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# The Bennetts: An Acting Family



*Par Brian Kellow  
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**Description :** Description du produit The Bennetts: An Acting Family is a chronicle of one of the royal families of stage and screen. The saga begins with Richard Bennett, a small-town Indiana roughneck who grew up to be one of the bright lights of the New York stage during the early twentieth century. In time, however, Richards fame was eclipsed by that of his daughters, Constance and Joan, who went to Hollywood in the 1920s and found major success there. Constance became the highest-paid actress of the early 1930s, earning as much as \$30,000 a week in melodramas. Later she reinvented herself as a comedienne in the classic comedy Topper, with Cary Grant.. After a slow start as a blonde ingenue, Joan dyed her hair black and became one of the screens great temptresses in films such as Scarlet Street. She also starred in such lighter fare as Father of the Bride. In the 1960s, Joan gained a new generation of fans when she appeared in the gothic daytime television serial Dark Shadows. The Bennetts is also the story of another Bennett sister,

Barbara, whose promising beginnings as a dancer gave way to a turbulent marriage to singer Morton Downey and a steady decline into alcoholism. Constance and Joan were among Hollywood's biggest stars, but their personal lives were anything but serene. In 1943, Constance became entangled in a highly publicized court battle with the family of her millionaire ex-husband, and in 1951, Joan's husband, producer Walter Wanger, shot her lover in broad daylight, sparking one of the biggest Hollywood scandals of the 1950s.

Presentation de l'auteur" *The Bennetts: An Acting Family* is a chronicle of one of the royal families of stage and screen. The saga begins with Richard Bennett, a small-town Indiana roughneck who grew up to be one of the bright lights of the New York stage during the early twentieth century. In time, however, Richard's fame was eclipsed by that of his daughters, Constance and Joan, who went to Hollywood in the 1920s and found major success there. Constance became the highest-paid actress of the early 1930s, earning as much as \$30,000 a week in melodramas. Later she reinvented herself as a comedienne in the classic comedy *Topper*, with Cary Grant. After a slow start as a blonde ingenue, Joan dyed her hair black and became one of the screen's great temptresses in films such as *Scarlet Street*. She also starred in such lighter fare as *Father of the Bride*. In the 1960s, Joan gained a new generation of fans when she appeared in the gothic daytime television serial *Dark Shadows*. *The Bennetts* is also the story of another Bennett sister, Barbara, whose promising beginnings as a dancer gave way to a turbulent marriage to singer Morton Downey and a steady decline into alcoholism. Constance and Joan were among Hollywood's biggest stars, but their personal lives were anything but serene. In 1943, Constance became entangled in a highly publicized court battle with the family of her millionaire ex-husband, and in 1951, Joan's husband, producer Walter Wanger, shot her lover in broad daylight, sparking one of the biggest Hollywood scandals of the 1950s. Brian Kellow, features editor of *Opera News* magazine, is the coauthor of *Can't Help Singing: The Life of Eileen Farrell*. He lives in New York and Connecticut. From Publishers Weekly For a while in the early 1930s, Constance Bennett was the highest paid actress in Hollywood; younger sister Joan was an equally prominent star who worked with A-list directors like George Cukor and Fritz Lang. Though the two are not as widely remembered today as other film stars of the period, Kellow (*Can't Help Singing: The Life of Eileen Farrell*) goes a long way toward addressing the oversight, beginning with their father, Richard, one of the most respected theater actors of the early 20th century and an early proponent of Eugene O'Neill. The family biography also reveals the life of the forgotten middle sister, Barbara, who never made it in show business and slid into acute alcoholism. Kellow's closely critical evaluations of their performances can verge on the cruel, as in the comparison of Constance to "a seasoned drag queen" in her final film appearance, and his judgmental tone occasionally extends to the characters' personal lives, though admirably less so than in other celebrity biographies. In most ways, Kellow is a respectfully restrained biographer, addressing even the most potentially lurid scandal like Joan's husband shooting her agent because he suspected them of having an affair with a sense of his subjects' dignity. 32 pages of bw photos. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. Presentation de l'auteur" *The Bennetts: An Acting Family* is a chronicle of one of the royal families of stage and screen. The saga begins with Richard Bennett, a small-town Indiana roughneck who grew up to be one of the bright lights of the New York stage during the early twentieth century. In time, however, Richard's fame was eclipsed by that of his daughters, Constance and Joan, who went to Hollywood in the 1920s and found major success there. Constance became the highest-paid actress of the early 1930s, earning as much as \$30,000 a week in melodramas. Later she reinvented herself as a comedienne in the classic comedy *Topper*, with Cary Grant. After a slow start as a blonde ingenue, Joan dyed her hair black and became one of the screen's great temptresses in films such as *Scarlet Street*. She also starred in such lighter fare as *Father of the Bride*. In the 1960s, Joan gained a new generation of fans when she appeared in the gothic daytime television serial *Dark Shadows*. *The Bennetts* is also the story of another Bennett sister, Barbara, whose promising beginnings as a dancer gave way to a turbulent marriage to singer Morton Downey and a steady decline into alcoholism. Constance and Joan were among Hollywood's biggest stars, but their personal lives were anything but serene. In 1943, Constance became entangled in a highly publicized court battle with the family of her millionaire ex-husband, and in 1951, Joan's husband, producer Walter Wanger, shot her lover in broad daylight, sparking one of the biggest Hollywood scandals of the 1950s. Brian Kellow, features editor of *Opera News* magazine, is the coauthor of

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