

## Sports on TV

### Rangers

Fri 24 at 7:30pm vs. Lightning (MSG)  
Sun 26 at 7pm vs. Mighty Ducks (MSG)  
Tue 28 at 7:30pm vs. Stars (MSG)  
Thu 30 at 7:30pm vs. Islanders (MSG/SC)

### Islanders

Sat 25 at 3pm vs. Mighty Ducks (SC)  
Mon 27 at 7:30pm vs. Sharks (SC)  
Wed 29 at 7:30pm vs. Canadiens (SC)  
Thu 30 at 7:30pm vs. Rangers (MSG/SC)

### Devils

Thu 23 at 7:30pm vs. Canadiens (SC)  
Sat 25 at 7:30pm vs. Sharks (SC)  
Mon 27 at 7:30pm vs. Flyers (SC)  
Thu 30 at 7:30pm vs. Canucks (SC)

### Giants

Sun 26 at 1pm vs. Bengals (NBC)

The most impressive thing about going to a recent Devils game, according to one attendee, was the halftime "mighty mite" show; the sight of tiny kids playing half-speed hockey was, he reports, "like seeing a regular game on quaaludes." Can you imagine how long a game would seem *then*? Mark Messier and the Canucks come back to town this week.

## Equestrian

### Show

#### The 114th National Horse Show

Madison Square Garden, Seventh Ave at 32nd St (465-MSG1). Subway: A, C, E, 1, 2, 3, 9 to 34th St-Penn Station. Wed 29 at 7:30pm; Thu 30, Oct 31 at 8am, 1pm, 7:30pm; Nov 1 at 7am, noon, 4:30pm. \$15.

This, the world's oldest indoor horse show, features top-level riders from around the world and marks the one time a year that Madison Square Garden sells champagne and strawberries at its concession stands. Most impressive, though, may be the annual celebrity class. In the past, such luminaries as Robin Quivers and Vanessa Williams have participated and Loretta "Hot Lips" Swit has acted as judge. Last year, jockey Julie Crone appeared with her horse dressed as a rabbit. (She wasn't fooling anybody.)

## Wrestling

### Pro

#### WWF Action

Nassau Coliseum, Hempstead Turnpike, Uniondale, L.I. (516-794-4100). Travel: LIRR to Hempstead, then take a bus or cab to coliseum. Fri 24 at 8pm. \$12-\$30.

This pro-wrestling card includes Bret "Hit Man" Hart vs. the Undertaker, The Patriot vs. the Sultan with Sheik, and Jesus vs. Mark Mero with Sable. I don't care how good Sable is; Mark Mero should be looking for a new agent. Also featured will be a "Long Island Street Fight" that is not sanctioned by the WWF; God only knows what you have to do to be disclaimed by those guys.

## Museums

### Photography

#### Replay! Great Photos from Sports Illustrated

Newseum/NY, 580 Madison Ave between 56th and 57th Sts (317-7596). Subway: E, F to Fifth Ave. Through Oct 25; Mon-Fri 10am-5:30pm, Sat 10am-5pm. **FREE**

This exhibit of more than 100 Sports Illustrated images includes gems that range from Jackie Robinson smashing into Yogi Berra during the 1955 World Series to Kerri Strug telegenically playing through pain. After the exhibit closes next week, you'll have to wait for one of the magazine's periodic retrospective issues—probably about 15 minutes.

## Movie

### Documentary

#### Sports Film Series

Newseum/NY, 580 Madison Ave between 56th and 57th Sts (317-7596). Subway: E, F to Fifth Ave. Sun 12, Thu 16 at 1pm. **FREE**

Perhaps concerned that there isn't enough sports on TV, the Newseum has been running a series of documentaries to supplement its exhibit of Sports Illustrated photographs. The series winds up this week with a screening HBO's *When it Was a Game, Part Two* a survey of baseball from 1934 to 1960.

## Things to Do

### Running

#### Run

#### Not Quite the New York City Marathon

Central Park, 67th St and West Drive (860-4455). Subway: B, C to 72nd St. Sun 26 at 10am. NYRR members \$13, nonmembers \$20. For those running in next week's New York City Marathon, this is a chance for one final tune-up. For those who didn't make the lottery or who think that 26.2 miles is just a little insane, it's a chance to cross the same finish line after running just 5 miles.

### Biathlon

#### Event

#### Brooklyn Biathlon

Wollman Skating Rink, Prospect Park, Ocean Ave entrance, Brooklyn (914-247-0271). Subway: D, Q to Prospect Park. Sun 26 at 7:30am. \$30. Fun as it would be to watch, this is not the biathlon you know from the Winter Olympics; there will be no skiing and no shooting at this event (at least no sanctioned shooting). Instead, participants in the final biathlon of the season will run three miles, bike 18 miles, and then run another three. The fastest will do so in under an hour and a half.

### Biking

#### Ride

#### The Green Apple

Central Park, Fifth Avenue and 90th St (802-8222). Subway: 4, 5, 6 to 86th St. Sat 25 at noon. **FREE**

This is an uptown bike tour of environmental sites. The stops include the Charles A. Dana Discovery Center, the Conservancy Garden and the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. There will also be presentations on solar energy, sustainable agriculture and other topics ecological.

