

American MASTERS

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press information



PBS

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Biographies

AMERICAN MASTERS Carol Burnett

CAROL BURNETT

Performer

Six-time Emmy Award winner Carol Burnett has demonstrated such versatility since ending the 11-year run of *The Carol Burnett Show* that she is as widely recognized for her dramatic abilities as she is for her comedic and musical talents. Americans fondly consider Burnett a true living legend, having bestowed more People's Choice Awards upon her than any other woman in the award show's history. In 2003, she received the Kennedy Center Honors and in 2005 the Presidential Medal of Freedom. The following year, she received a career achievement award from the Television Critics Association. Some of her other notable awards include six Emmys, five Golden Globes, the Peabody Award for *Friendly Fire* and the Ace Award for *Between Friends* with Elizabeth Taylor. She has enjoyed the kind of career that most performers are only able to dream of, moving easily from the stage to television, from feature films to films for television, and from variety specials to music and comedy specials.

Burnett has just begun voice work as the villainess Kangaroo in the animated Dr. Seuss classic *Horton Hears a Who*, in which she co-stars with Jim Carrey and Steve Carell. The 20th Century Fox film will be released next year.

In 2006, Burnett appeared on the award-winning *Desperate Housewives* on ABC. In her latest version of *Once Upon a Mattress* for ABC she played Queen Aggravain, and Tracey Ullman co-starred as Princess Winnifred, the role Burnett made famous during its smash Broadway run. Burnett also starred as Winnifred in two previous television productions of the musical.

The CBS special *The Carol Burnett Show: Let's Bump up the Lights*, was broadcast in May 2004, reuniting Burnett with Tim Conway, Harvey Korman, Vicki Lawrence, and Lyle Waggoner. Burnett's previous special, *The Carol Burnett Show: Show Stoppers* with Korman, Lawrence and Conway attracted nearly 30 million viewers. It was the fourth most watched program of 2001 and was nominated for three Emmys, including "Outstanding Variety, Music or Comedy Special."

In April 2002, *Hollywood Arms*, directed by Harold Prince, had its world premiere at Chicago's Goodman Theatre. The idea for the play was conceived by Burnett's daughter, Carrie Hamilton, who died of cancer in January of that year. Hamilton and Burnett co-wrote the script based on Burnett's 1986 best-selling memoir *One More Time*. The production made its Broadway debut at the Cort Theater in 2002. To perpetuate Hamilton's love of the performing arts, Burnett created The Carrie Hamilton Foundation, which is currently supporting fundraising efforts to establish The Carrie Hamilton Theater at The Pasadena Playhouse complex. The theater will support the works of young

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playwrights, directors and actors as well as embody an outreach program for at-risk children to expose them to the world of theater and the value of their own creative powers.

Burnett last appeared on Broadway in 1999 in the Stephen Sondheim musical review *Putting It Together*. The production was first mounted in 1998, to great critical and commercial success, at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles. Prior to that, she appeared on Broadway in 1995 with Philip Bosco in the Ken Ludwig farce *Moon Over Buffalo*. Both Burnett and Bosco received Best Actor Tony Award nominations for their performances in the hit show.

In 1996, Burnett appeared as Jamie Buchman's (Helen Hunt) mother on NBC's *Mad About You*, for which she won a Best Supporting Actress Emmy. In 1994, Burnett produced two specials for CBS, *Men, Movies & Carol* and *Carol Burnett: The Special Years*, featuring the most memorable moments from nine of her specials. *Seasons of the Heart*, a dramatic telefilm on NBC also aired that year.

Burnett spent most of her childhood in a less-than-glamorous section of Hollywood and attended UCLA before heading to New York. After she staged her own musical revue, offers for summer stock and 13 weeks' work on Paul Winchell's TV show followed. She earned raves for her now-legendary rendition of "I Made a Fool of Myself Over John Foster Dulles" on the *The Jack Paar Show* and *The Ed Sullivan Show*.

During her first year on *The Garry Moore Show*, she simultaneously performed the lead role in the hit off-Broadway musical, *Once Upon a Mattress*, which moved to Broadway. The first of several specials with Julie Andrews, *Julie and Carol at Carnegie Hall*, followed on CBS. Juggling both Broadway and television, Burnett starred on the stage in *Fade Out, Fade In*, and in a number of televised specials, including *Carol & Company*, with Robert Preston; a 90-minute version of *Once Upon a Mattress*; *Calamity Jane*; *Carol + 2* with Lucille Ball and Zero Mostel; and *Carol & Company* with Rock Hudson. In 1967, Burnett began the longest-running musical comedy variety show in television history: the Emmy-winning *The Carol Burnett Show*.

