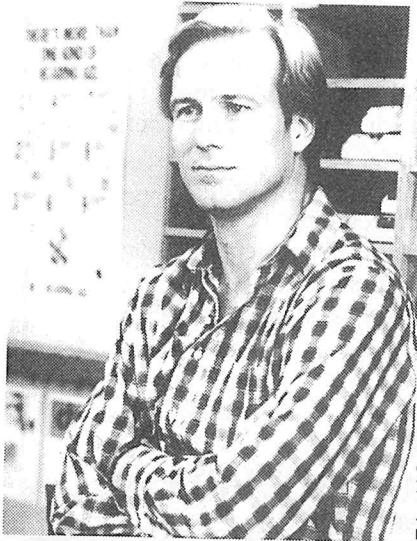


Preview 1989-90: The Plays

by Gerard Raymond



Takashi Seida



John Haynes

The stars come out on Broadway: (l. to r.) William Hurt, Blair Brown, and Vanessa Redgrave.

Even the most jaded and cynical among us look forward with some excitement to the upcoming theater season every September. By Tony nomination time in May, however, everyone has lapsed back to complaining about the terminal state of theater in New York. And there is no shortage of cures: Fire John Simon, get rid of Frank Rich, tighten immigration laws, don't let the real-estate investors and lawyers choose plays, reduce ticket prices. Some will say that we get the theater we deserve, while others will talk of cycles and resign themselves to wait till the bad theater spell ends.

The non-musical component of the 1989-90 season, nevertheless, looks particularly promising. The production lead time for a straight play is considerably shorter than that of a musical, hence there is no way of telling this far in advance what new plays may be rushed in during March and April to meet the Tony deadline. But from what has already been announced there is ample reason to be optimistic.

Broadway: Like every season in the
20 TheaterWeek

past three decades, there is a fair share of imports from London. This has often prompted the criticism that New York producers prefer to play it safe by mounting proven hits without taking risks on new American plays. But one has to rejoice in the chance to see Vanessa Redgrave, who kicks off the Broadway season to a glamorous start on September 24 in a revival of Tennessee Williams's *Orpheus Descending*.

"You Can't Argue with Greatness!" goes the advertising hype and indeed Redgrave was truly magnificent in Peter Hall's production of the play in London last year. She plays Lady Torrance, an Italian American woman trapped in a loveless marriage to a Southern redneck. Williams's play, a symbolic and often poetic depiction of the devastating effect of a wandering free spirit on a small repressed and racist Southern community, was a failure on Broadway thirty-two years ago. Hall's production, the first from the newly formed Peter Hall Company, enhanced the reputation of this operatic drama. Kevin Anderson, Anne Twomey and Tammy Grimes co-star with Redgrave in the Broadway pro-

duction which Hall will once again direct. Rumors from across the Atlantic indicate that Hall will return to Williams with *The Rose Tattoo* next spring, and Redgrave has been mentioned for the lead.

The Peter Hall Company's second production, *The Merchant of Venice*, which opened in London in June, is expected to open on Broadway in November. Contracts are currently being negotiated. Those who despair of cavalier attitudes to Shakespeare will approve of Hall's purist approach to the text. The London production, which plays through September, is distinguished by its elegance and clarity. Many critics expressed disappointment with Dustin Hoffman whose low-key approach to Shylock runs contrary to the traditional bravura performance. Hoffman will repeat his role and it is likely that Geraldine James may repeat her role as Portia.

The Secret Rapture, British playwright David Hare's most mature and accomplished work to date, was one of the best plays of the 1987-88 London season. Depicting two sisters, one an

money towards creating a classical repertory company?"

And that brings up the defining issue in Randall's life today. Actively involved in the 42nd Street renovation project, where he serves as an advisor on both the city and state committees, he is hoping to establish in one of the 42nd Street theaters a permanent not-for-profit repertory company that will present Chekov, Shaw and Ibsen in addition to newer and more experimental works.

"America is one of the few countries that does not have a classical repertory company," says Randall. "Ideally we will have a junior and senior company."

