was headlining Clayton, Jackson "Durante, and charging \$25 for a quart of wine... Edward Arnold appeared with Otto Kruger and Victor Moore in "Easy Come, Easy Go" at the Biltmore there... Al Jolson was in "Big Boy" at the Winter Garden... Fred and Adele Astaire, Walter Catlett and Cliff Edwards were in "Lady, Be Good!" at the Liberty... Also on the Broadway boards: W. C. Fields in "Poppy", Fred and Dorothy Stone in "Stepping Stones", and Eddie Cantor in "Kid Boots"...

That year William Fox began developing what was later to be known as Fox Movietone... Tony Moreno was a Paramount star... Lucille Le Sueur became Joan Crawford... Luis Alonso became Gilbert Roland... Buster Keaton made the unforgettable "Go West Larry Semon, Oliver Hardy and Dorothy Dwan starred in "The Wizard of Oz"... Ronald Colman and Vilma Banky teamed in Goldwyn's "Dark Angel"... Reed Howes, famed as the "Arrow Collar Man", appeared in Warner's "Bobbed Hair"...

Doug Fairbanks, after several years of experimentation, started production on an all-color picture, "The Black Pirate"... Bing Crosby was working as a song and dance man for Fanchon & Marco at \$60 a week... Lew Cody co-starred with Norma Shearer in MGM's "Slave of Fashion"... Douglas Shearer, her brother, got a job as a prop man at Warners... Jack Dempsey married Estelle Taylor, and Edmund Lowe married Lilyan Tashman... Leon Errol was in "Clothes Make the Pirate" at First National... Jack Mulhall teamed with Dorothy Mackaill in "Joanna" at the same studio... Buck Jones' leading lady was Jane Peters, who later became Carole Lombard... Mary Astor was soon to be proclaimed a Wampas Baby Star... And Lee Francis and Polly Adler were outgrossing Metro and Paramount.

Happy
50th Anniversary
Marguerite!
Fred Astaire
1976



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FRIDAY, MARCH 14, 1969



Testimonial Dinner



Honoring
WALTER WINCHELL
 DEC. 5TH, 1956

THE MASQUERS CLUB

PROUDLY PRESENTS

MAE WEST



Saturday, April 14, 1973

Hollywood, California

The Masquer's Honor
Ginger Rogers



Friday, November 30, 1979