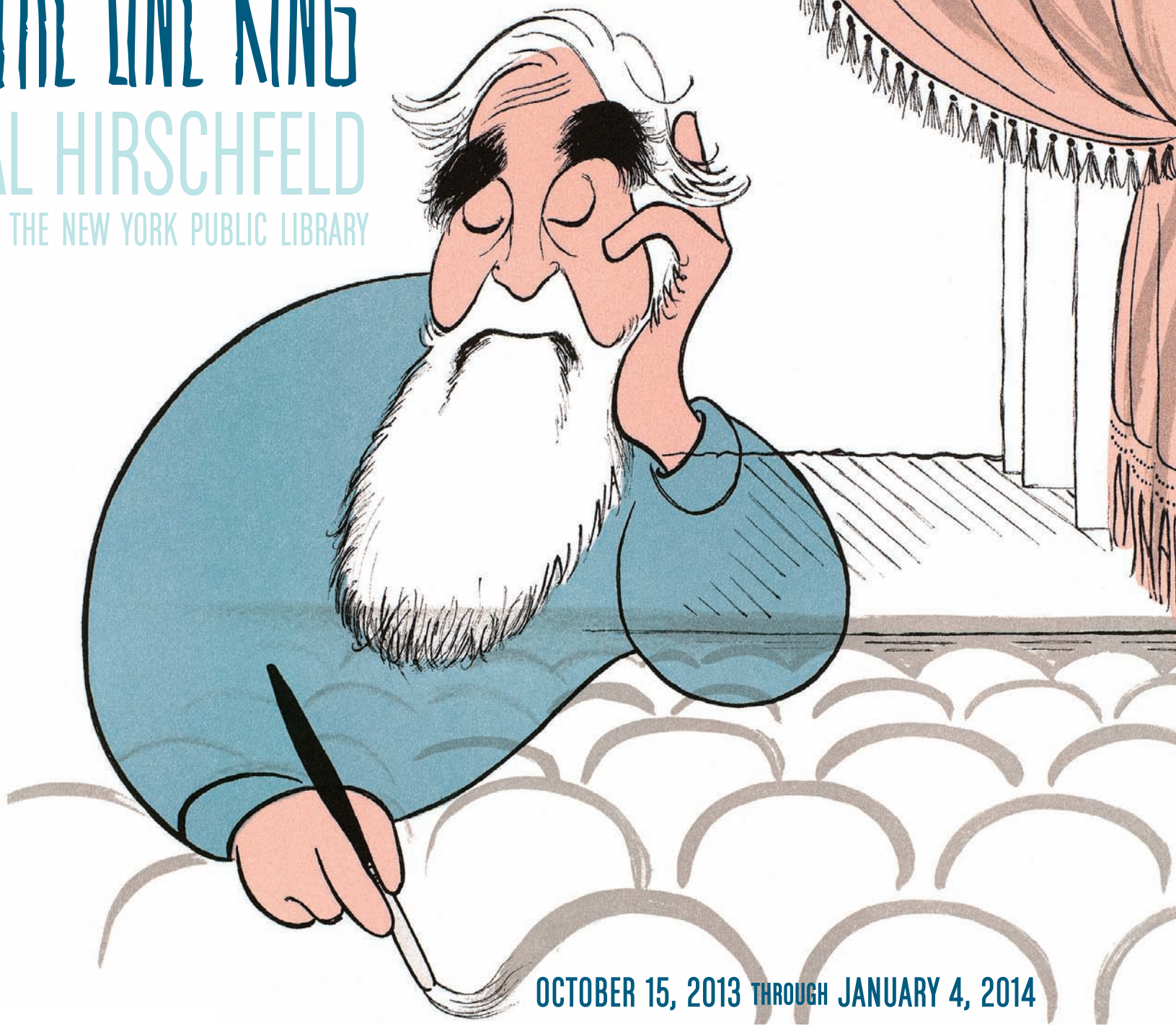


# THE LINE KING

## AL HIRSCHFELD

AT THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY



OCTOBER 15, 2013 THROUGH JANUARY 4, 2014

THE DONALD AND MARY OENSLAGER GALLERY | THE SHELBY CULLOM DAVIS MUSEUM | NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS | DOROTHY AND LEWIS B. CULLMAN CENTER

During our marriage, I had the unique experience of seeing a Hirschfeld drawing before it hit the newsstands, of being present during *The Process*, at the drawing board, and before the NINAS were hidden.

