The unflappable

Broadway, Hollywood and TV star Elaine Stritch returned to Manhattan from her “retirement” in Michigan to celebrate the HBO documentary of her life and times entitled Elaine Stritch: Shoot Me. The proceedings, at Manhattan’s Peley Center, began with the appearance of Alec Baldwin. You may recall that Stritch played his mother on 30 Rock. Also featured in the film are Tina Fey, Cherry Jones, Nathan Lane, Tracy Morgan, John Tarturro, the late James Gandolfini, and the great Hal Prince.

I first met “Stritchie” — as some of her pals call her — at one of Liz Smith’s landmark birthday parties. I remember Liz telling me that once upon a time she had been Stritch’s secretary. Hey, we all have to start somewhere! I also remember one of the guests at that party mentioning something about her wearing a hat — “Oh yeah,” Stritch shot back, “well, get over it!” We all knew that she was just kidding; but she seemed to love being able to say it with such gusto! Maybe it’s a little something called “acting.”

Dance enthusiasts

Kamie Lightburn, Heather Georges, and Stephanie Foster hosted a luncheon at Le Cirque to announce the upcoming Youth America Grand Prix Gala that they’re chairing at Lincoln Center. Guests of honor included American Ballet Theatre principal dancers James Whiteside and Herman Cornejo as well as New York City Ballet’s former principal dancer Charles Askegard. Only a few have the ability to fly through the air with the grace of these three.

Feast on Twice Baked Goat Cheese Soufflé, Salad ‘Le Cirque’, and Dark Chocolate Mousse were just but a fraction of what’s required to keep the guests on their feet.

Moving Right

Those who enjoy a peek through the keyhole at other cultures were probably enrapuured by the recent production at Lincoln Center of The Red Dress. It was presented by the China Arts and Entertainment Group for the first time in a major city outside of China. It tells the story of a young couple who fell in love as children, become separated and are eventually reunited. It featured colorful costumes, lavish sets and 45 dancers including the extraordinary Cheng Lin who gets to dance in a number of colorful outfits including a certain red dress — which actually turns out to be a wedding dress. Interesting how traditions differ from country to country. In The States, if a girl chooses to wear a red wedding dress it’s usually assumed that she’s been around the block a few times and doesn’t dare to wear white.

Although she preferred not making public appearances at that point in her life, she was afraid that if she didn’t speak up publicly, Grand Central might be demolished as well. When I spoke to her about how thrilled we all were by her efforts, she simply said, “I honestly felt that I didn’t have a choice.” For more on the former glory of Manhattan — pick up a copy of Nathan Silver’s Last New York — about which the New York Times said, “Two kinds of people should have this book — those old enough to remember how New York once looked and those too young to know the New York they missed.”

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