The suggestion has met with resistance. (See "Come and Meet The New 42nd Street", *TheaterWeek*, 10/31/88). Detractors contend a non-profit theater would be a serious money-loser and more important it would violate the honkey-tonk spirit of the block they wish to preserve even while cleaning the area up.

To which Randall replies: "That is the dumbest thing I've ever heard. The only way we're going to save Broadway in general and that block in particular is with small not-for-profit theaters. Broadway has already out-priced the ability of most New Yorkers to buy tickets. We're losing audiences because of the price and because of what's being shown. America invented the musical. But for some reason we're not able to create them anymore.

"As for small plays with small casts—that can't be done on Broadway either. A play like *M. Butterfly* on Broadway is an anachronism. The theaters on 42nd Street are perfect for small plays. And a not-for-profit theater would mean lower prices. That would generate audiences. And a national theater would increase tourism. That's good for the city's tax base and Broadway. Gerry Schoenfeld (head of the Nederlander organization) understands that and is chairman of our committee. But most importantly, the street would be well-lit and well-attended and that's a political plum for any mayor or governor.

"I have actors from all over the world interested in joining. Now all I have to do is raise fifteen million dollars. . . . Do you have any extra money on you?" He is only partially kidding and almost willing to accept the subway token the visitor offers. □

SKATERS AUDITION

FOR

RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL CHRISTMAS SPECTACULAR

Auditions for Ice Skaters (couples only), who also dance, for the 1989 "Radio City Music Hall® Christmas Spectacular" will be held on Wednesday, September 13, 1989 at SKYRINK, 450 West 33rd Street (at 10th Avenue) at 11:00 am. Callbacks will be Thursday September 14th. Applicants should bring updated photo, resume and a cassette tape of music. A tape recorder will be provided. AGVA and non-AGVA sign-up sheets will be at the rink on the day of audition. AGVA members will be seen first.

All Ice Skaters should have a short routine prepared.

Rehearsals begin the week of October 20th, 1989.

The 1989 "Radio City Music Hall Christmas Spectacular" runs from November 10th, 1989 to January 3rd, 1990.

Performance schedule varies from 2-5 shows per day.



RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL PRODUCTIONS
A ROCKEFELLER GROUP COMPANY

SINGERS AND DANCERS AUDITIONS

"RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL CHRISTMAS SPECTACULAR"

General auditions for the 1989 "Radio City Music Hall® Christmas Spectacular" will be held September 11th through 14th, 1989 at 890 Dance Center, 890 Broadway. Applicants should bring updated photo and resume, have music ready and be prepared to sing or dance. Check-in will be in Studio 4-3 at times and dates specified below. AGVA and non-AGVA sign-up sheets will be at the Radio City Music Hall stage door one day prior to audition day. AGVA members will be seen first.

Monday, Sept. 11th-	10:00 am	Female Singers who dance.
Tuesday, Sept. 12th-	10:00 am	Male Singers who dance.
Wednesday, Sept. 13th-	10:00 am	Male Dancers who sing (5'10" and over)
	2:00 pm	Female Dancers who sing (5'4" and under) Must be able to perform on pointe.

Thursday, September 14th- CALL BACKS AS SCHEDULED

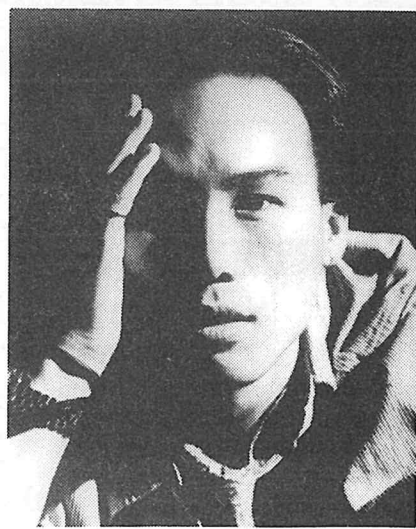
Rehearsals begin the week of October 20th, 1989.

