



PRIX-FIXE DINNER \$20.95
 Mention This Ad For
 A Free Glass Of Wine
 49th St & 1st Ave.
223-4200

RALPH'S ITALIAN RESTAURANT
 Very Good Food! Lunch & Dinner
 Reasonable prices!
 862 9th Ave. (corner of 56th St.) • 212-581-2283

Byblos Restaurant
 MIDDLE EASTERN FOOD
 OPEN 7 DAYS
 COCKTAILS • LUNCHEON SPECIALS
 COMPLETE DINNER
 200 E.39th at 3rd Ave., NYC • 212-687-0808

ALL YOU CAN EAT — \$15⁹⁵
THE BEST SUSHI IN THE VILLAGE! (11-11:30 DAILY)

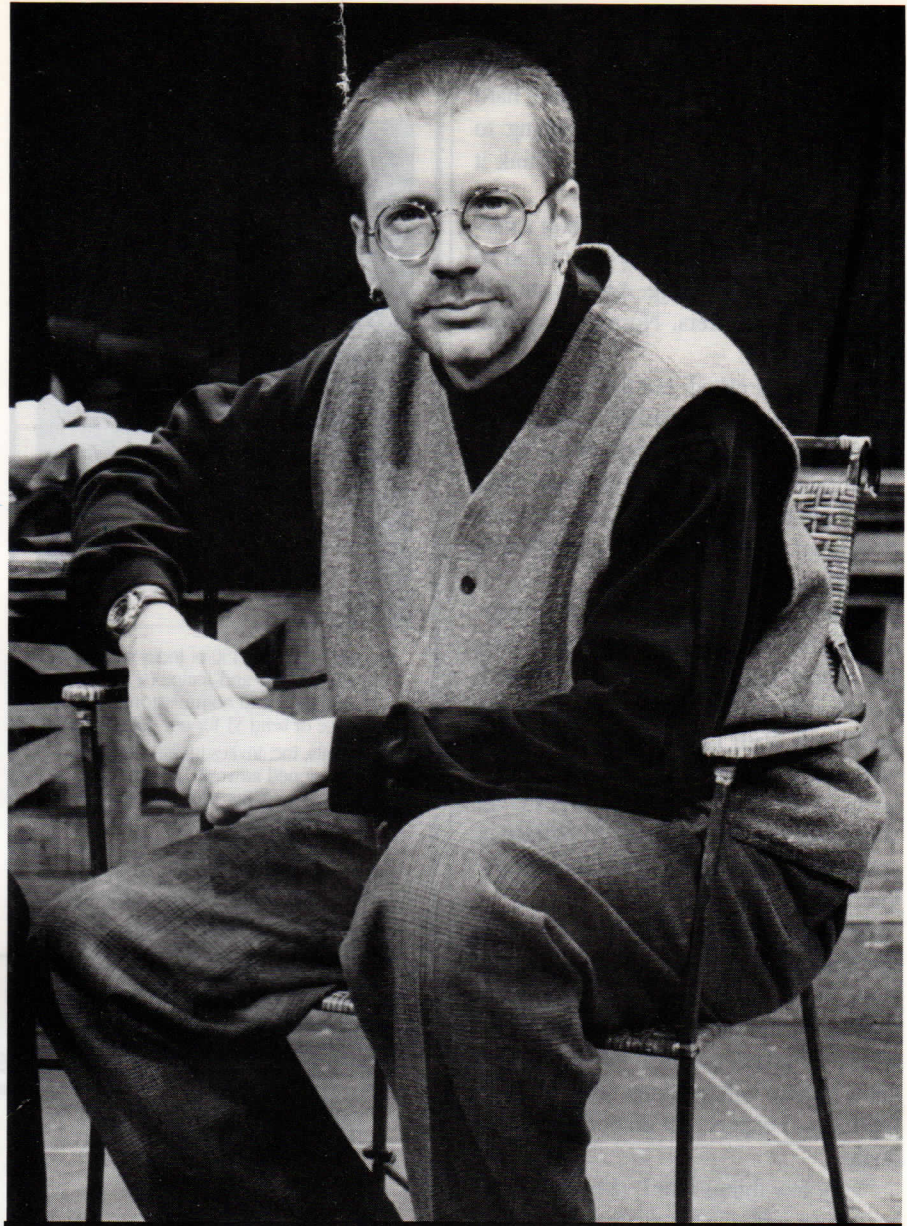
 • Sushi Bar
 • Catering Service
 • Take Out
 Near Actors Playhouse
 & Circle Rep Theatres
 69 7TH AVE SO (COR BLEECKER) 212-206-7024