During the 11-year run of *The Carol Burnett Show*, Burnett headlined in Las Vegas with Jim Nabors and made her stage debut in a non-musical, *Plaza Suite*, in Los Angeles. She starred in *Same Time, Next Year* with Dick Van Dyke and then *I Do, I Do!* with Rock Hudson. Her second Julie Andrews special followed, *Julie and Carol at Lincoln Center*, along with starring roles in the feature films *Pete 'N Tillie* with Walter Matthau and *The Front Page*, again with Matthau and Jack Lemmon. She also co-starred with Alan Alda in *6 Rms Riv Vu* on CBS and the following year portrayed four characters in a special television presentation of *Twigs*. Teaming with opera star Beverly Sills in *Sills & Burnett at the Met* earned Burnett a Christopher Award.

After ending *The Carol Burnett Show* in 1978 (the series won 25 Emmy Awards), Burnett starred in a number of highly-acclaimed productions, including *Julie and Carol: Together Again* and 1998's telefilm *The Marriage Fool* along with Walter Matthau. In recognition of this vast body of television accomplishments, The National Association of Broadcasters inducted her into their prestigious Hall of Fame.

Additional feature films include *The Four Seasons*, *Chu Chu and the Philly Flash*, *Annie*, and two films directed by Robert Altman, *Health and A Wedding*, for which she won the San Sebastian Film Award as Best Actress. She also starred alongside Michael Caine and Christopher Reeve in the film version of *Noises Off*, directed by Peter Bogdanovich.

Home audiences saw her in such television movies as *The Grass is Always Greener Over the Septic Tank*; *Friendly Fire*, for which she received an Emmy nomination; *The Tenth Month*; as well as the HBO films *Between Friends* with Elizabeth Taylor and *The Laundromat*, directed by Robert Altman. Other television specials include *Dolly and Carol in Nashville* with Dolly Parton, *Burnett /Discovers/ Domingo* with Placido Domingo and a two-hour ABC presentation of Neil Simon's play *Plaza Suite*. In 1991, she hosted two highly acclaimed CBS specials, *The Very Best of the Ed Sullivan Show*, and her own *The Carol Burnett Show: A Reunion*, two of the network's highest rated shows during the season.

Since 1990, Burnett has appeared in numerous productions of *Love Letters*, starring opposite such leading men as Leslie Nielsen, Tony Roberts, Charlton Heston, Tom Selleck, Brian Dennehy and Cliff Robertson; 1993's *From The Top!*; and Stephen Sondheim's *Company*.

Burnett has donated scholarships to her alma mater, UCLA, on whose board of trustees she serves and where she has established "The Carol Burnett Musical Theater Competition." In addition to UCLA, she has also contributed to scholarship funds at the University of Hawaii for ethics in journalism, and created scholarship funds for performers at Boston's Emerson College and The College of Santa Fe. She continues to give without hesitation to numerous charities, always remembering that she has been generously given to herself.

Carol Burnett's sources of greatest pride are her three daughters: Carrie Hamilton, Jody Hamilton and Erin Hamilton.

KYRA THOMPSON

Director

Kyra Thompson is a writer/producer/director of documentary films. She was nominated for an Emmy, a DGA award and an Independent Spirit award for her work on *Dying to Tell the Story*, a film about war journalists as seen through the eyes of the sister of photographer Dan Eldon, who was slain while on assignment in Somalia.

Thompson most recently completed *Craft in America*, a three-part art series focusing on some of the nation's most talented craft artists. Thompson wrote and co-executive produced the series, which aired on PBS in May 2007.

Prior to this, Thompson wrote, produced and directed *AMERICAN MASTERS Bob Newhart: Unbuttoned*, which aired in 2005 on PBS and received a Cine Eagle Award for Excellence.

Thompson also directed *Stand Up: A Summer at Comedy Camp*, about at-risk youth who learn to heal through laughter, which aired on PBS in 2002. Also on PBS in 2002, Thompson helmed a new series titled *Global Tribe*, focusing on social entrepreneurs in emerging countries.

Previously, Thompson directed *Doctors Under the Knife*, *Arctic Rose* and *Soldiers of Peace*, about a group of Nobel Prize-nominated Colombian children, all of which aired on CNN. She also completed two one-hour specials celebrating Warner Bros. 75th anniversary, *The Warner Bros. Story: No Guts, No Glory*, for TNT.

Thompson also directed a one hour documentary, *Behind the Scenes at People Magazine*, which aired on TBS. Previously, she served as senior producer and writer of the Ace-nominated *The*

Good, The Bad and The Beautiful. This two-hour special on women in the movies aired originally on TNT and continues to run on many PBS stations.