The "Radio City Music Hall Christmas Spectacular" runs from November 10, 1989 to January 3rd, 1990. Performance schedule varies from 2-5 shows per day.



RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL PRODUCTIONS
A ROCKEFELLER GROUP COMPANY

Lettice and Lovage, which is entering its third year in the West End, will be Maggie Smith's first show on Broadway since Tom Stoppard's *Night and Day* in 1979.



Zoe Dominic

Sherri Cohen

Left to right: "Maggie the Cat": Kathleen Turner; "Maggie with Cat": Maggie Smith in *Lettice and Lovage*; B.D. Wong.

idealist and the other a Junior minister in the Thatcher government, Hare's play is a biting comedy as well as a perceptive and humane study of the amoral times ushered in by Mrs. Thatcher. The play is dedicated to the actress Blair Brown, who has the lead in the American production under Hare's direction. The original National Theater production (which opened in October last year) was directed by Howard Davies. This production will begin performances in September at the Public Theater for a six week preview period and move to Broadway for an official opening in October. Although *The Secret Rapture* was a great success at the National, no producer was willing to move it to the West End. It is heartening to know that its current producers are willing to take the financial risk of bringing this play to Broadway.

Artist Descending a Staircase was written by Tom Stoppard as a radio play for the BBC in 1972. It was staged for the first time last year at the King's Head Theater Club (Britain's first dinner theater) and then transferred to the West End. Inspired by Marcel Du-

champ's "freeze-frame" painting "Nude Descending a Staircase," Stoppard makes acerbic comments on modern art using a "whodunit" framework. The action of the 11-scene, 80-minute play moves backwards from 1972 to 1914 and then folds in on itself and fast-forwards to 1972 again. Tim Luscombe who directed the play in London will direct the Broadway production which will have a new cast and designers.

Stoppard wrote *Artist Descending a Staircase* between his stage plays *Jumpers* and *Travesties*. In many respects it is a preparation for the complex debates on art and literature of the latter play. New York audiences will get to see *Travesties* at the Cocteau Rep, off-off Broadway in October. Stoppard's latest work, *Hapgood*, a characteristically dazzling juxtaposition of quantum physics and spy melodrama, made its way to Los Angeles with Roger Rees, Simon Jones and Judy Davis, but plans for New York have been scuttled.

Maggie Smith's return to Broadway (absent since Stoppard's *Night and Day* in 1979) is eagerly anticipated. *Lettice and Lovage*, which is entering its third

year in the West End, was scheduled for the last Broadway season. But when Smith injured her shoulder, the opening date was postponed to next March. Peter Shaffer, who returns to the light comedy genre after the dramatic *Equus* and *Amadeus*, tailored the part of Lettice Douffet—an eccentric tour-guide who loses her job because of her propensity for making history more exciting—to fit Smith's comedic talents. Michael Blake-more (also represented this year with the musical *City of Angels*) will again direct. Margaret Tyzack repeats her role as Lotte Schoen, the perfect foil for Lettice's ever-creative schemes to bring beauty into the world.

For new American plays, Broadway producers often rely on the regional theaters, which have served as a kind of nursery since the 1970s. Frank Galati's adaptation of John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* arrives in New York having travelled both the regional theater as well as the London route. The epic production originated at the Steppenwolf Theater Company in Chicago last year. It was then revised and played at the La Jolla Playhouse in San Diego. It

IF YOU LIKE "SHAKESPEARE UNDER THE STARS," YOU'LL LOVE WHAT WE DO BEHIND CLOSED DOORS!

The New Randall L. Jones Performing Arts Theatre
 THE IMAGINARY INVALID
 THE GLASS MENAGERIE
 NOTHING LIKE THE SUN
 Through September 2

Utah SHAKESPEAREAN FESTIVAL

"The Festival City" Cedar City, Utah 84720
 FESTIVAL BOX OFFICE: (801) 586-7878

THE GREAT AMERICAN MUSICAL RETURNS TO BROADWAY!

Now Through September 2

JOHN CULLUM

in his

Tony Award Winning Role

SHENANDOAH



"Singularly beautiful, infinitely touching. John Cullum is magnificent. It will win you over handily."

