The Cliff Dwellers

Drama Category — Full Membership Roster



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Editor's Notes: Source: the Newberry-derived Cliff Dwellers member database (1907–2015), "Member + Detail" sheet, filtered to the 20 members whose recorded Profession is "Drama." Fields shown: name, whether the member's recorded membership type was Honorary, the year(s) of membership on file, profession, and any comment already in the database.

Because the Drama category totals exactly 20 members, the list below is the complete roster reordered in descending order of fame, based on web research (major stage/screen honors, lasting critical recognition, leadership of national theater organizations, etc.), with a brief note on why each was placed where they were. Several members have no independent public record beyond the club's own file; for these the note says so plainly. The same 20 members follow a second time, in ordinary alphabetical order, to match the format used for the other Cliff Dwellers professional-category rosters.

All 20 Members, Ranked by Fame

#	Name	Honorary	Year(s)	Profession	Comment (source database)	Why Notable (research)
1	Arliss, George	No	1911–1938	Drama	Actor and playwright. Lived at Players Club, NYC. Noted for portrayal of historic personages in motion pictures, especially Disraeli and Cardinal Richelieu. 1868-1946.	The first British actor to win an Academy Award (Best Actor, 1929/30) for his signature role as Benjamin Disraeli, a part he had already made famous on stage and screen. Went on to play Voltaire, Cardinal Richelieu, and Alexander Hamilton in a career that spanned Victorian theater, silent film, and talkies.
2	Skinner, Otis	Yes	1911–1938	Drama	Actor, played hundreds of roles throughout the world, for over 60 years. Author of two books. Father of actress Cornelia Otis Skinner. 1858-1942.	A leading American Shakespearean and classical stage actor from the 1880s into the 1930s, celebrated for his 20-year run as Hajj the beggar in Kismet and for roles including Shylock, Hamlet, and Richard III. Father of actress and writer Cornelia Otis Skinner.
3	Hampden, Walter	Yes	1947–1960	Drama	Actor, theater manager and repertory producer. Motion pictures:"The Hunchback of Notre Dame"; play "All About Eve"; TV "Macbeth". 1879-1955.	A major Broadway star best known for Cyrano de Bergerac (played repeatedly 1923-1936, revived on radio in 1948) and for Shakespearean leads such as Hamlet and Macbeth; later familiar to film audiences from All About Eve and Sabrina. Served 27 years as president of New York's Players Club, whose library now bears his name.
4	Drew, John	Yes	1911–1927	Drama	Actor and comedian, specializing in Shakespearean comedy. Drew was a regular visitor to the Kiva. President and life time member of the Players Club in NYC. 1853-1927.	One of the most acclaimed leading men of the American stage in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and a member of the Drew-Barrymore theatrical dynasty (uncle of Lionel, Ethel, and John Barrymore). Longtime president of the Players Club in New York.
5	Brieux, Eugene	Yes	1915–1935	Drama	French dramatist. Leading exponent of realistic drama. "Les Avaries" (1914). 1858-1932.	A leading French dramatist of the realist/social-problem school, elected to the Academie francaise in 1909; his controversial play on venereal disease, Les Avaries (Damaged Goods), became an internationally

