

"Anna doesn't give a damn what people think," says Donna Murphy.

Theater

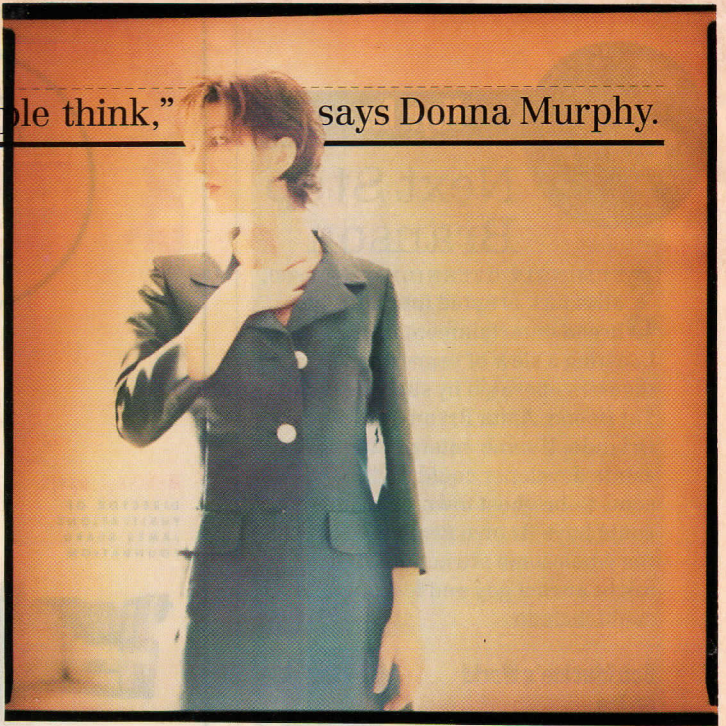
Murphy's Law

ANNA, THE PRETTY AND CHARMING English tutor in *The King and I*, seems worlds apart from Fosca, the dour, proud, and fiercely obsessive center of Stephen Sondheim's 1994 play *Passion*. But actress Donna Murphy sees their similarities. "Ultimately, Anna doesn't give a damn what people think either," points out Murphy, who currently stars on Broadway in the Rodgers and Hammerstein classic.

Murphy won a Tony as Fosca, and she has happily watched that character's most piercing moment—the song "Loving You"—turn into a gay standard. Friends asked her to sing the number (which begins, "Loving you is not a choice, it's who I am") at their commitment ceremony. "A number of friends who are gay have said that to them that song, more than anything else—not in a literal way, but a heart way—really cuts to it," she says.

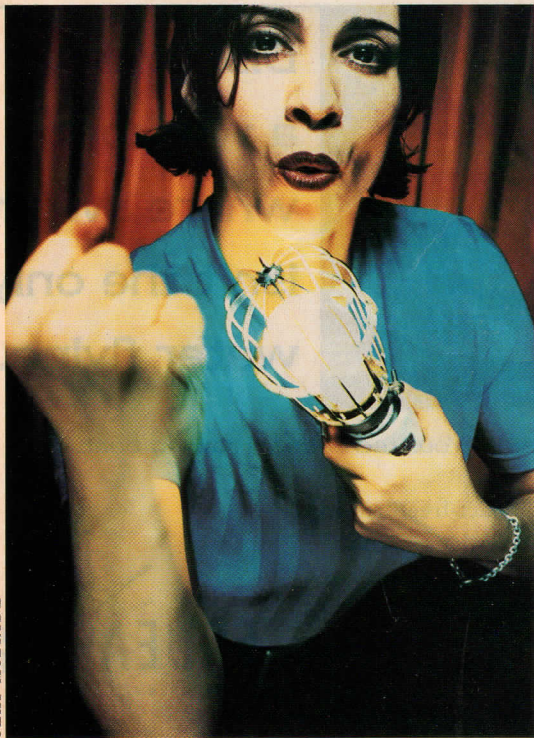
Murphy, who has a recurring role on the ABC show *Murder One* and sings along with Mandy Patinkin, Dawn Upshaw, and others on the CD *Leonard Bernstein's New York* (due out in May on Nonesuch), knows crowds love the lavish costumes of *The King and I*. But when she struggles in and out of corsets and petticoats and massive crinolines, Murphy remembers with longing that "Fosca had abandoned the trappings, the outer facade of being a woman. She was one smart babe, that's all I can say!" —MICHAEL GILTZ

ALISON SHIRK



HEARTFELT:
The Tony winner at work.

Michael Giltz also contributes to *New York and Entertainment Weekly*.



CLAY MCBRIDE

Line Up for Marga

SOMETIMES I FEEL LIKE I'M NOT AN EARTHLING," Marga Gomez says, flashing her wide, impish grin and exposing the adorable gap between her front teeth. "That's partly because I'm the only child of two flamboyant entertainers." Harlem born and San Francisco based, the 30-something queer performer made her name as a standup comic (*Comic Relief VI*, Comedy Central's *Out There*). Now that she's branching out, her flamboyant parents have come in handy. A 1994 one-woman show, *Memory Tricks*, was based on her mother, a self-dramatizing Puerto Rican dancer. Her latest, *A Line Around the Block*, currently running at New York's Public Theater, is about her father, a Cuban comic from the golden age of the *teatro*, the Latino variety shows of 1960s New York.

"We are supposed to conduct ourselves in a certain way," Gomez says, "because we are born here, or because we like girls or boys or whatever. I prefer to make it up every day." *Line* proves her a kind of Latina Lily Tomlin (whom Gomez idolizes): In addition to fondly resurrecting her always funny, often tacky comedian father and recreating some of his comedy sketches, Gomez plays herself as a teenager and, most memorably, creates Irma Pagan, a fictitious Latina bombshell and closet lesbian. As Gomez puts it, it's a "one-woman spectacular," presented in her father's inimitable style—making it look big, even if it's about to fall apart any minute. "I can't make a lot of costume changes. I'm a

woman and can't just become a drag queen." —GERARD RAYMOND

Gerard Raymond has written for *The Village Voice* and *Harper's Bazaar*.

CHIN JAB:
Gomez is back.

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