—Walter Kerr, N.Y. Times/WQXR

"Gifted and intelligent. John Cullum has the best singing voice on the American musical stage."

—Jack Kroll, Newsweek

Mondays to Saturdays at 8pm: Matinees Wednesdays & Saturdays at 2

Call TICKETRON NOW! (212) 246-0102 (24 Hours / 7 Days)

GROUPS Call: (212) 398-8383

VIRGINIA THEATRE, 245 West 52nd Street

Original Cast Recording on RCA VICTOR

was also part of the National Theater's International '89 Season in London this past June. It opens on Broadway next April with its 35-member Steppenwolf cast, which includes Gary Sinise, Lois Smith and Terry Kinney, under Galati's direction.

Larry Gelbart's *Mastergate* premiered earlier this year at the American Repertory Theater in Cambridge, Mass. Described as a "play on words," *Mastergate*, is topical satire about an Iranscam-like investigation of an Oliver North-like character who bears the name of Manley Battle. According to rumor (subsequently denied), this tale of governmental jerking around was deemed too political for Washington and was cancelled at the Kennedy Center. The play is Gelbart's first on Broadway since *Sly Fox* in 1976. (He is also the author of the book of the forthcoming Broadway musical *City of Angels*). Daniel Van Bargaen repeats his role as Battle. Others in the cast include Jerome Kilty, David Rasche and Melinda Mullins. Michael Engler, who gained prominence with last season's *Eastern Standard*, directs.

The Piano Lesson will be Pulitzer prize-winner August Wilson's fourth Broadway play. It is part of the author's ambitious seven-play cycle covering each decade of the 20th century and illuminating some aspect of the black American experience. *The Piano Lesson*, which is set in the 30s, has evolved through the same route as the earlier Wilson plays: a premiere at the Yale Repertory Theater in New Haven, a regional tour through the country followed by a Broadway opening. As in the past, Lloyd Richards, artistic director at Yale, will direct. In the meantime, Wilson makes his debut in London in October when *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* opens at the National Theater. His latest play, *Two Trains Running* (set in the 60s), premieres at Yale next spring.

Originally scheduled at the Pasadena Playhouse for three weeks in January 1989, *Accomplice*, a new comedy thriller by Rupert Holmes, ended up playing for seventeen weeks displacing the rest of the Playhouse schedule. The play's catch-line is "I'm not telling" and apparently the audience is sworn to secrecy before the performance begins. For author Rupert Holmes, it marks another first in an extraordinary career.

Having made his name as a songwriter, he wrote the book, lyrics and music for *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* and became the first person in Tony history to win awards for both score and book. *Accomplice* is his first non-musical project and his second work for the theater. Art Wolff will direct again and most of the original cast, which includes Michael McKean, are expected to repeat their roles.

Not many plays are produced directly for Broadway in these current hit or flop times, but *Tru* is an exception. This one-man show about novelist, short-story writer and playwright Truman Capote, takes place over two days at Christmas in 1975—when Capote could reminisce over his success as a writer and a famous personality before drugs and alcohol overshadowed the last decade of his life. Tony award winner Robert Morse will play Capote (Paul Williams was originally slated for the role.) The show is written and directed by Jay Presson Allen, who adapted *Cabaret* and *Deathtrap* for the screen and *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* and *Forty Carats* for Broadway.

Paddy Chayefsky's *The Tenth Man* will be presented by the Lincoln Center Theater in December. It is set in a Long Island synagogue and revolves around a young woman who is possessed by a dybbuk (a demon in Jewish folklore). Chayefsky derives much comic mileage out of a culture clash between the Old World and the New. The play was first staged on Broadway in 1959 by Tyrone Guthrie and this new production will be the first revival. Ulu Grossbard, whose last Broadway production was Woody Allen's *The Floating Light Bulb* for a previous regime at the Lincoln Center in 1980, will direct.