Before our marriage, however, I had already been a keen as well as a professional observer of the art of Al Hirschfeld - albeit without the luxury of proximity. I was a theatre historian, and Al Hirschfeld was an essential, at times a definitive, original resource in the history of the American stage. Long before video cameras, it was Al doing the accurate recording of our greatest shows.

The first drawing of his I really studied was one commissioned by my first husband, Leo Kerz, for his Broadway production of Eugene Ionesco's *Rhinoceros* in 1961. That's the one where Zero Mostel transformed into the title character - a snorting, pawing, giant wild pachyderm. He did it right on stage without benefit of special makeup or special effects and terrorized his poor, shaking co-star Eli Wallach night after night, literally tossing him about the stage. But it was Al Hirschfeld's equally remarkable theatrical art that, fortunately, captured the moment - in all its ferocity and power and originality - for posterity.

The scene was naturally the highlight of the play and since I worked on the production, I got to witness it at many performances. Knowing the original as well as I did, I couldn't help marveling at the way Hirschfeld had encapsulated it in a line drawing, like some kind of visual shorthand, catching not only the look but the high drama of the moment. Hirschfeld's accuracy of theatrical detail is by now legendary, but he also seemed to have some mysterious knowledge of the playwright's intentions. Like a clairvoyant with a pen instead of a crystal ball.

ABOVE  
Zero Mostel and  
Eli Wallach in *Rhinoceros*  
Ink on board, 1961



After that dramatic start I always returned to Hirschfeld's work to assist me in my research for museum exhibitions and television programs. Because of his incredible attention to visual detail and near photographic eye, Hirschfeld's drawings provide a wealth of visual history not only of the theatre but of American cultural life. Since his art runs like connective tissue through nine decades, his drawings are sociologically as well as aesthetically indispensable. In fact, a Hirschfeld is often more revealing than a camera, because of the drawing's flair and fluidity of movement, and added dimension over mere photography or videography.

*THE LINE KING'S LIBRARY* is filled with research from the archives of theatre, music, dance and literature. Enjoy your exploration of those hidden treasures. Thanks to talented archaeologists David Leopold and Barbara Cohen Stratyner for leading the hunt.

LOUISE KERZ HIRSCHFELD  
President, The Al Hirschfeld Foundation

*Adapted from "Looking Over His Shoulder", first published in Hirschfeld On Line (Applause 1999)*





FAR LEFT

42<sup>nd</sup> Street with  
Christine Ebersole,  
Michael Cumpsty, and  
Kate Levering  
Lithograph, 2001

LEFT

Jack Lemmon  
Published 1979

BELOW

Dolly Haas and  
Nina Hirschfeld  
Photo by Peter Basch  
c. 1953

## THE LINE KING

Al Hirschfeld's career began at Goldwyn Pictures in 1920 across the street from the 42<sup>nd</sup> Street branch of the New York Public Library, and over the next nine decades, Hirschfeld and the Library became even closer. Hirschfeld availed himself of the Library's book and picture collections, he attended its events, and was a lifelong supporter. He encouraged Billy Rose to support the Library's burgeoning theatre collection, and suggested to others that they give their collections to the Library.

Over the years, the Library has collected original Hirschfeld drawings, paintings, and prints, and its shelves are filled with books and publications featuring Hirschfeld artwork (including fifty years of the *Best Plays* series), as well as posters, album covers, and all manner of ephemera. His barber chair and drawing table, where he created virtually all of his work, now greet visitors to the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts on the plaza of Lincoln Center. *THE LINE KING'S LIBRARY* showcases the richness of the Library's Hirschfeld collection, as well as the ubiquity of Hirschfeld's artwork over his eighty-two year career and beyond.







