



Perhaps pining for the costar she really wanted, Katharine Hepburn strikes a pose in *Without Love*.

## Leading Lady

IN 1942, KATHARINE HEPBURN COMMANDED THE STAGE IN *WITHOUT LOVE*, HER ONLY APPEARANCE AT THE WALNUT STREET THEATRE. THE THEATER'S PRODUCING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, BERNARD HAVARD, TAKES US BEHIND THE CURTAIN.

AS TOLD TO ALEXANDRA LESHNER

“Katharine Hepburn was at the height of her popularity during the run of *Without Love*, which opened at the Walnut Street Theatre on March 23, 1942, following her success with *The Philadelphia Story*, both onstage and on-screen. In the 1940s, Walnut Street Theatre was a tryout house for productions on their way to Broadway. Hepburn’s appearance during that time was significant, as her name brought many people to the theater. In the show, Hepburn played a New England widow who operates a boarding house in Washington. She enters into a marriage of convenience with an American diplomat, and before the end of the play they discover they have truly fallen in love. Hepburn gave a fine performance playing opposite Elliott Nugent. Nugent, however, lacked charisma onstage, partly due to a drinking problem. She had originally suggested that Spencer Tracy play her opposite, and she would later give an even better performance in the film version opposite Tracy. Despite mixed reviews, the show sold very well—everyone wanted a ticket to see her perform live. Having Hepburn perform on our stage, along with many other notable actors, is a highlight of our rich history: We’re now in our 205th anniversary season.” *825 Walnut St., 215-574-3550; walnutstreettheatre.org* **PS**