

DEENA ROSENBERG HARBURG TAKES HELM OF YIP HARBURG FOUNDATION

NEW YORK, January 4 – As of January 1, 2017, Ernie Harburg, son of the legendary lyricist E.Y. "Yip" Harburg, has stepped down as President of the Yip Harburg Foundation, to be succeeded by Yip's daughter-in-law, Deena Rosenberg Harburg, who is presently the foundation's Artistic Director. She is Lifetime Founding Chairperson of the unique NYU Tisch Graduate Musical Theater Writing Program and author of "Fascinating Rhythm: The Collaboration of George and Ira Gershwin" and "The Music Makers." She is also co-author with Ernie of two forthcoming books about Yip's selected lyrics and the creation of the song "Over the Rainbow," to be available in 2019 (the 80th anniversary of the film "The Wizard of Oz").



DEENA ROSENBERG-HARBURG

The Yip Harburg Foundation (www.yipharburg.com) was created after the lyricist's death to carry on his legacy and to promote educational opportunity, social/economic justice and world peace. E.Y. Harburg, the master lyricist, was "Broadway's Social Conscience." His classic songs included "Brother, Can you Spare a Dime?" and "Over the Rainbow." Yip fought for social and economic justice for all people throughout his life. The Foundation's educational initiatives include Deena's unique Arts in Education programs of many kinds, including Musical Theater programs in underserved public schools to excite literacy and self-expression and The Rainbow Troupe, an ensemble ranging in age from eight to forty plus that is based in New York's East Village. The Foundation's "Brain, Heart and Nerve" educational initiative is a sustainable education-through-the-arts project introducing children to the values of Musical Theater, emphasizing computer use, collaboration, positive self esteem and character building. The Foundation maintains a unique partnership for musical theater studies (funded by the Yip Harburg Foundation) which was founded by Deena for SUNY's Empire State College Metropolitan Center. It offers generous annual scholarships to students, professional-level

workshops for degree credit study groups and internships for Empire State College students taught by artists from Broadway and the broader musical theater community.

Deena R. Harburg (née Deena Rosenberg), a cultural and musical historian, had received her BA from the University of Chicago in cultural history before doing her graduate work in Musicology at the CUNY Graduate Center. She first met Yip Harburg in 1973 to interview him for an article in *Midstream Magazine* about the Gershwins. This led to further *NY Times* articles and her book about the collaboration of George and Ira Gershwin. There had been previous biographies of the storied team, but hers was the first evaluation of their collaborative process--how words and music create a "song." Subsequently, her *New York Times* article, "The Homeless Plight of the American Musical," caught the attention of David Oppenheim, then Dean of NYU's School of the Arts (which was later re-named Tisch School of the Arts). Urged by Yip, Sheldon Harnick, Arthur Laurents and Stephen Sondheim, Oppenheim recruited her to organize and chair Tisch's graduate program in musical theater. She formulated a proposal in 1979 for a two-year MFA in which students would work with a community of mentors. These mentors eventually included the likes of Leonard Bernstein, Arthur Laurents, Stephen Sondheim, William Bolcom, Comden and Green and Harold Prince. The program opened in 1981; its "success stories" now include alumni Winnie Holzman (book writer of "Wicked"), Robert L. Freedman and Steven Lutvak (creators of "A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder") and playwright/director George C. Wolfe. It is the country's - and maybe the world's - only such program. Ms. Harburg chaired the department for 17 years.

This program was seeded by a grant from Yip Harburg and other funders which, over time, have included The Ford Foundation, the Oscar Hammerstein family, Richard Rodgers and the estates and foundations of Frederik Loewe, Harold Arlen, Herb Alpert, and Ira and Leonore Gershwin.

Yip Harburg died on March 5, 1981, but not before introducing Rosenberg to his son, Ernie, recommending her as someone with "impeccable taste." Ernie became a widower that June and after traveling for a year, became reacquainted

with Ms. Rosenberg. Ultimately they married in 1982. Ernie subsequently co-authored "The Broadway Musical" (1993) with Deena Rosenberg's father, Bernard Rosenberg, distinguished professor of sociology at City College of New York and a Founding Editor of Dissent Magazine. With Harold Meyerson, editor of American Prospect as well as another Dissent editor, he also co-authored a biographical book on his father, "Who Put the Rainbow in The Wizard of Oz?," which was published around the same time as Deena's book on the Gershwins.

After her work at NYU, Deena was Founder and Executive Director of CAP (Computers in the Arts Project), a unique program begun in 1995, which was partially inspired by her students at NYU, many of whom were working as part time faculty teaching arts in schools. It integrates computers and the musical theater arts continuously into the daily curriculum. The program is based on theories of multiple intelligence that were introduced by Harvard Professor Howard Gardner. By the end of CAP's first year, the percentage of students working at grade level in its pilot program at P.S. 19 on Manhattan's Lower East Side (a high poverty area) had doubled. By the second year, it had reached 100%.

Ernie Harburg is now 90 and states that his age is the reason for his retirement. But he will not slow down much. The former social psychologist and epidemiologist at University of Michigan is working on two "iBooks" with Deena that are designed to work like an app: with text accompanied by music, videos and photo slideshows. One is "We're Off to See the Wizard: Yip Harburg, Lyrical Activist," a collection of the 100 best lyrics by Yip Harburg. The other is "Somewhere Over the Rainbow - Yip Harburg, Words, & Harold Arlen, Music - The Creation of a Timely, Timeless and Universal Song."

Deena is currently the Yip Harburg Foundation's Executive Vice-President and Artistic Director. She has recently been busy representing the lyricist's legacy in the production of "Finian's Rainbow," which is running through January 29, 2017 at Irish Rep, and working as dramaturg for "The Wizard of Oz: A Jazz Musical for All Ages" at Harlem Repertory Theatre (www.harlemrepertorytheatre.com), which has just been extended through May 27, 2017. The latter production stages Deena's one-hour version of the Royal Shakespeare Company's adaptation, which is based on the book by L. Frank Baum, with songs by lyricist E.Y. ("Yip") Harburg and composer Harold Arlen from the film "The Wizard of Oz." Ms. Harburg, in collaboration with director Keith Grant and librettist Arthur Perlman, has sharpened the production to include more of Yip's original vision. The musical, while retaining all the classic elements of the film, has been staged with a multi-racial cast and a jazz underscore.

Deena has also adapted a one-hour version of the classic Yip Harburg-Burton Lane-Fred Saidy musical "Finian's Rainbow," which will be distributed by Music Theatre International worldwide, and a new one-hour musical version of "The Wizard of Oz," which is currently distributed worldwide. She lives in the East Village, four blocks from where Yip grew up, with husband Ernie and their son, Ben.

The Yip Harburg Foundation is a non-profit organization whose purpose is to spread Yip Harburg's artistic legacy, aimed at creating a world of "free and equal people." Its mission statement says, "We stand on the beliefs of social justice, equal educational opportunity and learning through musical theater." The Foundation invites scholars, students and musical theater practitioners to use its extensive archives on Yip Harburg. Its chronicles consist of a rare and extensive collection of scripts, scores, recordings, videotapes, press clippings, etc. Originals are housed at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center and at Yale University. Copies of most of these materials can be accessed from the Foundation's office at 636 Broadway, Manhattan (near Bleecker Street).

Jonathan Slaff & Associates

Press Representative - 55 Perry Street, #1M - New York, NY 10014
Tel. (212) 924-0496 - Fax (877) 534-4061 - js@jsnyc.com - www.jsnyc.com