LEFT

*Rhythm Series - Cakewalk*  
Lithograph, 1970

RIGHT

*Rhythm Series - Charleston*  
Lithograph, 1970

The name Al Hirschfeld (1903 – 2003) has virtually been synonymous with Broadway since his first theatrical drawing was published in December 1926. But by then, he was a six-year veteran of movie studio publicity and art departments, having already worked for Goldwyn, Universal, Pathé, Selznick, Fox, First National, and Warner Brothers. “I lived in the movies,” he says of his early years, and it was in films that he discovered his gift of caricature. Hirschfeld supplied iconic artwork for posters, programs, heralds, trade ads, and billboards, for every studio in Hollywood from *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* to *Gangs of New York*. In his film art, Hirschfeld began to explore how each line of his drawings had to create a visually compelling work that attracted attention in the briefest possible interval. He learned to purify the pictorial detail of his drawings and quickly gained a confident authority.

Hirschfeld’s caricatures debuted during the genre’s vogue in the 1920s, but in little more than a decade he towered over the field. His style stands as one of the most innovative efforts in establishing the visual language of modern art through caricature in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Instead of relying on simple recognition, he employed a palette of graphic symbols to translate the action of the whole body into line drawings that have become the *lingua franca* of generations of actors and audiences. The best loved of these symbols is NINA, his daughter’s name which he began hiding within his work in 1945.



# “Line as *movement* - prancing, skipping, twisting and dancing,”

according to critic Michael Kimmelman, “was the vehicle through which Hirschfeld conveyed the adrenaline rush of live theater and his absorption in the here and now, resulting in art that looks eternally, uncannily fresh.”



At the age of twenty, Hirschfeld took a studio on West Forty-second Street with the newly arrived Miguel Covarrubias and was bitten by the bug of caricature that Covarrubias had brought from his native Mexico. Hirschfeld’s friendship with John Held Jr., who literally invented the look of the Jazz Age in his drawings, was just as crucial in the young artist’s development. Held’s thin line was an important ingredient in Hirschfeld’s early caricatures, and Held’s success and its attendant responsibilities left a lasting impression on Hirschfeld.

## ABOVE RIGHT

*American Ballet Theatre*  
with Alexander Godunov,  
Martine Von Hamel,  
Anthony Dowell, Natalia  
Makarova, Fernando Bujones,  
and Cynthia Gregory  
Published May 4, 1980