Star-studded revivals are, depending on your taste, the boon or the bane of Broadway. A typical example is the revival of W. Somerset Maugham's 1921 comedy, *The Circle*, which has not been seen on Broadway for over fifty years. The plot involves a young woman who decides to elope with her lover, a rubber planter from Malaya, against all the advice she receives from friends and relatives. *The Circle* stars Rex Harrison (last seen on Broadway in the star-studded *Aren't We All*), Glynis Johns and Stewart Granger, who makes his Broadway debut. It will be directed by Brian Murray

the musical comedy hit!

Nunsense

"HILARIOUS!"
Liz Smith

4th SMASH YEAR!

Call Hit-Tix: (212) 564-8038 Groups: (212) 889-4300

DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS THEATRE 432 W. 42 St. on Theatre Row • 239-4321
Cast Album on DRG Records, Tapes and CDs

A love affair with song and dance...
A trolley ride to new romance.

Meet Me In St. Louis

THE NEW BROADWAY MUSICAL

Opens November 2nd
Special Price Previews
Begin October 14th

CALL TICKETRON TODAY!
(212) 246-0102
(24 Hours a Day • 7 Days a Week)
GROUP SALES (212) 398-8383

GERSHWIN THEATRE
222 West 51st St. NYC 10019

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof opens with Kathleen Turner making her Broadway debut.

whose last Broadway productions were *Hay Fever* and *Blithe Spirit*.

Tennessee Williams will be represented again on Broadway in March 1990 when *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* opens with Kathleen Turner making her Broadway debut as Maggie the Cat. Robert Prosky is expected to play Big Daddy, Polly Holliday is mentioned for Big Mama and Daniel Hugh Kelly plays Brick. This production, directed by Howard Davies, will reinstate the author's preferred ending. (The original 1955 Broadway production was changed at director Elia Kazan's request). Davies, who directed *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* in London and on Broadway, directed a production of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* at the National Theater in London last February with Lindsay Duncan in the lead.

A Few Good Men by Aaron Sorkin focuses on two marines standing trial for the murder of another marine. The play deals with military life and the "unofficial marine code of justice." Playwright Sorkin spent five years of his life working the TDF line in Manhattan, handing out flyers for other people's productions. In 1990, he is likely to have his first play on Broadway as well another, *Making Movies*, off-Broadway. Don Scardino is slated to direct both plays and Tom Hulce (Mozart in the film version of *Amadeus*) will play the role of the legal defense officer in *A Few Good Men*.

Broadway potentials for next year include: Dennis McIntyre's *National Anthems* which deals with a blue-collar worker and his yuppie neighbors. The play was workshopped at Long Wharf, New Haven with Al Pacino, Jessica Harper and Kevin O'Rourke last year and played later in a revised version, also at Long Wharf, with Tom Berenger, Mary McDonnell and Kevin Spacey under Arvin Brown's direction. Negotiations have been going on this past year for a Broadway production which may materialize next year with Pacino or Berenger.

Alan Ayckbourn's *A Small Family Business* was a major hit at the National Theater in 1987. Like all of the prolific author's new work, this play gets

funnier as it gets more serious. Ayckbourn examines the moral decay in England today by looking at the escalating effects of petty crime in a respectable family furniture business. Ayckbourn directed the play himself at the National with Michael Gambon in the lead. The proposed Broadway production will be directed by Dan Sullivan who received a Tony nomination for his work on *The Heidi Chronicles* last season.

The West Coast revival of Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, with Glenda Jackson and John Lithgow, and directed by the author, was once considered a strong possibility for this Broadway season. But it is now scheduled for London and will not play in New York this season. Albee's latest, *The Marriage Play*, however, after a set-back caused by the death of producer Richard Barr, is expected on Broadway later this season. The play will be directed by Albee and is described by him as the story of two people whose 23 year-old marriage is in crisis "because they are bright enough to know that nothing is ever enough."

Off-Broadway: The fact that two world-famous playwrights, Harold Pinter and Athol Fugard, have chosen to premiere their new work in resident theaters in the city says much for the quality of work being produced in the not-for-profit sector.

