

at 2. In previews for a 4/20 opening. *Pearl Theatre Company*, 80 St. Marks Pl. (598-9802).

**Pieces of the Sky**—A World War II postman, disliked in his Nebraska community for both his religion (Jewish) and the bad news he brings, romances the owner of a diner. Written by David L. Pater-son; presented by Urban Stages. \$15. Wed.-Sat. at 8, Sun. at 3. Previews begin 4/18 for a 4/22 opening. *28th Street Theatre*, 15 W. 28th St. (421-1380).

**Power Plays**—A series of three one-act comedies, starring and written by Alan Arkin and Elaine May. \$47.50. Tues.-Sat. at 8, Wed., Sat. and Sun. at 2:30. Previews begin 4/14 for a 5/7 opening. *Promenade Theatre*, 2162 Broadway, at 76th St. (239-6200).

**Quidam**—Cirque Du Soleil's ninth spectacular—which should, like its previous eight, chill, tickle, and trompe many an oeil. \$15.75-\$59.50. Tues.-Thurs. at 8, Fri. at 6 and 9:30, Sat. at 4:30 and 8:30, Sun. at 1 and 5. In previews for a 4/16 opening. *Big Top at Battery Park City*. (800-678-5440).

**Too Jewish Two**—Avi Hoffman's sequel to *Too Jewish?* is a tribute to the tumblers, the precursors of the Borscht Belt comics and shtickers. Presented by the Jewish Rep. \$35. Tues. and Thurs.-Sat. at 8, Sun. at 3 and 7, Wed. at 2. Previews begin 4/18 for a 4/28 opening. *Playhouse 91*, 316 E. 91st St. (831-2000).

Now Playing

**Amazing Grace**—After Timothy McVeigh's conviction, Ted Kaczynski's confession, and the Texas execution of a born-again Christian, the public may not be very eager to spend more time thinking about the death penalty. But this latest drama from Blue Light Theater Company—about a murderer awaiting her execution—could well be worth looking at, because Michael Cristofer wrote the script and Marsha Mason plays the condemned. \$37.50. Tues.-Fri. at 8, Sat. at 3 and 8, Sun. at 3. *Theatre Four*, 424 W. 55th St. (239-6200).

**Anadarko**—The unheroic and generally unbecoming human response to captivity has long fascinated writer-actor Tim Blake Nelson, and he returns to this subject with verve in this new play. Set in a tiny prison cell, the drama follows two Oklahoma drifters as they torment each other and fend off attacks from their jailers. \$15. Mon.-Fri. at 8, Sat. at 5 and 9, Sun. at 7. *MCC Theatre*, 120 W. 28th St. (727-7765).

**As Bees in Honey Drown**—Socialite Alexa Vere de Vere—one part Hepburn, two parts eyeliner, three parts luxury addict—enlists a young author to write a screenplay about her life. Written by Douglas Carter Beane; alertly directed by Mark Brokaw (*How I Learned to Drive*). Starring Bo Foxworth and Kristine Nielsen. \$47.50. Tues.-Fri. at 8, Sat. at 6 and 9, Sun. at 3 and 7. Opened 7/24/97. *Lucille Lortel Theatre*, 121 Christopher St. (239-6200).

**Blue Man Group: Tubes**—Smart silliness, with toilet paper, neon-colored paint, cereal, etc. Wildly inventive, and appropriate for just about everyone—kids, adults, foreigners, haters and lovers of performance art. \$39-\$49. Tues., Wed., Thurs. at 8, Fri. and Sat. at 7 and 10, Sun. at 4 and 7. Opened:

11/17/91. *Astor Place Theatre*, 434 Lafayette St. (254-4370).

**The Broadway Kids Sing Broadway**—A musical revue of songs made famous by Broadway kids. Expect tunes from *Annie*, *The Sound of Music*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Oliver!*, and *Bye Bye Birdie*. \$20. Sat. and Sun. at noon. Through 6/21. *John Houseman Theatre*, 450 W. 42nd St. (354-2220).

**Checking Out**—A ghost and a lonely Puerto Rican cross paths in the Bronx. Written by Candido Tirado. \$20. English performances on Wed.-Fri. at 8; Spanish performances on Sat. at 2 and 8 and Sun. at 2 and 6:30. Through 4/19. *Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre*, 304 W. 47th St. (354-1293).

**The Cripple of Inishmaan**—An Irish orphan, Cripple Billy, dreams of landing a part in a Hollywood filmmaker's documentary in order to impress his beloved. The play is Martin McDonagh's first in his Aran Island trilogy and his second to open in New York this season. \$40. Tues.-Fri. at 8, Sat. at 2 and 8, Sun. at 2 and 7. *The Public's Newman Theater*,