## BELOW RIGHT

*Rhythm Series -  
Pas De Deux*  
Lithograph, 1970

## FAR RIGHT

*Leonard Bernstein*  
Publication date unknown







LEFT

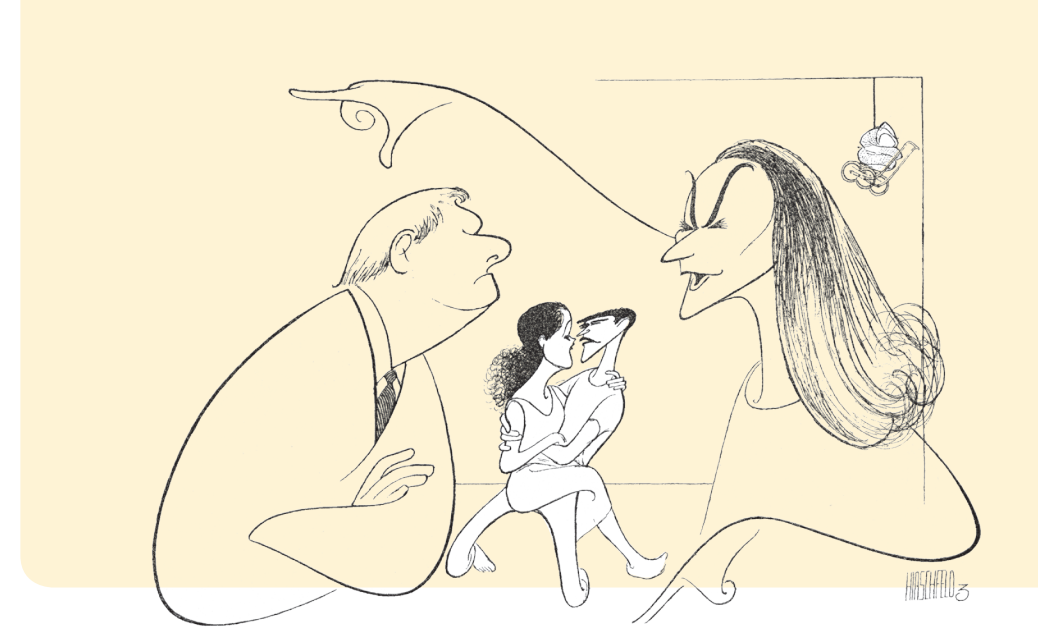
Martha Graham  
Lithograph, c. 1969

BELOW

Fanny Brice and George  
Jessel heading the stage  
show at the Paramount  
Published December 4, 1932

RIGHT

The Play About The Baby  
with Marian Seldes, Brian  
Murray, Kathleen Early,  
and David Burtka  
Lithograph, 2001



A ten-month stay on the island of Bali in 1932 would cement Hirschfeld's interest in the graphic possibilities of line. "It was in Bali that my attraction to drawing blossomed into an enduring love affair with line." Enchanted by the dramatic shadows of Javanese puppets and the art of the island, Hirschfeld's sympathetic reaction to this environment instilled a belief that caricature expressed the magic of a child's world. When he returned to New York, the spotlight replaced the dramatic sunlight of Bali in Hirschfeld's pictures. He gave up easel painting altogether and focused on what interested him most: image in pure line.



Here shown are George Jessel and Fanny Brice. Also in the interlude are Donald Norris, the Jesse Crawford, Gypsy Markoff (in the lobby) and Rubinoff and his band

Hirschfeld looked with an artist's eye but with a journalist's intent to capture the magic of performance. One of Hirschfeld's greatest challenges was to avoid "creating stereotyped drawings of stereotyped subjects." Appearing regularly in the paper (as well as many other publications) was a sign of success, but the ubiquity came with a price: Hirschfeld had to reinvent himself for each drawing in order to remain fresh. A playwright may have to come up with a new angle for his work every season; Hirschfeld had to do it every week. With the theater, an art form that included scores of handsome leading men, attractive leading ladies, young ingénues, earnest love interests, tragic heroines, and dastardly villains, etc., his subject remained more or less the same, but Hirschfeld's response did not. One drawing might be a complex composition with a cast of characters, and the next might be





a minimal portrait of a single performer, followed by a work defined by light and shadow, before another drawing with vigorous cross-hatching and suggestive brushwork. Hirschfeld created his own graphic problems, but always in service of his subject.

His embrace of the moment has kept his work from being dated. “The work never happens in the past tense,” says Jules Feiffer. Look at what’s on Broadway today *The Glass Menagerie*, *Chicago*, *Pippin*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Mamma Mia!* *Annie*, *The Trip to the Bountiful*, *The Winslow Boy*, and *Cinderella* — all drawn by Hirschfeld in one production or another. Now look at this exhibition whether at the art physically on the walls or digitally throughout the installation, you might be forgiven if you think he’s drawing this season. The current Tony Best Musical, *Kinky Boots*, plays at the Al Hirschfeld Theatre (portions of the dedication ceremony can be seen in the exhibition), so he remains a presence on Broadway.

We hope this exhibition works much like a Hirschfeld drawing in that you gain insight and leave with a smile. As the playwright William Saroyan wrote in 1941, “I like everything of Hirschfeld’s I’ve seen. I don’t know why and I know I don’t need to know why. I like people like Hirschfeld because they’re the best, and I like what they do because they can’t help it and only want you to be happy.”

