

## Jerry Orbach



Jerome Bernard Orbach was an American actor and singer, described at the time of his death as "one of the last bona fide leading men of the Broadway musical and global celebrity on television" and a "versatile stage and film actor." Over his career he received a Tony Award and Screen Actors Guild Award as well as nominations for three Emmy Awards and a Grammy Award.



Jerry Orbach

### By Michele Cohen

Jerry Orbach hunched over his musical score, mouthing the words, as the technical crew scurried around him and attached microphones to his clothes. His expression varied from a broad, friendly Broadway smile to a look of concern; he knew he had to catch a plane to New York in two hours.

Orbach worked in professional theater even before he transferred to NU as a sophomore in 1953. His list of Broadway credits is most impressive: "Guys and Dolls," "The King and I," a 1969 Tony Award for "Promises, Promises," "Chicago," "Chapter Two," and "42nd Street."

He also said he couldn't miss participating in the Gala—whatever the cost.

**THERE'S A VERY** warm spot in my

heart for Northwestern," he explained. "It would be a terrible shame not to be included in something like this. I wouldn't want to miss it for anything."

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"42nd Street" is the largest, most expensive production ever to hit Broadway. Some of the costume changes are so fast, the people helping make changes are on roller skates.

Orbach plays a familiar role: the lead in a romantic comedy. In this show, filmed in the 1930s with Ruby Keeler, Dick Powell and Warner Baxter, an unknown breaks into Broadway by replacing a star with a broken leg, and falls in love with the director.

**IT'S THE TYPE** of role Orbach has always been good at—even at NU.

Orbach's new style, though, has reflected a sort of turning in his career.

"I think he's a young character comedian with a lot of energy and a very mature kind of drive. But he isn't a kid anymore," said his former teacher Prof. Robert Scheniedemann.

**"HE'S MATURED** into something rare in New York—which is an honest-to-God man who sings his songs with great force."

But according to Orbach's wife—a Broadway performer who met Orbach behind the stage in "Chicago"—Orbach would like more serious roles in film and would like to write and direct.

Orbach just completed filming his first major movie role in "Prince of the City," to be released in spring.

Still, Mrs. Orbach said, "He prefers the one-to-one of the theater. He's a performer and he loves the arts wherever it is. The movies give you a broader audience, but it's not as rewarding."

**EVEN AFTER** all his professional experience, Orbach said one of his most

memorable roles was in Bertolt Brecht's "The Caucasian Chalk Circle." He said that ranks with his performance in "Scuba Duba"—where he was on stage during the entire performance—as among his most challenging.

The challenges of his work still keep him happy and very, very busy.

"I don't have any fun when I'm not working," Orbach insisted. "I can relax—I can take a vacation. But after a few weeks I want to do something again."

"I think I could make it for about three months lying on my back in Tahiti. Then I'd need to go back."

"Because when you're working at something you enjoy, it's not work."



## LAST CHANCE TO

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TODAY AT:

Norris Cafeteria 11:00-1:00

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