

An online gathering of Broadway greats

WE HAVE A LOT of pet websites, theatrical and otherwise, here at *Dramatics*. While working on this month's issue we kept returning to this one: www.americantheatrewing.org. The Theatre Wing is best known as founder of the Tony Awards, but the organization, started by a group of stage ladies during World War I to support the troops, these days sponsors all kinds of educational and philanthropic projects—including the book *The Play That Changed My Life* (excerpts begin on page 20).

Theatre students and teachers should take advantage of the dozens of media clips produced and/or archived by the Theatre Wing. It's a great wealth of material, well presented. You can watch and listen directly from the site, download files, or subscribe to podcasts.

Start with "Working in the Theatre," a series of hourlong videos featuring panels of prominent actors, directors, and other stage artists talking frankly (and often humorously) about what they do, and why. Readers of Jim Palmarini's interview with two young stars of *Next to Normal* (page 5) will want to watch Theodore S. Chapin's talk with four of the show's creators, while "Leading Ladies" is an enjoyable coffee klatsch between Tony winners Laura Benanti, Beth Leavel, Bebe Neuwirth, and *Normal* lead Alice Ripley, with American Theatre Wing executive director Howard Sherman asking the questions. For listening only, there is "Downstage Center," the Wing's weekly interviews with major players such as actor Rondi Reed (*August: Osage County*) and director Gregory Mosher (*A View from the Bridge*).

Just as interesting, though perhaps not as glamorous, is the "In the Wings" video series, in which a wide range of behind-the-scenes theatre professionals—a fight director, an orchestrator, an automation engineer, a dialect coach, a dance captain—describe how they broke into the



AMERICAN THEATRE WING

Actors John Lloyd Young (left), Alison Pill, and Jonathan Groff in "The Next Generation," part of the American Theatre Wing's "Working in the Theatre" video series.

business (aerial choreographer Paul Rubin started out as a kid magician), what a typical day on the job is like, and how they keep shows on track when things go wrong. Since most paying theatre gigs actually occur "in the wings," or beyond, these videos might lead students to consider careers other than acting.

There are some great older clips on the site as well. Inspired by this month's Acting in Musical Theatre ar-

ticle on the Golden Age, we listened to a Broadway League radio interview from the 1970s with Yul Brynner, who was starring in a revival of *The King and I* at the time. He talks about hearing a lot of female laughter from the audience at the King's sexist comments. "They can afford to laugh," Brynner observes, in this era of "women's lib," whereas "in the old days, they used to cough at these jokes."

—J.Y.C.

