

# STAGEBILL

75 YEARS

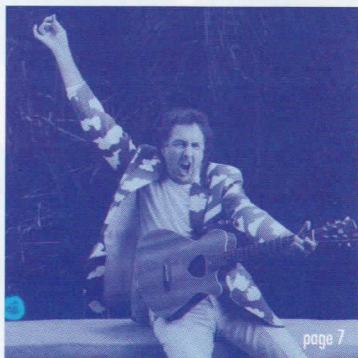
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## FEATURES

### Idle Thoughts 7

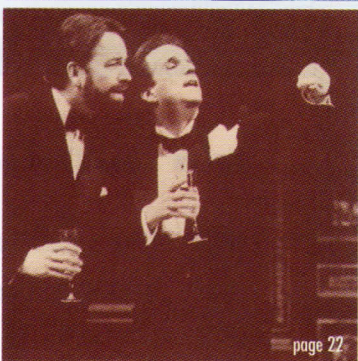
Monty Python veteran Eric Idle brings his touring revue of Python songs and sketches to the Warner Theatre, June 14–15. *Andy Buck* explores the meaning of life with the writer-performer.



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### Life of the Party 22

Television icons John Ritter and Henry Winkler hit the Kennedy Center on June 17 with Neil Simon's new farce *The Dinner Party*. *David Barbour* catches up with Ritter.



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### Street of Dreams 26

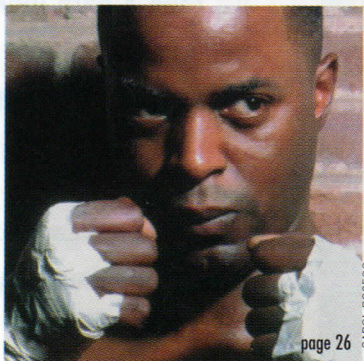
As The Shakespeare Theatre revives Tennessee Williams' *Camino Real* through July 23, *Gerard Raymond* discusses the neglected classic with director Michael Kahn.

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## DEPARTMENTS

### Stagebill Wordplay: Feline Farewell 30

*Matt Jones* says good-bye to a long-running Broadway musical.

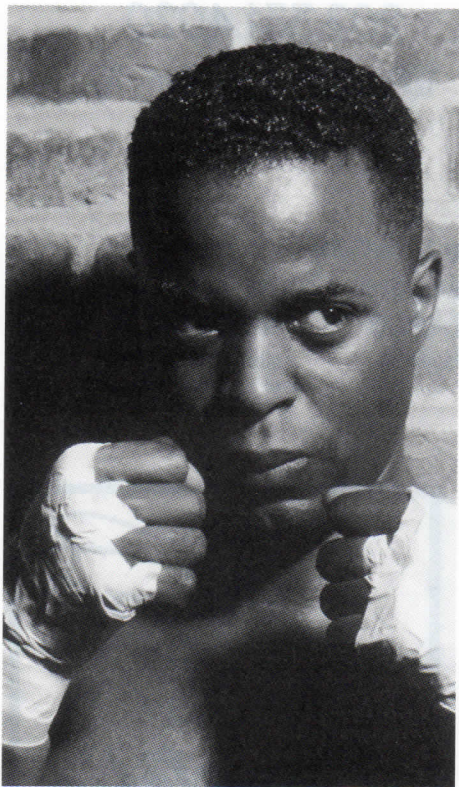


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CRAIG SCHWARTZ

CAROL ROSEGG

As The Shakespeare Theatre revives Tennessee Williams' *Camino Real*, through July 23, GERARD RAYMOND speaks with director Michael Kahn about the neglected classic.



Victor Love stars as Kilroy in The Shakespeare Theatre's *Camino Real*.

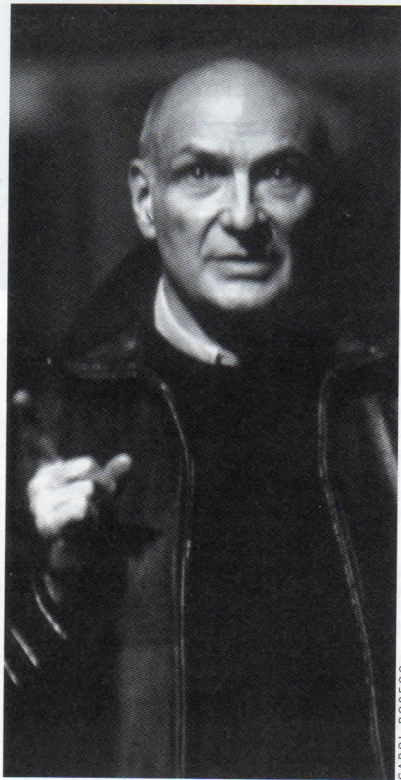
# Street of Dreams

It's taken nearly half a century, but *Camino Real* is ready to stake its claim as a theater classic. Not that this strange and wondrous play by Tennessee Williams has lacked passionate advocates. Even when it flopped disastrously on its original Broadway run in 1953 many hailed the play as great. In the intervening years, *Camino* supporters have grown steadily in number and the play's stock has risen. Michael Kahn, artistic director of The Shakespeare Theatre in Washington D.C., was still in high school when he encountered the play on its premiere engagement. His current production of *Camino Real* (at The Shakespeare Theater through July 23) is the latest

in a series of recent revivals across the country to shine the spotlight once again on Williams' neglected, but never quite forgotten masterpiece. "I remembered it as being very theatrical," says Kahn recalling his first contact with the play. "Working on it now, it holds up even more so than in my imagination."

*Camino Real* focuses on a group of desperate romantics: some of them real (Casanova, Lord Byron), a few fictional icons (Camille), and others that Williams made up (Kilroy, played by the appropriately named actor Victor Love, a boxer who serves as a sort of Everyman character). All find themselves stranded in the plaza of an unnamed Latin American city. The play unfolds like a dream with an epic sweep; moments of farce and terror are intertwined with great pathos and compassion in a series of short

CAROL ROSEGG



CAROL ROSEGG

**Director**  
**Michael Kahn**

them,” observes Kahn. But even at its bleakest moments, Williams offers a lifeline to all such lost souls: the belief, as he puts it, that “violets in the mountains can break the rocks.” The hopeful message in the play, Kahn concludes, is that “compassion, tenderness, and love can make a difference in a cruel world. And you have to have the courage to face what you don’t know in order to survive.”

*Gerard Raymond is a frequent contributor to Stagebill.*

expressionistic scenes. “It’s very much a poet’s play,” says Kahn. A natural fit, he explains, for a company that focuses on the works of Shakespeare. “There are larger than life, iconic characters, yet they are also very real. It deals with universal themes. And the language of the play is extraordinary. It’s very musical. The characters have arias like great soliloquies.”

Williams’ abstract operatic drama may well have been ahead of its time when it premiered in the 1950s. It was also remarkably prescient for an artist who was still in his mid-30s. (Williams began work on *Camino* as early as 1946.) When the play opened, Williams was at the height of his popularity, following the triple Broadway successes of *The Glass Menagerie*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and *The Rose Tattoo*. However, the portrait of Byron in the play is that of an artist who understands too well the perils of fame and the dreaded waning of creative power. It might have been a self-portrait of the playwright some 20 years in the future.

“The people in the play are frightened. They are all at the end of the line and death awaits



## STAGEBILL WORDPLAY

**ANSWERS TO PUZZLE ON  
PAGE 30**

**Feline Farewell**

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