

San Bernardino Public Library Presents Actress Lee Meriwether

The San Bernardino Public Library is proud to present actress Lee Meriwether in her one-woman show, *THE WOMEN OF SPOON RIVER: THEIR VOICES FROM THE HILL* on Tuesday, April 7, 2015. This free performance will take place at 6:00 PM in the Bing Wong Auditorium of the Feldheim Central Library at 555 W. Sixth Street, San Bernardino, 92410.

Published in 1915, Edgar Lee Masters' *Spoon River Anthology* is a collection of epitaph poems describing the lives of the inhabitants of the fictional small town of Spoon River, Illinois and includes two hundred and twelve separate characters providing accounts of their lives, losses and deaths. In 1962, Charles Aidman adapted *Spoon River Anthology* for the stage. This production premiered in Los Angeles and starred Betty Garrett, Joyce Van Patten, and Naomi Caryl in the three female roles. Understudying Garrett, Van Patten and Caryl was **Lee Meriwether**. The show then had a successful run on Broadway and has since been produced thousands of times around the world. In 2002, Theatre West revived the show for its 40th anniversary, directed by Garrett and Van Patten. This time, however, **Lee Meriwether** — the one-time understudy — now appeared in the role originated by Ms. Garrett. Having an affinity for the show and the women of *Spoon River*, Lee often felt that Masters had given short shrift to the female residents of his fictional town. Of the over two hundred characters in the collection, only a handful were women. Seeing an opportunity to give these women their due, as well as to provide a challenge for herself as an actress, Lee set about adapting Masters' work, extracting nearly all of the female characters. Later, together with writer/actor/director Jim Hesselman, Lee discovered that by performing them in a particular order she could create not only personal accounts of the women as individuals, but also depict an overall picture of the life of women in general — both in terms of a particular period and place, but also in universal and eternal terms.

Lee Meriwether was successively: Miss San Francisco, Miss California and **Miss America**. Though most know Lee as "Betty" in the highly successful CBS series, *Barnaby Jones* — for which she was nominated for both the Golden Globe and the Emmy — or as "Catwoman" in the 1966 *Batman* movie with Adam West, Lee has had starring or recurring roles in no less than nine series, ranging from the first women's editor with Dave Garroway on the original *Today Show* on NBC to her three-year run as Lily on *The Munsters Today* for Universal. Some of Lee's successful series include: *Time Tunnel*, *The New Andy Griffith Show*, *Mission: Impossible*, *The F.B.I.*, *12 O'clock High*, and *Dr. Kildare*. Lee studied acting with the famed teacher Lee Strasburg, as well as dancing, singing, and fencing with some of the top coaches in New York. In addition to portraying "Catwoman," her noteworthy film roles include Andy Griffith's pregnant wife in *Angel in My Pocket*, and Rock Hudson's southern wife in *The Undefeated*. Lee "swam" with *Namu*, *The Killer Whale* and played the "man" killed by Kim Novak in *The Legend of Lylah Clare*.

Live theatre, however, continues to be Lee's first love. Attesting to that fact is her long association with Theatre West, a professional actors' workshop in Hollywood. Recent national stage credits include: the female version of *The Odd Couple*, *Last Summer at Blue Fish Cove* (for which she received the Drama Logue Award for Best Actress as well as the San Francisco Critics Award), *The Business of Murder* with Van Johnson, Sondheim's *Follies* with seven former Miss Americas, a national tour with Anthony Zerbe and Roy Dotrice of *Country Matters (Sex and Shakespeare!)* and most recently productions of the musicals *Hello Dolly!*; *Mame*; *The King and I* with George Chakiris; *I Do, I Do*; *A Little Night Music* with her husband, Marshall Borden, and the 20th Anniversary tour of Dan Goggin's *Nunsense* with Kaye Ballard, Mimi Hines, Georgia Engel and Darlene Love.

Lee's free performance will be followed by a Q & A with the audience. Attendees will have the opportunity to purchase photographs autographed by Lee. Proceeds will benefit Ability First, serving children and adults with special needs, at its Camp Paivika in the San Bernardino Mountains.

For more information call 909-381-8238 or visit www.sbpl.org