Mountain Language is Harold Pinter's first new play since 1984. In twenty minutes, Pinter presents a concentrated snapshot of evil perpetrated by a totalitarian regime. It was apparently inspired by the playwright's concern for the Kurdish mountain people who were denied the use of their own language by the Turkish government and also his feelings about the Thatcher government. The play was mounted at the National in London last October with a high-powered cast that included Michael Gambon and Eileen Atkins, directed by the author. The Classic Stage Company was given the American rights to do the play after their successful 1987 production of Pinter's first full-length play, *The*

Birthday Party, which, in its portrayal of torture, is thematically linked to *Mountain Language*. The two plays will be performed on a double bill. Carey Perloff directs Peter Reigert and David Strathairn in both productions. Pinter will participate in the rehearsals.

New York Theater Workshop presents the American premiere of *My Children! My Africa!* as a result of Athol Fugard's desire to follow last year's *The Road to Mecca*, with a new play in a small-scale non-commercial environment. This play arrives in New York by-passing the usual paths taken by Fugard's recent work—via a production at the National or a premiere at the Yale Repertory Theater. It tells the story of two school children, one black and one white, who are brought together by an idealistic black teacher. Their friendship, loyalties and ideals, however, are destroyed by apartheid and the current politics of South Africa. The play will be directed by Fugard who first staged it at the Market Theater in Johannesburg this June with Tony award winner John Kani playing the teacher. Courtney B. Vance and Lisa Fugard (the playwright's daughter) are under consideration to play the young people in the American production.

Other Off-Broadway openings will include: *Hyde in Hollywood* by Peter Parnell which will be produced by Playwright's Horizons who also produced the author's previous *Romance Language*. Set in Hollywood, the play revolves around a famous film director and a young gossip columnist. Casting has not been announced but Gerald Gutierrez will direct.

On a similar theme, *Price of Fame*, a new play by the actor Charles Grodin, is part of the Roundabout Theater's season. In what is described as a suspenseful comedy, Grodin will play a movie star who is being interviewed by a reporter from *Esquire* (played by Christine Lahti) who plans to do a hatchet job on the star. Lahti will have finished her stint in *The Heidi Chronicles* before this play opens in late May next year.

Playwrights Horizons will also present *When She Danced* by Martin

Roundabout Theater will present *The Tempest* with Frank Langella and B.D. Wong.

Sherman, a humorous look at Isadora Duncan in 1920s Paris, when she was in the midst of her tumultuous marriage to the Russian poet Sergei Yessenine. Sherman is best known for *Bent* which played on Broadway in 1979. His most recent work, *A Madhouse in Goa*, is just concluding its run in the West End. *When She Danced* was first staged at the King's Head Theater Club in London last September by Tim Luscombe (*Artist Descending a Staircase*), who will direct the American premiere as well.

Also from London is Nick Dear's *The Art of Success* which premiered at the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1987. Manhattan Theater Club has invited the RSC's Adrian Noble to direct the play in New York. It is a bawdy portrait of the famous painter and engraver William Hogarth and his friend the novelist Henry Fielding, set in the raucous, sleazy 1730s.

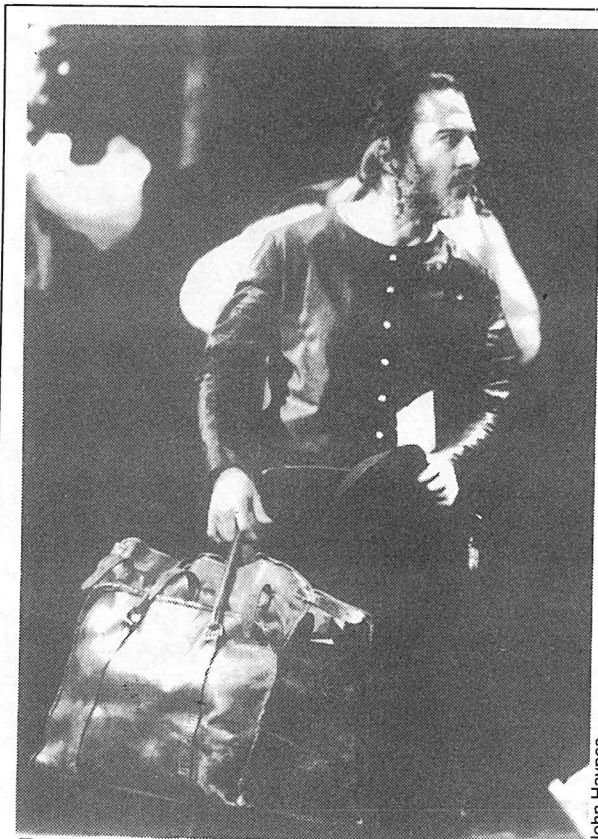
Oscar winner William Hurt and Lois Smith (also in *The Grapes of Wrath*) play