East River Cafe
 Italian Cuisine
 Seafood Specialties
 Party Room Available
 1111 First Ave. at 61st Street, NYC 212-980-3144


 Fine Italian Cuisine in a theatrical atmosphere!
 Sat & Sun Brunch 11am - 4 pm • Unlimited Champagne
 Open 7 Days
 180 Columbus Ave, (68th St.) NYC. 212-873-2500


MARSALA RISTORANTE
 Authentic Italian Cuisine
 Pre-Theatre/Prix Fixe \$19.95 per person
 883 1st Avenue (betw. 49 & 50 Sts.) NYC
212-223-0466


LA RIVISTA RISTORANTE
 The Classical Italian Restaurant
 On Restaurant Row
 313 W. 46th St. NYC **212-245-1707**



Couple Clash:
Writer Ron Nyswaner on
Gay/Straight Dynamics
by Gerard Raymond

“I don’t live in an exclusively gay world,” says screenwriter-turned-playwright Ron Nyswaner. “I live in small-town America, in a world where, for some reason, gay people and straight people are living quite comfortably with

each other.” That is the world which informed Nyswaner’s Oscar-nominated screenplay for *Philadelphia*, the film in which Tom Hanks played a homosexual lawyer with AIDS. It also defines the sensibility Nyswaner brings to his first play

Oblivion Postponed, currently at the Second Stage Theater.

When *Philadelphia* hit the multiplexes two years ago, Nyswaner and the film's director Jonathan Demme were criticized in some quarters of the gay community for not letting Hanks's character kiss his lover (Latin hunk Antonio Banderas) even once during the movie. Well, in *Oblivion Postponed* there is not just one male-male kiss, there are two! Not that he wrote the play as a response to criticisms of the movie. Nyswaner is quick to say that both were written at roughly the same time.

In *Philadelphia*, the stricken Hanks is surrounded by an idyllic family that doesn't stint on love and support. His initially homophobic defense lawyer (played by Denzel Washington) gradually becomes more understanding of homosexuals and the discrimination faced by people with AIDS. In *Oblivion Postponed*, the gay urban world collides with the straight small-town world, and both sides discover each has much to teach the other.

"Jonathan Demme and I will take responsibility for every decision made in *Philadelphia*," Nyswaner declares, echoing a point he has made tirelessly during the various debates that raged across the country since the film's release. "*Philadelphia* was always designed to reach the broadest audience possible. We wanted to talk to that other audience that had to be enticed out of their homes, who had to hire the baby-sitter and drive to the mall, and then had to make a choice between seeing a movie about AIDS and gay people or Arnold Schwarzenegger's latest movie. I certainly understand why urban gay people think we didn't go far enough. It's easy in hindsight to say we could have gone much farther, and now you can say that we could have had the couple kiss. But what would have been the point if the people of New York stood up and applauded us and the people of Pittsburgh stayed home? The critics would have loved us and we would have won awards, but what a failure that would have been."

Explaining the genesis of *Oblivion Postponed*, Nyswaner relates: "I was traveling in Rome with my boyfriend and we had a very specific experience which initiated the play. It was on the day of the Epiphanies, January 6. We walked into a small church, and for reasons that are very hard to explain—although there is an

COMEDY AND IMPROVISATION

Chicago City Limits

CLASSES IN COMEDY AND IMPROVISATION

Winter Semester Begins Jan. 9

Classes are taught by members of New York's longest-running and most critically acclaimed comedy group.

