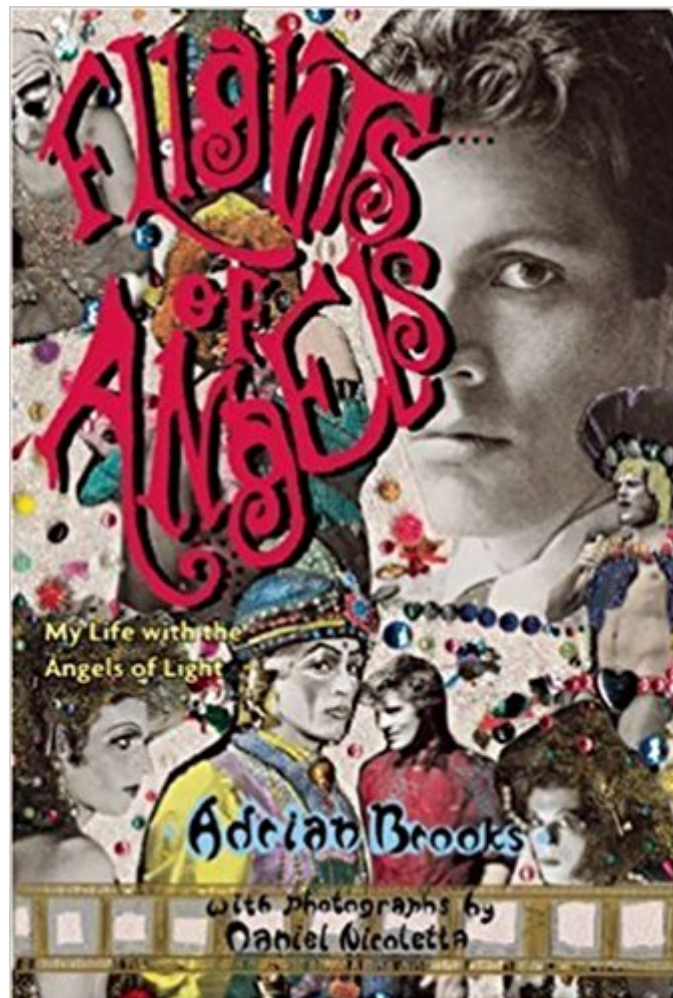




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# Flights Of Angels: My Life With The Angels Of Light



## Synopsis

The Angels of Light were more than a queer performance troupe in the 1970s; growing out of the equally legendary Cockettes in San Francisco, the Angels were a way of life, putting on trashy, fantastical drag fairy tales in a city and an era that was in the blissful throes of early gay liberation. Adrian Brooks was a charter member of the Angels and the author of most of their shows. In this vivid memoir, San Francisco in the 1970s comes to life, as Brooks recounts amazing stories from behind closed doors. He also describes his early years as a Pennsylvania youth whose life is transformed working with Martin Luther King, then subsequently cavorting in Andy Warhol's world in Manhattan, before heading west, where the Angels made perfect, beautiful sense of the world. Featuring more than seventy-five full-color photographs, *Flight of Angels* is a remarkable, elegiac ode to the ecstasy and defiance of queer life and culture before the AIDS crisis.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The result is a no-holds-barred story set within the larger framework that defined the era, the country, and especially its urban centers.... Brooks is certainly honest, and he recreates a unique era that was ultimately shattered by the passage of time and devastation of AIDS. Nicoletta's striking photographs enhance this unusual text. —Library Journal (Library Journal 2008-06-18)

Adrian Brooks is a poet, performer, novelist, and playwright. Born in 1947 in Philadelphia, he was active in the anti-war and civil rights movements and part of New York's Soho and Andy Warhol

scenes in the early 1970s. From 1973 to 1980, he was at the vanguard of gay liberation with the Angels of Light in San Francisco. Dan Nicoletta is a freelance photographer who worked in Harvey Milk's camera store in San Francisco in the 1970s; he later worked on Milk's political campaigns, including his victorious election to public office on one of the first openly gay platforms in the world. His photography has been exhibited widely in the US and Europe.

All about San Francisco's counter culture at one of the most excessive moments in its history.  
Happy, sad, tragic and real..

Great to have some written record of a glorious time in gay history that some of us don't remember as clearly as we might...