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						influential work of early 20th-century theater.
6	Middleton, George	No	1916–1921	Drama	—	A prolific and commercially successful Broadway playwright (Polly With a Past, 1917, ran 315 performances and made a star of Ina Claire; Adam and Eva, 1919-20, was named among the year's best plays). Served as president of the Dramatists Guild of America, 1927-1929, and helped establish its Minimum Basic Agreement protecting playwrights.
7	Walker, Stuart	No	1917–1938	Drama	Beverly Hills, CA	Founder of the touring Portmanteau Theatre (1915), an influential American repertory company that brought quality drama to Chicago and other cities through the 1920s; staged the Broadway premiere of Booth Tarkington's Seventeen (1918) before moving into Hollywood screenwriting and production.
8	Kane, Whitford	No	1917–1944	Drama	NYC. Also an author	An Irish-born character actor who appeared in roughly 56 Broadway productions over nearly six decades and was celebrated for playing the First Gravedigger in 23 productions of Hamlet opposite stars including John Barrymore. Trained young actors at Chicago's Goodman Theatre, awarded a young Orson Welles a drama prize, and later joined Welles's Mercury Theatre company.
9	Robertson, Donald	No	1907–1926	Drama	Had his own theater company, playing in Chicago and the midwest early in the century. Wrote seven volumes of poetry. Promoter of the Chicago Civic Theater. 1860-1926.	An influential early Chicago theatrical figure who ran his own company touring Chicago and the Midwest in the early 1900s, published seven volumes of poetry, and helped promote the Chicago Civic Theater; his papers are held by the Chicago History Museum.
10	Sergel, Sherman L	No	1962–1980	Drama	(also listed literature)	A playwright and longtime figure at Chicago's Dramatic Publishing Company, whose catalog of his plays (including a stage adaptation credited to him of Twelve Angry Men) has been widely produced in schools and community theaters; also active in the Cliff Dwellers' Literature category.
11	Gold, Aaron M	No	1971–1972	Drama	—	No independent public biographical record beyond the club's own membership file was found; entry reflects the database comment.
12	Hurley Jr., Faith	No	2014	Drama	—	No independent public biographical record beyond the club's own membership file was found; entry reflects the database comment.
13	Medford, Spencer	No	2000	Drama	Former student at the Goodman School of Drama. Member of the DePaul University Theater Alumni Board; involved with various upstart theater companies. Nominator: Robert J Johnson. (Age 27 in 2000.)	Per the club's own record, a Goodman School of Drama alumnus and DePaul University Theater Alumni Board member active with several Chicago-area startup theater companies at the time of his 2000 nomination.
14	Munro, Steve	No	2010	Drama	—	No independent public biographical record beyond the club's own membership file was found; entry reflects the database comment.
15	Newport, Samantha	No	2012	Drama	—	No independent public biographical record beyond the club's own membership file was found; entry reflects the database comment.
16	Nixon, Charles	No	1908–	Drama	Drama and music editor. In 1893 published an	Per the club's own record, a Chicago Daily News drama and music editor

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	Elston		1924		illustrated color supplement to the Chicago International Ocean, the first newspaper in America Published in color. Chicago Daily News. Chicago Opera Association. 1860-1929?	who in 1893 published what is described as the first color-illustrated newspaper supplement in America, tied to the World's Columbian Exposition era.
17	O'Connor, William J	No	1978–2000	Drama	Sponsor: Richard Armstrong. Brand identity and design consultant. Interests: University of Chicago Court Theater, former Board Chairman. University of Chicago Graduate School of Business, Consulting Education Program.	Per the club's own record, a brand-identity and design consultant and former board chairman of the University of Chicago's Court Theatre.
18	Padnos, William	No	1997–2000	Drama	Managing Director: Ox-Bow, a summer school of art. Sponsor: Ed Deam.	Per the club's own record, managing director of Ox-Bow, the Michigan summer school of art affiliated with the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.
19	Schmitt, Natalie	No	2006	Drama	Also a professional educator	No independent public biographical record beyond the club's own membership file was found; entry reflects the database comment.
20	Witt, Gavin	No	1996–2000	Drama	Actor, Dramaturg, Teacher. Founding member, Greasy Joan & Co, Theater Ensemble. Performed in several Jefferson Award winning productions in over 2 dozen plays in the past two years. BA cum laude, Yale University; MA, University of Chicago. Nominator: Adam Davidson. (Age: 28 in 1996.)	Per the club's own record, a founding member of the Chicago storefront ensemble Greasy Joan & Co. who performed in Jefferson Award-winning productions; holds degrees from Yale and the University of Chicago.

Complete Drama Category Roster (20 members, A–Z)

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