## DAVID LEOPOLD

*David Leopold is an author and curator who has organized exhibitions for institutions around the world. He has been the archivist of Al Hirschfeld’s work for more than two decades.*

**To learn more about Al Hirschfeld and his work, please visit [www.AlHirschfeldFoundation.org](http://www.AlHirschfeldFoundation.org) or follow it on Twitter @ [AlHirschfeld](https://twitter.com/AlHirschfeld). Please visit [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org) to learn more about the Library collections and services.**



**GALEITY**, tenderness, merry songs, sentimental ones, dances, sparkling specialty acts, an inspired use of Technicolor, A ROUSING STORY—that’s M-G-M’s latest sure-to-be-hit, “Broadway Rhythm.” Starring a new romantic team, “Broadway Rhythm” has a brilliant cast headed by George Murphy and Ginny Simms, lovely lady of the air-waves who makes her debut under the M-G-M banner. Add to that sure-fire pair of entertainers, Tommy Dorsey and his music, Charles Winninger, Lena Horne, Hazel Scott, Eddie “Rochester” Anderson, Gloria De Haven, Kenny Bowers, Ben Blue, Nancy Walker, the Glumaxons . . .

Add six sensational newcomers from the New York stage—the Ross Sisters, three breath-taking young acrobats; Walter Long, tap dancer nonpareil; Jane Hale, golden-haired dancer; and Dean Murphy, the White House’s favorite mimic, who presents a series of the impersonations that made him famous—President and Mrs. Roosevelt, Mortimer Snerd and Charlie McCarthy, Jimmy Stewart . . .

In perhaps the most versatile role of his career, George Murphy dances, sings, provides comedy, romance. As the pivotal character of a delightful story based upon the Jerome Kern-Oscar Hammerstein II musical play, “Very Warm for May,” Ginny Simms proves that she’s an actress as well as radio’s No. 1 singing star. And she sings as well as acts—Kern’s all-time hit, “All the Things You Are,” and a lovely Spanish song, “Amor, Amor.”

Hilarious contributions to “Broadway Rhythm” are trombone duets by Dorsey and Winninger—“I Like Coryn Music,” a candidate for the Hit Parade by Don Raye and Gene de Paul, and “National Emblem March.” Winninger demonstrates once again his stature as a tear-and-laugh provoker and he revives—in a flashback sequence—“Pretty Baby” for a charming song and dance routine with sunny-haired starlet Gloria De Haven.

“Broadway Rhythm” gives petite Gloria, one-time vocalist with Bob Crosby’s band, the most advantageous role of her blossoming career as Winninger’s stage-struck daughter.

Nancy Walker and Ben Blue do a delightful song and dance sketch, “Milkman Keep Those Bottles Quiet.” Gravel-voiced “Rochester” adds comedy, too, as George Murphy’s “Man Friday” and as Lena Horne’s ardent suitor. Nothing short of sensational are Lena’s two appearances—first in a flamboyant production number, “Brazilian Boogie-Woogie,” and then singing “Somebody Loves Me,” the memorable George Gershwin tune. Inspired piano pyrotechnics are contributed by Hazel Scott’s brilliant interpretation of Chopin’s “Minute Waltz” in swingtime.

Climaxing the film is a spectacular presentation with almost the entire talent-studded cast dancing and singing “Who’s Who in Your Love Life,” another new song by Raye and de Paul.

“Broadway Rhythm” was directed by Roy Del Ruth, veteran maker of Technicolor films, including “Du Barry Was A Lady.” It was produced by Jack Cummings who brought to the screen such successes as “Ship Ahoy” and “I Dood It.”