She also served as producer and writer on the award-winning documentary series *A Century of Women*. This landmark six-hour series won the highest honors from the American Women in Radio and Television, the National Education Association, and the Cable Ace Awards, and was also nominated for an Emmy.

Thompson is also co-author, with Chuck Crisafulli, of the non-fiction book *Go to Hell: A Heated History of the Underworld*, published by Simon and Schuster in 2005.

Thompson spent four years as a staff producer for VU Productions, the non-fiction arm of Gary David Goldberg's UBU Productions. Her other producing credits include *Revolution at Work*, an ABC News special; *Shattered Lullabies* and the award-winning Public Service Campaign *A Lifetime Challenge* for Lifetime Network; and *People Have the Power*, a get-out-the-vote campaign for Women of America Now Demand Action. Prior to this, Thompson was a development associate at Stephen J. Cannell Productions.

Thompson received a Bachelor of Fine Arts from New York University, Tisch School of the Arts, having also studied at the Sorbonne in Paris, France and Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois.

SUSAN LACY

Series Creator and Executive Producer

Susan Lacy has been an award-winning originator of primetime public television programs since 1979. As the creator and executive producer of *AMERICAN MASTERS*, she has been responsible for the production and national broadcast of more than 140 documentary films about our country's artistic and cultural giants, those who have made an indelible impact on the American landscape. Now celebrating its 21st season on PBS, *AMERICAN MASTERS* has garnered unprecedented awards and is consistently recognized by television critics as "the best biographical series ever to appear on American television."

In addition to her producing role, Lacy is an award-winning filmmaker. Her 2004 *Judy Garland: By Myself* earned her an Emmy Award for writing and an Emmy nomination for directing. She wrote, directed and produced *Joni Mitchell: Woman of Heart and Mind* (IDA nomination for Outstanding Documentary) and *Leonard Bernstein: Reaching for the Note* (Emmy Award and DGA nomination). She produced the Peabody Award-winning *Paul Simon: Born at the Right Time*, directed and produced *Rod Serling: Submitted for Your Approval*, directed and produced *Lena Horne: In Her Own Voice* and was one of the producers on the widely acclaimed *No Direction Home: Bob Dylan* – all for *AMERICAN MASTERS*.

Under her leadership, *AMERICAN MASTERS* received the Primetime Emmy for Outstanding Non-Fiction Series in 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003 and 2004. Lacy is also the recipient of five Primetime emmys for *Lillian Gish: The Actor's Life for Me*, *Broadway's Dreamers: The Legacy of The Group Theater*, *Unknown Chaplin*, *Buster Keaton: A Hard Act to Follow*, and *Edward R. Murrow: This Reporter*. In addition to eight Peabody awards for *John Hammond: From Bessie Smith to Bruce Springsteen*, *Unknown Chaplin*, *Buster Keaton: A Hard Act to Follow*, *Paul Simon: Born at the Right Time*, *Alexander Calder*, *F. Scott Fitzgerald: Winter Dreams*, *No*

Direction Home: Bob Dylan, and Andy Warhol: A Documentary Film, she received Grammy awards for *Lou Reed: Rock and Roll Heart* and *No Direction Home: Bob Dylan*, 31 additional Emmy nominations and three Oscar nominations. *No Direction Home* was most recently honored with the 2007 Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Award for excellence in broadcast journalism.

Lacy's career in public television began in 1979, as deputy director of performance programs at Thirteen/WNET New York. She was senior program executive for *GREAT PERFORMANCES* and worked as director of program development with *THE AMERICAN PLAYHOUSE*, where she was a founding member. Lacy then ran the East Coast office of Robert Redford's Sundance Institute from 1984 to 1987. She was a consulting producer at Time-Life Video during the launch of Time-Warner's new initiatives in long-form documentary production. Lacy also led programs at both the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Lacy was one of the select 2005 honorees at the Museum of Television & Radio's "She Made It" event, which recognized 50 exceptional women who have created and informed the genre. She serves on the board of governors of the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences and is a trustee of the Independent Documentary Association. Lacy is a member of the Directors Guild of America, the Writers Guild of America, the Independent Features Project and New York Women in Film & Television. She has a BA in American Studies from the University of Virginia, where she was elected to Phi Beta Kappa, and an MA in American Studies from George Washington University. She was a Graduate Teaching Fellow, a Smithsonian Fellow and completed a residency at the American Academy in Rome. In 1994, she was awarded an honorary doctorate from Long Island University and in 1996, she was named Distinguished Alumnus of the Year at Mary Washington College, the women's college of the University of Virginia.

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