

# The Diary of Anne Frank

**Adaptation by Francis Goodrich and Albert Hackett;**

**newly adapted by Wendy Kesselman;**

**directed by Mr. McGlynn**

**Cast (in order of appearance)**

**Anne Frank.....Ashley Watson**  
**Otto Frank.....Zach Bush**  
**Edith Frank.....Elizabeth Allee**  
**Margot Frank.....Tracey Marr**  
**Miep Gies.....Megan Holub**  
**Peter Van Daan.....Shane Rogers**  
**Mr. Kraler.....Zach Hubbard**  
**Mrs. Van Daan..... Juliana Reiling**  
**Mr. Van Daan.....Tyler Befort-Speir**  
**Mr. Dussel.....Nathan Sullivan**  
**First Nazi Officer.....MariahNeilson**  
**Second Nazi Officer.....Josh Shelburn**  
**Additional Nazi soldiers.....Stage Crew members**

# **Campus Mano Stage Adv. Acting Rep class**

presents

*The Diary of Anne Frank on*

*Dec. 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup>*

Wendy Kesselman's eye-opening revision of the popular prize winning 1955 dramatization by Francis Goodrich and Albert Hackett of *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*. The diary, which had been published in 1947 with a foreword by Eleanor Roosevelt, was a publishing phenomenon, deeply penetrating American consciousness with its vivid, revealing, and deeply personal account of the Holocaust. It presented in microcosm a tragedy too vast and barbarous for easy human comprehension.

In 1943, in order to avoid arrest and deportation by the occupying Nazis, the Jewish Frank family, Ann, her parents, Otto and Edith, and her older sister, Margo, went into hiding in a secret annex above Otto's office in Amsterdam. Anne had recently been given a diary for her thirteenth birthday. For the 25 months that the Franks lived in the annex with four other desperate Jews, the introspective and talented Anne kept her diary. Tragically, they were all discovered by the Nazis and deported to the Nazi death camps where all but Anne's father, Otto, perished during the waning days of the Third Reich. Returning to Amsterdam after the Nazis were defeated, Frank was given the diary which had been retrieved by a Dutch friend who had been instrumental in helping the Franks to hide.

With the approval of Otto Frank, the outstanding American novelist Meyer Levin (*Compulsion*), who had brought the diary to the attention of its American publisher (and reviewed it for the N.Y. Times Book Review) wrote an adaptation for the stage. When producer Kermit Bloomgarden showed the play to the controversial Lillian Hellman, she pronounced Levin's adaptation to be "too Jewish", and convinced Otto Frank to dismiss Levin. Hellman further convinced Frank to hire her Hollywood friends, married and successful screenwriter partners Goodrich and Hackett, to write a more "universal" adaptation. Aside from their screenwriting credit (there were several screenwriters, credited and uncredited, involved) for *It's a Wonderful Life*, the Hacketts were strictly purveyors of light comedy and musical screenplays, and never wrote any other successful play. The Hacketts closely hewed to the structure and events of Levin's adaptation, removing any mention of Anne's pride in her Jewish heritage and of her fears that her talents would go unrecognized because of hostility to her identity. They emphasized Anne's inspiringly hopeful moments ("... I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are truly good at heart."), excluding her darker thoughts. Levin's version was suppressed (Levin's sad story is too long to be detailed here) and not permitted to ever be produced.

A well constructed, moving and spiritually uplifting feel-good play which catered to the need for reassurance and cosseting by its 1950s post-war audience, the Hacketts' adaptation was warmly received. I do not know how well their adaptation would work today. However, it is factually and emotionally dishonest. Along with almost everyone else, I remember eagerly ingesting its pabulum in 1955. An example of such is having Otto Frank say, as Nazi soldiers break into the secret annex, that for the past two years, we have lived in fear, now we can live in hope. No matter how long I ruminate on that line, I cannot make any sense of it. Just as bizarrely, when Otto Frank returns to the attic after the war, he tells Miep that Anne was happy in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, happy to be outside in the fresh air. Kesselman provides a haunting, disturbing alternative vision of Anne's last days. There is nothing in the original adaptation to match the power of that image in bringing home the horror of the Holocaust.

It is now known that Otto Frank withheld from publication an extensive number of pages from Anne's diary which related to her burgeoning sexuality and the full extent of her sense of alienation from her mother and sister. In 1995, almost 15 years after Otto's death, these pages were incorporated into a "definitive" new addition of the diary.

For the 1997 Broadway revival, new adaptor Wendy Kesselman set out to redress the Hackett's de-Judaization of Anne, and incorporate newly available information on Anne's burgeoning sexuality. This is the version which Campus Mane Stage will be presenting. Although this adaptation may not be entirely successful, it seriously reduces the phony feel-good aspects that the Hacketts' had introduced, and is to be commended for its heightened realism and power.

Some of Kesselman's revisions are clearly extensive. It is heartening to see a more complex, three-dimensional Anne Frank on the stage. We not only sympathize with her as a victim of the Nazis, but we care about her emotionally confusing, burgeoning adolescence. Now when Peter says that he would deny being Jewish to the world, Anne movingly expresses her determination to carry her identity with pride. .

The Hacketts gave us a feel-good *Anne Frank*. Wendy Kesselman has adapted and expanded their work to provide something deeper and more meaningful. Aided by the presence of a fully dimensional Anne, the Campus Mane Stage's production renders *The Diary of Anne Frank* more powerful and heartbreaking than ever.

*The Diary of Anne Frank* performances Dec. 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> @ 7:30 pm.