



# Noel, Tallulah, Cole, and Me: A Memoir of Broadway's Golden Age

*John C. Wilson*

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An important figure during the golden age of Broadway, John C. Wilson staged such famous productions as *Kiss Me, Kate* and *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. He also worked with many of the greatest actors, playwrights, producers, and other artists from the 1920s through the 1950s, including Alfred Lunt, Lynn Fontanne, Laurence Olivier, Vivien Leigh, Carol Channing, and Tennessee Williams. In his twenties, Wilson met Noel Coward and became both his lover and manager. Following Wilson's marriage to Russian princess Natalie Paley in 1937, he remained close friends with Coward until John's death in 1961.

In *Noel, Tallulah, Cole, and Me: A Memoir of Broadway's Golden Age*, producer-director Wilson provides an eye witness account of a never-to-be-seen-again period in American theatre and culture. The narrative covers Wilson's youth, his education at Yale, his experience working in silent films, and details of his professional and personal relationship with Coward. Wilson also recounts his theatrical career on Broadway and in London, his marriage to Paley, and life within international high society. The people Wilson befriended—Tallulah Bankhead, Cecil Beaton, Claudette Colbert, Cole Porter, and Richard Rodgers, among others—are described with affection, candor, and colorful panache. Wilson also shares behind-the-scenes stories about such landmark theatre productions as *Private Lives*, *Blithe Spirit*, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, and *Kiss Me, Kate*.

Completed in 1958, just three years before his death, Wilson's autobiography sat idle for decades. Wilson's great nephew Jack Macauley and theatre historian Thomas Hischak have edited the original manuscript and added commentary to help guide the reader through the myriad names and productions that are mentioned. From his long-term relationship with Coward to his enduring marriage to Paley, Wilson's life was as charmed as it was celebrated. Featuring nearly forty photos, *Noel, Tallulah, Cole, and Me* is an engaging account of one of the most important periods in Broadway's history, as well as a fascinating look into the lives of the glamorous men and women of the era.



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