## TOP RIGHT

*My Fair Lady* with George Bernard Shaw, Rex Harrison, and Julie Andrews  
Published 1956

## ABOVE

*The Iceman Cometh* with Jason Robards  
Offset lithograph, 1960

## ABOVE

*Broadway Rhythm*  
Trade advertisement, 1943



## CREDITS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*The Line King's Library: Al Hirschfeld and The New York Public Library* is a project of The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Jacqueline Z. Davis, Barbara G. and Lawrence A. Fleischman Executive Director; Barbara Cohen-Stratynier, Judy R. and Alfred A. Rosenberg Curator of Exhibitions; and The Al Hirschfeld Foundation, Louise Kerz Hirschfeld, President. The exhibit was developed and curated by Al Hirschfeld Foundation Archivist David Leopold and Barbara Cohen-Stratynier, with the staff of the Shelby Cullom Davis Museum, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts: Caitlin Whittington, Designer; and René Ronda and Dennessa Usher, Installers. Gallery media developed with Michael Diekmann, Manager of Play-Back and Inter-actives. Conservator: Grace Owen. Public programming for the project was developed by Cheryl Raymond, Manager of Public Programs, and David Callahan, Reserve Film & Video Collection.

Artifacts in the exhibition are from the research and circulating divisions of The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. We thank The Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature at The New York Public Library, for allowing the display of S. J. Perelman artifacts in the gallery. We are grateful to the many staff members of the Performing Arts Library for their contributions to the project and aid in locating so much wonderful material drawn, designed or illustrated by Hirschfeld. We also thank the Al Hirschfeld Foundation assistants Paul Chapman and Katherine Marshall, who did so much legwork in the Hirschfeld archives.

We are grateful to the following for permission to use exhibition video in the gallery: for Carol Channing video: Ghost Light Films and THIRTEEN Productions LLC in association with WNET; for excerpts from Theatre Talk: CUNY TV's *Spotlight* show; special thanks to Adam Walker and Bob Isaacson; for excerpts from the TOFT interview of Hirschfeld by Brendan Gill: Permission granted by Louise Kerz Hirschfeld, President of The Al Hirschfeld Foundation.

For permission to include excerpts from Theatre on Film and Tape Archive, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts coverage of the re-naming of the Al Hirschfeld Theater, we thank the member organizations of the Coalition of Broadway Unions and Guilds: Actors' Equity Association; American Federation of Musicians, Local 802; Association of Theatrical Press Agents and Managers, Local 18032; Dramatists Guild; International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, International; Makeup Artists - Hair Stylists Union Local 798; Motion Picture Projectionists, Operators, Video Technicians, Theatrical Employees & Allied Crafts, Local 306; Stage Directors and Choreographers Society; Service Employees International Union, Local 32BJ Theatre Division; Theatrical Protective Union Stage Hands, Local 1; Theatrical Wardrobe Union, Local 764; Treasurers & Ticket Sellers Union, Local 751; and United Scenic Artists, Local 829