Flights of Angels tries to settle some old scores, but the author mischaracterizes some events, specifically ones where I am mentioned in this memoir. For one thing, the show I wrote for the Angels theater troupe, Cinderella II, was not a "flop," as Brooks would have it, to make it seem that the group fell apart without him in it. Cinderella II was too long when it opened, but it was trimmed, jelled after a few performances, and received many rave reviews, and even won three Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Awards, including for lead performance for the part of Cinderella. Even the review by Bernard Weiner, which Brooks cites as negative, was mostly positive. The show enjoyed a six-week run of great success, even if backstage things were ugly. Brooks in this book also says that I tried to stop "free speech" because I brought suit to stop false reviews from being posted on a website. It has never been "free speech" to lie or slander, in court or on the Internet. Recent court cases are proving what I was unable to do in 1999. Flights of Angels has its moments, and deserves an audience, but it also has what must be called its Flights of Fancy. See my own memoir, with a chapter about the Angels of Light, in DROPPING NAMES.--Daniel Curzon  
DROPPING NAMES: The Delicious Memoirs of Daniel Curzon

In his amazing memoir, "Flights of Angels", Adrian Brooks takes us on a grand and gritty romp among San Francisco's most radical and outrageous theater troupe, The Angels of Light. From 1974 to 1980, Brooks was an integral part of the group, as an actor, singer, and scriptwriter. A true wordsmith, Brooks gives poetic voice to deeply personal reminiscences, both liberating and devastating, in a writing style that reveals his acute eye for detail, and exposes much of his own passionate personality. A small collection of Brooks' evocative poems at the end of the book,

skillfully used as reference points in the narrative, enhance this memoir, as do the many gorgeous production stills and endearingly candid off-stage photos by Dan Nicoletta, whose fine work captured much of the revolutionary spirit of the time. Adrian Brooks-as-Angel offers us his uncensored view of their gay, bi, straight, trans-gender, and possibly trans-species world of sex and drugs, performance art and GLITTER. Everything was theater, and everyone was onstage. They were "The Angels": painted bodies in rhinestone-studded g-strings, or swathed in glowing garments of velvet and lace and leather; wrapped in dime-store diamonds and feather boas; festooned with endless ropes of silvery beads and counterfeit pearls; trailing gilded peacock feathers and splendor across the stages of San Francisco in the 1970s. Starry crowns, enormous exotic masks and jewel-encrusted props by the truly visionary artist and actor, Tony Angel, dazzled and delighted the eye. Their incomparable sets were marvels of fairytale architecture, Byzantine-by-way-of cardboard, canvas, and genius. Their performances were peerless, fearless and hilarious. As artists, The Angels of Light created works of astounding beauty and magic. But the beauty was transitory, the magic evanescent; and the troupe's behavior offstage was becoming like San Francisco itself, more unpredictable and dangerous. Brooks' memoir presents their decline and fall in a glaring spotlight that spares no one, least of all himself. Freedom has its price, and as AIDS became a player, the piper began collecting on overdue debts. "Cooperation" became "competition", and love turned into hate - or worse, death. As the 1970s drew to a close, lethal sex and drugs, artistic burn-out, and fierce power-grabs signaled the final act of that remarkable age for the Angels of Light, and Brooks' telling rings true. But witnessing the waning of an era does not tarnish the brilliance of its earlier years and, all in all, "Flights of Angels" is a joy to read. Brooks has given us his own straight-in-the-eyes look at one of the most wildly chaotic and creative epochs in theater history. He has re-awakened in this reader memories of fabulous characters met and wonderfully reckless adventures survived. Laughs? Oh yes, plenty! Sadness for lost innocence and absent friends? Without question. But painful as much of the denouement surely was, Adrian Brooks writes it as he lived it. "Flights of Angels" is certainly the bravest book I've read, and I can't wait for his next one!

Maude Kirk  
San Francisco  
February 22, 2010

As a trained person in the theatre, I now cast shame on my so-called education from a respected university in the Southeast U.S., which failed to introduce me to the Angels of Light. As a gay man, I am delighted to know a bit more about myself and my history. As a person, I will always remember Adrian Brooks! In this book, the reader is transported to a time a place of mega-importance to the liberation of the gay psyche, for without the daring and progressive nature of San Francisco (and the

people who made that place ALIVE) we would live in a different world. Brooks is brave to imbue this book with such honesty, revealing for the first time the ugly underbelly of what most people certainly saw as boldly beautiful. From the moment I started reading it Flights of Angels had a hold on me, firmly tugging on my reigns even when I ought to have been attending my present situation (like babysitting my darling nieces). Please do pick up this book and read it, whoever you may be. Your life will be that much richer to have heard the tale of a man, who like so many of us knew he was different and gifted, and yearned for truth even in such nascent stages of his life. In so many other ways, too, Adrian Brooks is relatable, and his poetry is inspiring to the core. His life is Light and his willingness to share that with us offers all who partake a beaming, gleaming helping of an Angel!

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