Opening  
The Unmerry Wife of Avon

In really good sex scandals, it's not the juicy details but the thorny moral issues that count. In that respect, the dirt that playwright Peter Whelan has dug up may be more than 300 years old, but it's as good as it gets. *The Herbal Bed*, first presented by the Royal Shakespeare Company two years ago and opening April 16 at the Eugene O'Neill Theater, is Whelan's take on one of the few known facts about William Shakespeare's eldest daughter, Susanna, wife of the upstanding Stratford-upon-Avon doctor John Hall. Susanna was publicly accused in 1613 of having a venereal disease and of conducting a sexual liaison with Rafe Smith, a married man and family friend. Susanna sued for slander and won her case when her accuser, the doctor's apprentice, recanted and failed to show up at the trial. But Whelan set his sights on what didn't get recorded. "I enjoy using the gaps in history; there were some nice unknowns in this story," says Whelan, whose previous play for the RSC, *The School of Night*, speculated on the shady circumstances surrounding the death of Shakespeare's contemporary Christopher Marlowe. Filling in some of those gaps, Whelan suggests that Shakespeare's daughter may not be entirely blameless in the charge of adultery and implicates her husband in a coverup, giving the Elizabethan sex scandal a contemporary ring. In *The Herbal Bed*, both Susanna and Doctor Hall have good reasons for fearing an inquisition by the overzealous Vicar General, a seventeenth-century Kenneth Starr who insists on conducting an examination even after the case is closed. "Either something happened or it didn't, but I thought that there could be circumstances in which Doctor Hall would be reluctant to probe into the facts, because he could then lose his practice and his wife," says the playwright. "Lying, it seems, has become a very current issue. Should we probe into the private lives of people in the public eye?" When writing the play, he had in mind a Thatcher cabinet minister who was forced to resign over an extramarital affair. Of course, at the time, the world still hadn't heard about Monicagate. GERARD RAYMOND



Photograph by Henry Grossman.

425 Lafayette St. (239-6200).

**Dinah Was**—A play about Dinah Washington, Queen of the Blues. Yvette Freeman (*ER*, *Working*) plays the diva—come rain or come shine; Oliver Goldstick wrote the script. \$35. Tues.-Sat. at 8, Sun. at 3 and 7:30. Through 4/26. *WPA Theatre*, 519 W. 23rd St. (206-0523).

**Eddie Izzard: Dress to Kill**—Britain's hottest, cross-dressing comic offers his views on dinosaurs, the space program, and being raised by wolves. \$35-\$40. Tues.-Sat. at 8:30. *Westbeth Theatre Center*, 151 Bank St. (307-7171).

**Fantasticks**—The musical perennial that, happily, refuses to go away. \$35. Tues.-Fri. at 8, Sat. at 3 and 7, Sun. at 3 and 7:30. Opened: 5/3/60. *Sullivan St. Playhouse*, 181 Sullivan St. (674-3838).

**A Flea in Her Ear**—Bill Irwin, who proved himself a first-class interpreter of French farce in the Roundabout production of *Scapin* two years ago, now brings his directorial energies to bear on this 1907 Feydeau comedy about the misadventures of a suspicious wife. Mark Linn-Baker, last seen on his way to the forum, stars. \$50. Tues.-Sat. at 7:30, Wed., Sat., and Sun. at 2:30. Through 5/10. *Roundabout's Laura Pels Theatre*, 1530 Broadway, at 45th St. (719-1300).

**Forbidden Broadway Strikes Back!**—Gerard Alessandrini's update of his long-running musical spoof poking fun at the assorted absurdities of the Great White Way couldn't arrive in town at a more—well, let's be kind and say propitious time. \$40-\$45. Mon.-Wed.-Fri. at 8:15, Sat. at 2:30 and 8:15, Sun. at 3:30 and 7:30; food and drink available/optional. *Stardust Theatre*, Broadway at 51st St. (239-6200).

**Grandma Sylvia's Funeral**—An audience-participation comedy akin to *Tony 'n' Tina's Wedding*, written by Glenn Wein and Amy Lord Blumsack. When Grandma Sylvia dies, a power struggle ensues among family members. \$37.50-\$57.50, which includes a mitzvah meal. Opened: 10/9/94. Wed. at 2 and 7:30, Fri. at 8, Sat. at 5 and 9, Sun. at 1 and 5. *Soho Playhouse*, 15 Vandam St. (691-1555).

**Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde**—From letters, biographies, and court transcripts, writer-director Moisés Kaufman has put together an absorbing show about Oscar Wilde's 1895 trial for "gross indecency with male persons." \$20-\$47.50. Tues.-Fri. at 8, Sat. at 2 and 8, Sun. at 3 and 7. Opened 6/5/97. *Minetta Lane Theatre*, 18 Minetta Lane (307-4100).

**Hedwig and the Angry Inch**—John Cameron Mitchell—actor, director, and founding member of the Drama Dept.—wrote and stars in this rock concert-cum-musical, in which a German war bride finds herself in a Kansas trailer park and achieves self-actualization, not to mention tabloid fame, through songwriting. Featuring Stephen Trask and his downtown band, Cheater. \$35. Mon. and Wed.-Fri. at 8, Sat. at 7 and 10, Sun. at 7. Opened 2/14/98. *Jane Street Theatre at the Hotel Riverview Ballroom*, 113 Jane St. (239-6200).

**How I Learned to Drive**—Paula Vogel's play benefits from an original slant: child molestation as an act of consenting partners, with the child as a willing participant. Miss Vogel has written a memory play about a pedophile and his big-breasted niece by marriage, Uncle Peck and Li'l Bit, names a trifle too apt to ring true. The driving lessons Uncle Peck gives Li'l Bit over the years are a slow, careful—even caring—seduction. Mark Brokaw has directed inventively. (Simon: 3/31/97). Now star-