Workshops include:

- Improvisation Training for Actors - day and evening
- Performance Class
- Sketch Writing & Performance
- Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced Improvisation
- Summer Intensive in Improvisation

CALL DAVID WELLER AT (212) 888-LAFF

1105 FIRST AVENUE @ 61ST STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10021

Check Out TheaterWeek's
Guide to New Year's Eve

See Page 52



TATOU

PRE-THEATER

3 Course Prix Fixe Dinner \$22.50

5:30-6:45 Daily

151 East 50th Street, NYC
(212) 753-1144

NEED A TAXI?

ABSOLUTE Limousine at Taxi Prices!



Color TV • VCR • Stereo • Full Bar • Sun Roof

Prices for Stretch Limos:

NYC to LaGuardia\$20

NYC to Kennedy\$30

NYC to Newark\$30

NYC to Atlantic City R.T. \$290

\$30

per hour
No time Limit

1-800-546-6654

7 days • 24 Hours • Major Credit Card • Tips and tolls excluded

attempt to [do so] in the play—we both had a mystical experience. It was like an out-of-body experience. I am starting to sound like some New Age strange person, but that was what it was like. It was like taking LSD except we weren't. We wandered through Rome talking and talking, about life, death, and all these important things as if we were high. We ended up in a procession that led us right into St. Peter's and there, where we were surrounded by the evidence of the wealth of the church, our mystical experience went away completely. I wanted to write about that.

"Also," Nyswaner continues, "three years ago, my nephew died at the age of 21. He was a hemophiliac who had AIDS. That was such a significant event for me and for my family that I continue to write about it."

In *Oblivion Postponed*, which is set in a hotel in Rome, Nyswaner presents two couples, one gay (played by John Glover and David Aaron Baker), and the other straight (Mary Beth Hurt and James Rebhorn). One of the gay men is ill with AIDS; the teenage son of the straight couple has recently died. Both couples seem on the point of breaking up.

"There is a great deal of hopelessness," Nyswaner explains. "The pain that the straight couple is feeling is so powerful that they can't even comfort each other. Their grief has pushed them into their own sort of closet; the husband is drinking excessively and the wife is just lost. Sometimes there is no comfort to be had, and the pain, I think, becomes almost unendurable." The sense of despair experienced by the gay couple comes from their having been together for such a long time. "Sometimes the things you can't stand about the other person are so evident that it is just hopeless," says Nyswaner, who has been in a seventeen-year relationship himself.

"The straight couple is dealing with the death of their child, which is certainly as significant as losing a lover to AIDS," says Nyswaner. Shuttling between Manhattan and his home in Kingston, upstate New York, the 39 year-old screenwriter/playwright firmly believes in a world which is not ghettoized. "I think what *Philadelphia* was about, and what my play talks about is what people have in common, and how that is more important than what separates us."

A major supplier of theatre books to the world at large since 1923.

Books on film, television, dance, theatre, and all aspects of the performing arts ... Playscripts published here and abroad ... We ship worldwide—phone, fax, & mail orders welcome.



The **DRAMA BOOK SHOP**, Inc.

723 Seventh Avenue (Cor. of 48th St., 2nd Floor), New York, NY 10019
(212) 944-0595 • 800-322-0595 • Fax (212) 921-2013 • Open 7 Days

★ ★ ★ N. Y. TIMES
"One of the Best
Spanish Kitchens in N.Y.C."
Recommended by
Town & Country Magazine

RINCON DE ESPANA

LUNCH • DINNER • COCKTAILS

475-9891
260-4950



226 THOMPSON STREET
IN GREENWICH VILLAGE



FRANKIE

&

JOHNNIE'S

STEAKHOUSE

RESTAURANT

**Where good folks
meet & eat.
Since 1926**

269 West 45th St. — On the Great White Way — NYC
(212)997-9494

Frankie & Johnnie's
163 14th St.
Hoboken
(201)659-6202

Frankie & Johnnie's III
194-05 Northern Blvd.
Bayside, Queens
(718)357-2444

37th Street Hideaway
32 W. 37th St.
NYC
(212)947-8940