

LEVEAU_CULLUM

Sometime in the 1970s actor John Cullum appeared in the Phoenix Theatre Sideshow Series, in a play of mine, "*In The Voodoo Parlour of Marie Laveau*." It was brilliantly directed by Michael Montel who— along with Hal Prince and Stephen Porter—was one of the original Artistic Directors of the Sideshow Series. Reading today's article, the NY theatre memories of yore flooded in.

The Side Show's parent Phoenix Theatre was one of the leading Off-Broadway producers of its day. I saw my first Chekhov play in one of the the Phoenix Theatre productions, "*The Seagull*," starring Montgomery Clift. Also saw the premiere production of what became one my favorite musicals, "*The Golden Apple*" — a production that moved to Broadway. I think that was the first production to make that move.

"*In The Voodoo Parlour of Marie Laveau*" (<https://www.gaglianoriff.com/project/in-the-voodoo-parlour-of-marie-laveau/>) had been presented as an emerging script-in-hand reading at one of the early O'Neill Theatre Center presentations. John Cullum had not been in the O'Neill reading. He was outstanding in the Side Show production.

"*Laveau*" is structured as an unsung opera and each of the three characters have long major spoken arias. John Cullum had the longest spoken aria — and somehow —with his musical theatre chops — rendered the music of the language — though there wasn't any actual music.

I last saw John Cullum at a matinee of "*Urinetown*" (in which he was starring). After the show we spoke for a bit and I tried to get him interested in a monologue play I then had just written, "*My Chekhov Light*" (<https://www.gaglianoriff.com/project/my-chekhov-light/>). He declined, because he was then developing a solo piece of his own, he said. Delighted he's finally getting it on. Besides the obvious still-growing talent, John Cullum puts the lie to "ageism" — the next theatre fight, once the plague passes. Carry on, John Cullum. FG (www.gaglianoriff.com)

[https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/07/theater/
john-cullum-an-accidental-star-cabaret.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/07/theater/john-cullum-an-accidental-star-cabaret.html)