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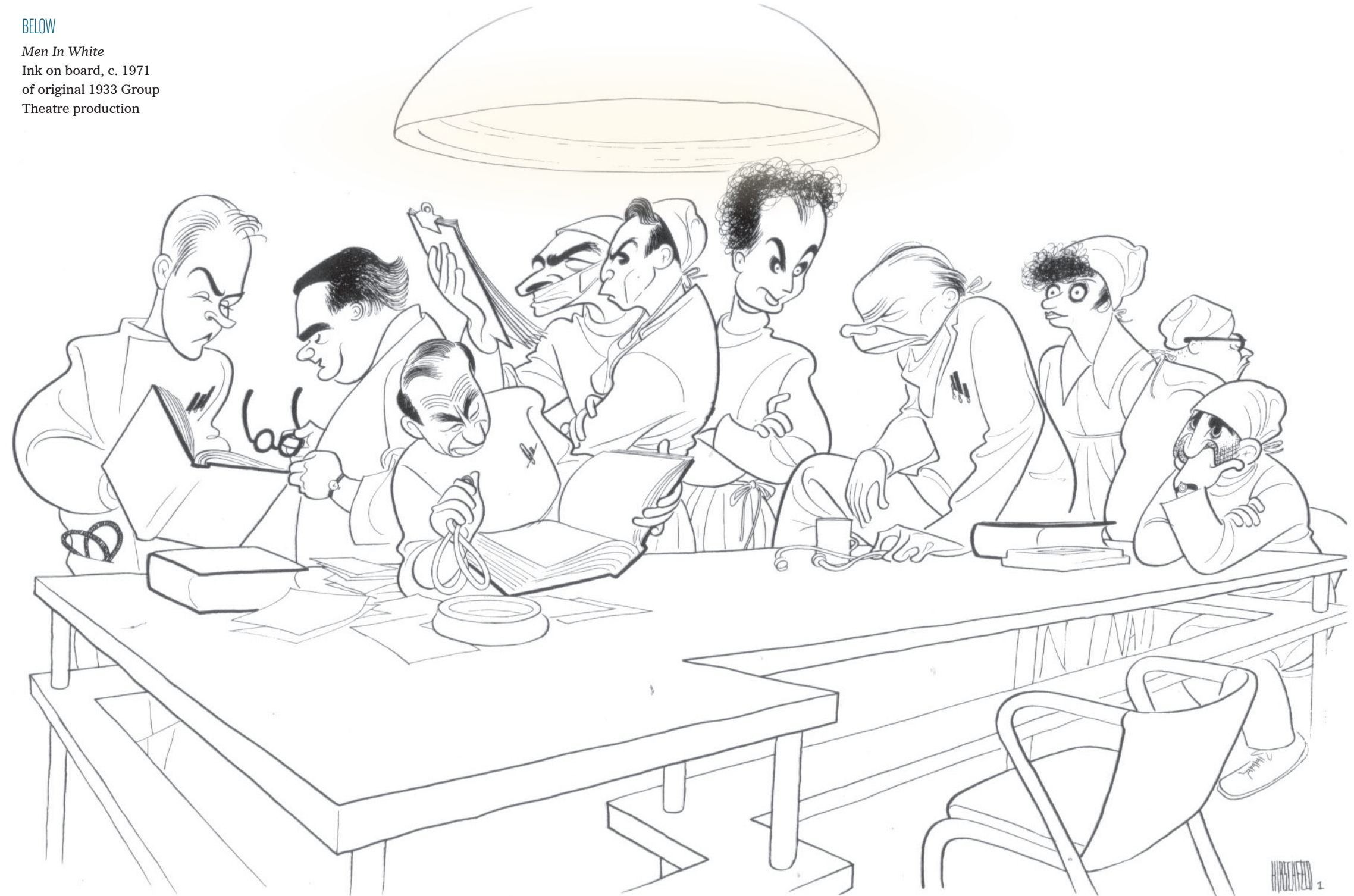
David Leopold's curatorial work is sponsored by The Al Hirschfeld Foundation. Material in the exhibition and brochure are in the collections of The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.  
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Al Hirschfeld is represented by The Margo Feiden Gallery, New York.

## BELOW

*Men In White*

Ink on board, c. 1971  
of original 1933 Group  
Theatre production





# PUBLIC PROGRAMS

THURSDAY

**October 24 at 6:0 p.m.**

## LIGHT AND LINE: DEPICTING PERFORMING

Curators Barbara Cohen-Stratynier and David Leopold look at the illustrators and photographers who covered Broadway and popular entertainment in the 20th century, and how they used black and white to create our memories.

THURSDAY

**November 14 at 6:00 p.m.**

## HIRSCHFELD'S HOLLYWOOD

The name Al Hirschfeld has virtually been synonymous with Broadway since his first theatrical drawing was published in December 1926. But by then he was a six-year veteran of movie studio publicity and art departments, having already worked for Goldwyn, Universal, Pathé, Selznick, Fox, First National, and Warner Brothers. Hirschfeld archivist David Leopold will trace Hirschfeld's nine decades of film art, followed by a curatorial tour of the exhibition.

MONDAY

**November 18 at 6:00 p.m.**

## THE LINE KING: THE AL HIRSCHFELD STORY

1996, 87 minutes

Directed by Susan Dryfoos,  
who will present at the screening.

