

performance

'The Place to be'

P'town's 'glitziest and most down-home fundraiser' readies itself

by Norman A. Allen

Swan Lake performed by men in tutus and army boots is only the beginning.

Something between Judy and Mickey performing in a barn and Les Cagelles strutting in feather boas, *Close to Home* is Provincetown's glitziest and most down-home fundraiser.

This year's program includes MC Lenny Grandchamp, HBO comic Tony Rose, singer Rache Alpert, Boston favorites Jake and Jean, a royal line-up of impersonators and a possible appearance by the Provincetown High Cheerleaders.

All proceeds go directly to the Provincetown AIDS Support Group.

Producer Anthony Jackman explained, "I collect all the cash at the end of the evening, ticket sales, bar, waiters' tips, the whole shebang. I put it in a greasy brown bag that I've been using for the past four years, and I hand it to the Support Group."

Jackman is the creator as well as producer of the extravaganza.

"It's for my two friends, Richard Brown and Richard Coggins. When I first heard that Richard Brown had been diagnosed, I turned to a friend and said, 'That strikes close to home,' and a light bulb went off."

From a little acorn

Close to Home's first incarnation was in the back room of the Town House in the center of Provincetown. What was meant to be a "little benefit" ended up with 23 acts and a crowd that overflowed into hallways and onto the stage itself.

Townspeople unite for this production.

'There's a van that runs back and forth to Boston hospitals every day of the week, driven by a volunteer. People in town provide haircuts, meals, help pay utility bills when it's necessary.... It's an amazing, a wonderful group'—the Provincetown AIDS Support Group.

—Anthony Jackman

ing our sets," Jackman explained. "We're planning working fountains, a forest, and falling snow for the *Swan Lake* sequence."

Laser beams and smoke machines also play major roles in the evening's festivities.

A worthy cause

Provincetown AIDS Support Group because of their undaunted efforts in the Provincetown community.

Bay Windows
2/8-14/90

There were tears in Jackman's eyes as he described what the Support Group had done for friends and colleagues.

"The commitment of people like Doreen Devlin and Alice Foley is overwhelming. There's a van that runs back and forth to Boston hospitals every day of the week, driven by a volunteer. People in town provide haircuts, meals, help pay utility bills when it's necessary. They assist with burials and wills. They're there for the family and friends to lean on. It's an amazing, a wonderful group. They deal directly with people, not politics or 'issues.' It helped me deal with my own losses, watching them make life easier, more comfortable for the people who are suffering."

Life is a banquet

Jackman's own history rivals Auntie Mame's.

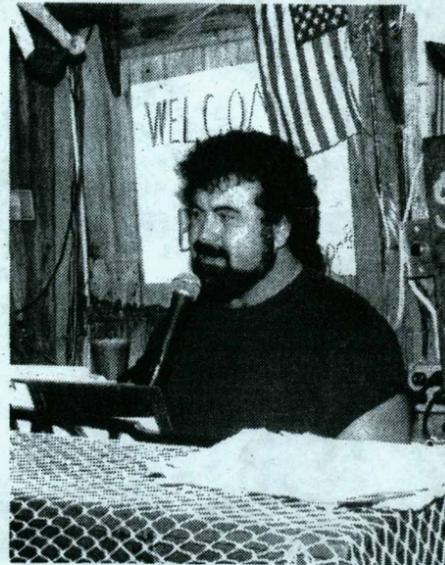
A chorus member in the film *Oliver!*, he went on to play the Artful Dodger more times than he cares to remember, both in London's West End and on tour throughout the British Isles.

Later, he worked in English repertory companies, performing in revivals of Ivor Novello musicals with titles like *Perchance To Dream* and *Lilac Time*.

He appeared in Andy Warhol's *Pork* at London's Roundhouse Theatre. "I remember," he said, "the critics hated that one. One London critic reported that the play had opened and then went on to list the various ice cream flavors available at the



From *Pork to Swan Lake*.
Anthony Jackman,
producer of *Close to Home*.



Doing the honors,
Lenny Grandchamp.

Jackman explained, "*The Advocate* gives us free advertising, WOMR always gives us a big push. The Provincetown Inn donates rooms for visiting performers. For the last two years Perry's Liquor has donated all bar supplies. We went to them last year to purchase the stuff and they said, 'Take it.' This production has literally no budget!"

Last year, realizing that the Town House could no longer house the show, much less the audience, Jackman approached the Provincetown Theatre Company and was given a warm welcome. PTC Artistic Director Michael Prevulsky now serves as Technical Director and Lighting Designer for the benefit. *Close to Home* takes over the Theatre Company's home at the Provincetown Inn for a week prior to the performance, squeezing PTC productions.

This year's performance promises to rival the past in technical extravagance.

"Rob Bramley is designing and build-



Doing his thing, Bobbie Ray.



Tony Rose

Playing it "Close to Home,"
Tony Rose as himself.

From India it was on to the Balearic Islands off the coast of Barcelona. "I spent two years there," he said. "We lived in a farmhouse. No electricity. No running water. Just me, my lover and some goats."

Jackman finally came to America as an illegal immigrant in 1978. It wasn't until the amnesty in '87 that he got his green card.

"Why did I want to come to America? If these were Roman times, I'd want to be in Rome, right? America was the place to be, the center of things."

He settled in Boston, starting as a dishwasher at Lulu White's and quickly worked his way up to manager. It was there that his entrepreneurial spirit began to shine.

"We had some of the greatest names in jazz at Lulu's. Anita O'Day, Blossom Dearie, Dizzy Gillespie. It was also the first creole restaurant in Boston. When things got real tough, I'd go over to the bar where Fritz is now. It used to be a rugby bar and I'd just sit and watch all these big, beefy stupid guys shouting. It made it easier to go back to the kitchens."

Jackman came to Provincetown eight years ago. Aside from his work as producer of *Close to Home*, he's a frequent performer with the Provincetown Theatre Company and an alternate on their Board of Directors.

Having lived and worked in Provincetown for nearly a decade, he shrugs with an embarrassed smile and says, "It's home now."

The fourth annual *Close to Home* benefit takes place in the Mayflower Room of the Provincetown Inn, One Commercial St., Provincetown, on Thursday, February 15, at 8 p.m. The suggested donation is \$10. A shuttle service runs from Provincetown Town Hall to the Provincetown Inn from 7:15 to 8:30 p.m. and will provide return trips after the performance. ▼