

RETURN OF AN ANGEL

Directed by...



MICHAEL LILLY
Biography

Michael is a native of North Carolina and graduated from the University of North Carolina (Greensboro) in 1975 with a BFA degree in Directing. While at the University he toured the state twice with the Theater for Young People and as a senior, performed in *The Orestia* at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D. C. as part of the American College Theatre Festival.

After college, the United Arts Council of Greensboro selected Michael, along with his wife Brenda, as an Artist-In-Residence. Together they co-founded the ACT Co. - a producing Theatre Company sponsored by the North Carolina Arts Council through CETA and NEA funds. The ACT Co. mainly performed out of two spaces - the classic fifteen hundred seat Carolina Theatre and a smaller (150 seat) experimental space they designed in an old mantleworks warehouse they called The Mantleworks Theatre.

Michael served as Director or Producer for over fifteen plays in three years while in residence, including *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, *No Exit*, *Vanities*, *The Miracle Worker* and *Old Times*. Believing the future of theatre lay in the nurturing of new playwrights, Michael ventured into the production of original plays with the first works of award winning writer Tom Huey. The success of the ACT Co. served as a model for similar arts projects in eight other states and is documented in both a film and book.

After moving to California in 1979, Michael's interest in directing original material continued. Working with several different theatres (including the Matrix, Theater West, Powerhouse and Theatre 40), he produced and directed numerous plays, festivals and play reading series. He served as the Director of New Works at Actor's Alley from 1990 until 1995. There, he also directed the world premieres of Peter Lefcourt's *Sweet Talk*, and Joe Beesecker's *The Annual St. Valentine's Day Zin Tasting*. He won a Cable Car Award for his direction of Beesecker's play *Fools Rush Inn* at Theatre Artaud in San Francisco.

He has served as a dramaturge and staging director for the Los Angeles branch of Lehman Engle Musical Theatre Workshop. He produced two seasons of the Venice Playwrights Festival where he also directed the premiere of Tom Huey's *Man In the Bright Nightgown*, and Jill Maynards's *Caffeine Society*. The plays received five Dramalogue Awards including one for direction. He subsequently directed two additional productions of *Nightgown*, including an Equity touring production in North Carolina. He directed the American premiere of British Playwright Valerie Windsor's critically acclaimed play, *Effie's Burning* as the inaugural production of the Rubicon Theater Company in New York City.

In the summer of 1998, along with his wife, he formed The Occasional Theatre, a producing organization modeled loosely on their former group, The Act Co. *Elephant Sighs*, a new play by Ed Simpson, became their initial production. Under Michael's direction, *Elephant Sighs* received numerous "Critic's Pick" nods from area papers including The Los Angeles Times, Entertainment Today (which also voted it Best Ensemble Play of '98), The L.A. Weekly and BackStage West (Garland Award Winner/Best Actor). In the summer of 2000, The Occasional Theatre premiered another Ed Simpson play, *Additional Particulars* and under Michaels direction, again struck gold with the critics and the original five week run was expanded to seventeen weeks. The production received three LA Drama Critic Circle nominations, winning for the writing and lead actor. Michael received a directing nomination.

While *Additional Particulars* ran on the West Coast, Michael traveled to North Carolina to revive his award winning production of *The Man In The Bright Nightgown* at the Broach Theatre. It played to sold out houses and became the highest grossing play of their season.

In the summer of 2001 Michael directed a staged reading of *To Kill A Mockingbird* with a cast that included Academy award nominee Bruce Davison, James Avery, Mae Whitman, Lisa Pelikan and Charlie Robinson at the S. Mark Taper Amphitheatre to benefit the environmental organization, *Tree People*.

In March of 2002 he traveled to North Shore Music Theatre in Beverly, MA. to direct an Equity workshop production of a new musical, *The Legend of Tom Dooley*. In the spring of 2004 he directed a staged reading of *American Tales*, a new musical based on two short stories by Herman Melville and Mark Twain for the Los Angeles based Antaeus Company. Ken Stone (book/lyrics), a collaborator on the project, went on to win the 2005 Edward Kleban award for the book of Melville's *Bartleby, the Scrivener*.

After his move to North Carolina, Michael was hired as Artist-In-Residence to direct Moises Kaufman's *The Laramie Project* at Brevard College in Brevard, North Carolina. In the Spring of 2006, he directed *Elephant Sighs* in Greensboro at the Broach Theatre then moved the show to Asheville where it played to sold out audiences as part of the Stoneleaf Festival. He also served as the chair of the screenwriting competition for the 2005 Carolina Film Festival. He wrote and directed the Christmas show for the Temple Theatre in Sanford in 2005 and 2006 and in February, 2007 directed the World Premiere of Peter Colley's play, *The Man In The Desert* at Theatre In The Park in Raleigh. He directed the World Premiere of *Night at the Connelly Theatre* in Manhattan for the 2007 International Fringe

Festival.

Michael has served as Dialogue Coach for the ABC series, *Second Noah*, *State of Grace*, the MGM series, *Fame L.A.*, and Pax TV movie trilogy, *Christy*.

He is a member of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers and the Drama League. He lives with his wife and two dogs in Biltmore Forest, North Carolina.



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