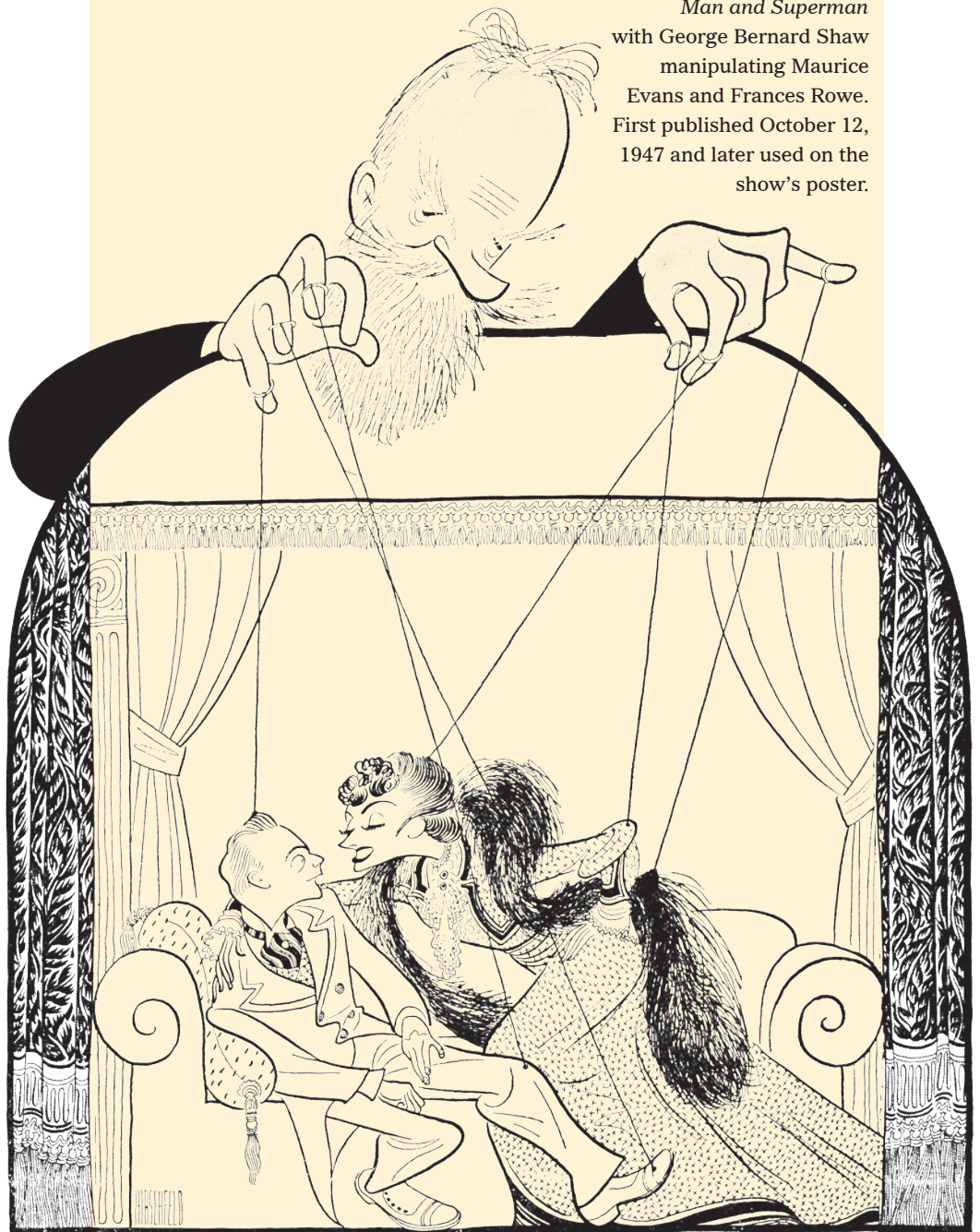
This Oscar-nominated documentary is a portrait of Al Hirschfeld featuring rare home movies, special appearances by his celebrity subjects, and interviews with his late wife Dolly Haas, and daughter Nina. The artist emerges as a brilliant, delightful, quirky, and compassionate observer of humanity.

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*Man and Superman*  
with George Bernard Shaw  
manipulating Maurice  
Evans and Frances Rowe.  
First published October 12,  
1947 and later used on the  
show's poster.



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