### Eclectic

#### Fairs

#### Chelsea Piers Halloween Carnival

Chelsea Piers, 23rd St and Hudson River (336-6881). Travel: C, E to 23rd St, then M23 bus or walk to river. Sat 25 12-5pm. **FREE**

The Chelsea Piers sports behemoth is pulling out all the stops for this annual fair. In addition to movies, face-painting and pony rides, there will be over 20 sports-related carnival games, a preschool gymnastics area, miniature golf and a climbing wall. At 8pm, the Roller Rinks will stage a Halloween edition of their In-Line Saturday Night Party (\$8). Costumed skaters are admitted for half price and have a far greater chance of getting harassed on the way home.

#### NYC Marathon and Sports Experience Expo '97

New York Coliseum, Columbus Circle, 59th St and Broadway (682-6565). Subway: A, B, C, D, 1, 9 to 59th St-Columbus Circle. Wed 29-Nov 1 11am-5pm. \$7.

In past years, the Expos that accompanied the NYC Marathon were only open to marathoners and their famously sunny economic profiles. This year, somebody seems to have had a bright idea—"maybe people who watch running also have disposable incomes"—and the gates have been thrown open. The Expo features booths from the likes of Adidas, PowerBar, Foot Locker, plus a climbing wall, a pool for kayaking demos and a hang gliding simulator.

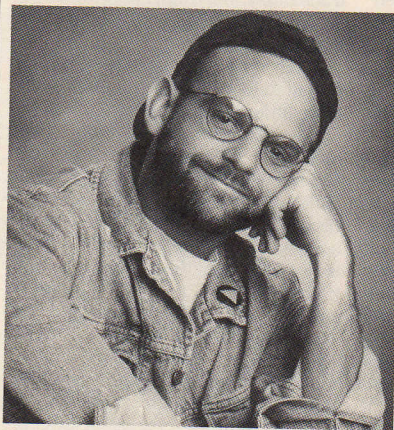
# THEATER

## Interview

# Newton's law

Director Michael Wilson exerts his own force on *Defying Gravity*

When Michael Wilson says his career as a director has been on "slow burn," it's tempting to relate the metaphor to the current production of *Defying Gravity*. The play by Jane Anderson (*The Alleged Texas Cheerleader Murdering Mom*), which is in previews at the American Place Theatre, is inspired by the launch of the space shuttle *Challenger*. But it seems that, unlike the tragic 1986 space mission, Wilson may be heading for the stratosphere with his first commercial production in New York.



Up to the *Challenger*: Wilson fights *Gravity*.

*Defying Gravity* isn't docudrama. The *Challenger* disaster is seen through the eyes of seven disparate characters, including the French Impressionist painter Claude Monet, as well as the daughter of the teacher who is part of the ill-fated mission. Focusing on a seminal moment in our collective consciousness, the play explores "what it is about certain people, whatever their discipline, that inspires them to go further and further into new territory," says the director, "taking risks which could not only endanger themselves but others as well."

The 32-year-old Winston-Salem, North Carolina, native might not have discovered his yen for the theater had he not suffered a knee injury in elementary school. "I used to spend every summer on the Little League baseball field," Wilson relates. Unable to play during the summer he hurt himself, he enrolled instead in a public-school theater program in which he got a role in *Damn Yankees* (he sang the high notes in "Heart"). He was hooked for life.

Wilson didn't actually start directing until seven years ago—his adaptation of *A Christmas Carol* is

now an annual feature at Houston's Alley Theater—but he's been preparing for the profession ever since he graduated from college. He spent two seasons at the American Repertory Theater in Cambridge, Massachusetts, working as a house manager and actors' understudy. His post-graduate education, he reports, involved witnessing firsthand the likes of ART's director, Robert Brustein, and avant-garde directors Andrei Serban and Anne Bogart. After ART, Wilson joined the Alley, where he served as head of casting for a year before being appointed associate

artistic director. "Seeing so many actors over and over again," Wilson says, "you learn an important part of a director's job: casting."

But no director could have asked for more rigorous or rewarding training than staging Tony Kushner's monumental two-part epic, *Angels in America*. "It was one of the highlights of my life," says Wilson, still marveling that the Alley's artistic director, Gregory Boyd, gave the prestigious job to a relative novice. "[Michael is that extraordinary thing," says Boyd, "the closest thing I know to a[n] Elia] Kazan. He is able to work well with actors—and he also has a sense of the visual poetry of the theater." Kushner

apparently had reservations at first. When Kushner discovered that Wilson was only 30 years old, the director recalls the playwright's saying to him, "You're so young! Do you know that what you are about to do is the hardest thing you will ever do in your life?" But Kushner is now Wilson's greatest champion. He energetically promotes the young director's talents within the theater community, and he will be working with Wilson again this February in Houston on a revised version of one of Kushner's early plays, *Hydrotophia, or the Death of Dr. Brown*.

Like Kushner's work, *Defying Gravity* has its share of fantastic elements. "I like magic in the theater," says Wilson, clearly enjoying the idea of Monet's presence at the *Challenger* launch. "The play has its own theatrical logic," he says. "It's not about how Monet, who died in 1926, got to Florida in 1986. The play becomes a metaphor for how we walk through the world. It asks us to look at everything anew."—Gerard Raymond

*Defying Gravity* is at the American Place Theatre. See Off Broadway.