the leads in Joe Pintauro's *Beside Herself* a drama of a middle-aged woman who is forced to reassess her life by the ghosts of her younger self. Produced by Circle Repertory Theater, it is directed by John Bishop, Circle's resident director and playwright. In the early part of next year Circle Rep will present the long-awaited *Prelude to a Kiss*, which has played in two regional companies on the west coast this past year. Written by Craig Lucas (*Reckless*) and directed by Norman Rene, this strange, romantic tale with mystical overtones is triggered off when a strange man kisses a bride at her wedding.

Plans are underway to bring Tom Kempinski's *Separation* to off-Broadway this season. Kempinski was last represented on Broadway with *Duet for One* in 1981. His new play, which was nominated for the Comedy of the Year Laurence Olivier Award in London this year, is about a transatlantic love affair between an English playwright and a

physically handicapped American actress. Michael Attenborough who directed the play originally at the Hampstead Theater Club and in the West End in London is slated to direct the American premiere.

The New York Shakespeare Festival reaches the one-third mark in its controversial, much debated Shakespeare Marathon. According to a spokesperson for Joe Papp, there are no firm commitments yet from stars or a director so the 12th production scheduled for the fall has not yet been announced. Meanwhile, Shakespeare will be represented off-Broadway outside the Marathon as well. New York Theater Workshop has announced "an original theater-piece" adapted from *Othello* by Reza Addoh, a new west-coast director, which will feature four actors, and Roundabout Theater will present *The Tempest* with Frank Langella as Prospero and B. D. Wong (fresh from *M. Butterfly*) as Ariel. □



John Haynes

Dustin Hoffman as "Shylock" in *The Merchant of Venice*.

BROADWAY OPENINGS

<i>Orpheus Descending</i>	September 24	Neil Simon
<i>Mastergate</i>	October 12	Criterion Center
<i>Tru</i>	October	TBA
<i>A Few Good Men</i>	October	Music Box Theater
<i>Secret Rapture</i>	November 6	Ethel Barrymore
<i>The Circle</i>	November 20	The Ambassador
<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	November	46th Street Theater
<i>Artist Descending a Stair</i>	November 30	Helen Hayes
<i>The Tenth Man</i>	December	Vivian Beaumont
<i>Accomplice</i>	March	46th St. Theater
<i>Cat on a Hot Tin Roof</i>	March	TBA
<i>Lettice & Lovage</i>	March 25	TBA
<i>The Grapes of Wrath</i>	April	TBA
<i>The Piano Lesson</i>	April 16	TBA

OFF-BROADWAY OPENINGS

<i>Beside Herself</i>	October 17	Circle Rep
<i>Mountain Language and The Birthday Party</i>	October 31	Classic Stage Company
<i>Hyde in Hollywood</i>	October	American Place Theater
<i>The Tempest</i>	October	Roundabout Theater
<i>The Art of Success</i>	December 5	Manhattan Theater Club
<i>My Children! My Africa!</i>	December 18	Perry Street Theater
<i>Othello</i>	February	Perry Street Theater
<i>When She Danced</i>	February 15	Playwrights Horizons
<i>Price of Fame</i>	May 23	Roundabout Theater