

## 2002 NATIONAL MEDAL OF ARTS RECIPIENT

### Al Hirschfeld, artist/caricaturist, New York, New York

Al Hirschfeld is best known for the witty caricatures of theater personalities he produced for the arts pages of *The New York Times* from 1928 until his death in January 2003, at the age of 99. Although cannily perceptive and often amusing, his drawings were benignly pointed and never went for the jugular. Hirschfeld said his contribution was to take the character, created by the playwright and portrayed by the actor, and reinvent it for the reader. His work appeared in numerous publications of the last nine decades, 50 editions of the *Best Plays* series, and on numerous book and record covers. It is represented in the collections of many museums, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Museum of Modern Art, Whitney Museum of American Art and St. Louis Art Museum in his hometown. His work appeared on two series of U.S. postal stamp: *Comedians by Hirschfeld* in 1991 and *Silent Screen Stars* in 1994. Hirschfeld wrote several books including *Show Business is No Business* and *The American Theater as Seen by Hirschfeld*, and 10 collections of his work were published in his lifetime. He was declared a Living Landmark by the New York City Landmarks Commission in 1996 and he was given the ultimate Broadway accolade on what would have been his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday in June 2003: the Martin Beck Theater on West 45<sup>th</sup> Street was renamed the Al Hirschfeld Theater.

National Endowment for the Arts

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THE WHITE HOUSE