



Gem Theatre Detroit • Biographies



RITA McKENZIE (Ethel Merman) began her internationally acclaimed portrayal of Ethel Merman Off-Broadway at the John Houseman Theater in New York City and later performed at Carnegie Hall. The response was overwhelming, and McKenzie took her act to the Pasadena Playhouse in California; Harrah's Casino Hotel in Atlantic City, New Jersey; and on an eight-city tour in Japan. McKenzie recently completed the national tour of Neil Simon's female version of *The Odd Couple*, in which she co-starred with her good friend Barbara Eden. McKenzie received a National Broadway Theatre nomination for "Best Actress in a Touring Play" for her portrayal of Olive Madison. McKenzie and Eden previously completed a successful tour of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. She recently toured with Renee Taylor and Joe Bologna in *Bermuda Avenue Triangle*. McKenzie starred in the Los Angeles premiere of the Off-Broadway musical *Ruthless!* and can be heard on the original cast recording. She also toured as *Annie Oakley* in the 50th anniversary of *Annie Get Your Gun* with Glenn Yarbrough. McKenzie created the role of *Phoebe Farber* in Sam Harris's Broadway bound *Hurry! Hurry! Hollywood!* in Los Angeles and portrayed *Maggie Jones* in *42nd Street* with Mariette Hartley. Her other starring roles include Reno Sweeney in *Anything Goes*, Aldonza in *Man of La Mancha*, Ruth in *The Pirates of Penzance*, Belle Poitrine in *Little Me*, Domina in *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, Cleo in *The Most Happy Fella*, Widow Corney in *Oliver!*, Nurse Custer in *Whoopee!*, and Rose in *Gypsy*. McKenzie has had the privilege of opening for Steve Allen, Don Knotts, and Norm Crosby. She has been a Pops guest with every major symphony across the country. For television and film, McKenzie played Alice on *The Brady Bunch: The Final Days*; guest-starred on *Caroline in the City*; Mrs. Littlejohn on *Frasier*, Rita Marcus on *Big Brother Jake*, and her recurring role on *Daddy Dearest* starring Richard Lewis and Don Rickles. She co-starred in the feature film *I Might Even Love You* and was featured in Rodney Dangerfield's film *Meet Wally Sparks*. Ms. McKenzie's new venture *Radio Bupkis* is now playing on BlogTalkRadio.com every Thursday at 2 PM Eastern Time. Join the clan of Meany, Miney, and Moe as they stumble through life blissfully Bupkis. Nothing Is Better!