

The Fall Preview: Broadway Musicals

2nd Anniversary Issue

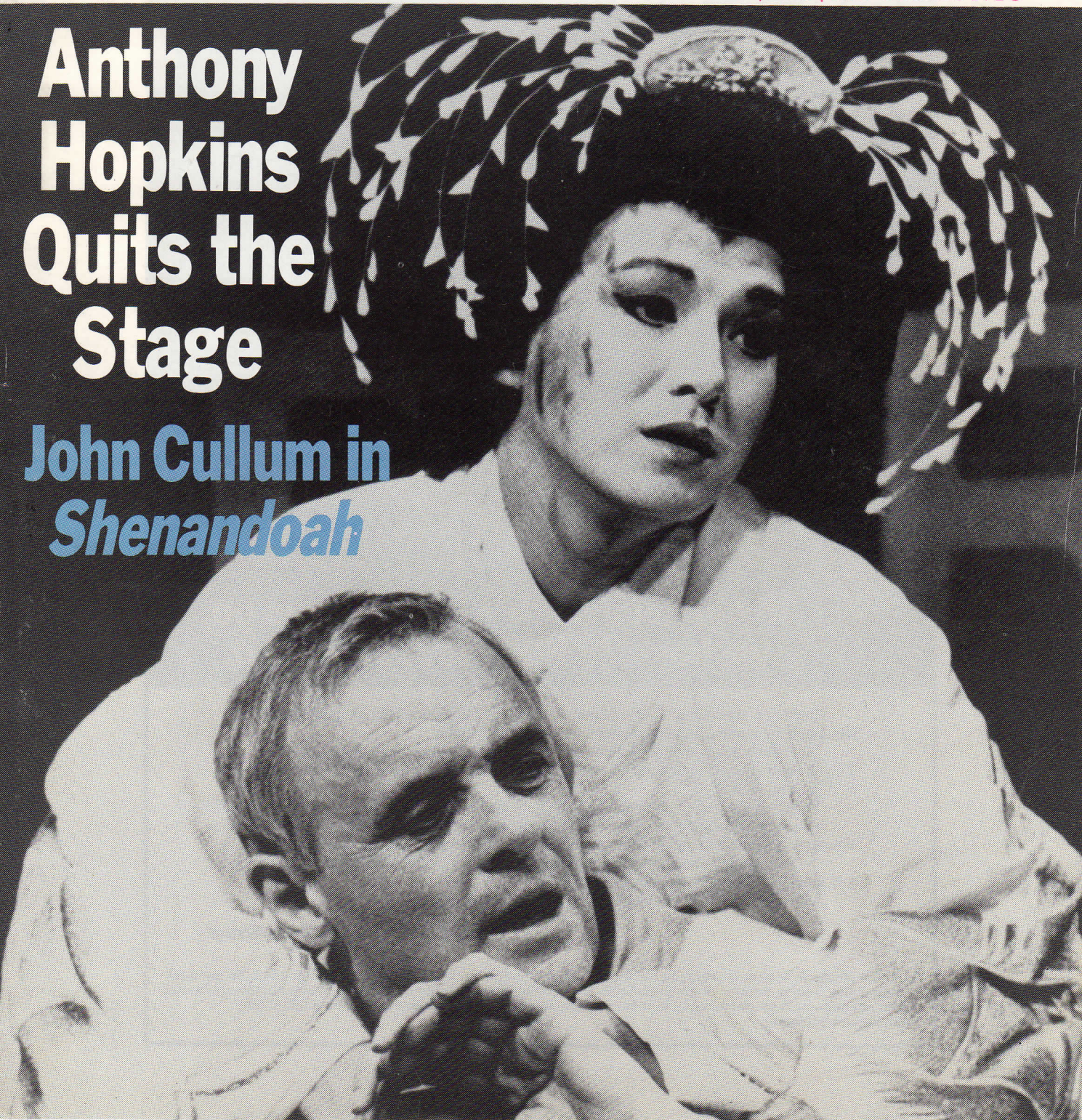
# TheaterWeek™

August 14, 1989

\$2.00/\$3.00 Outside NYC

**Anthony  
Hopkins  
Quits the  
Stage**

**John Cullum in  
*Shenandoah***



# Anthony Hopkins: The Reluctant Actor's Farewell To The Stage

*"Some part of me,  
the great need to act, has died."*

by Gerard Raymond

**H**is voice resonates with the cadences of his native Wales. His physical presence commands the stage. At 52, Anthony Hopkins is one of Britain's leading actors. He currently stars in David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly* at the Shaftesbury Theater, one of London's biggest draws in the West End.

Like the late Richard Burton—a fellow Welshman he has often been compared to—Hopkins, bedeviled by alcoholism and a turbulent nature, very nearly destroyed his life and career.

He catapulted into fame in 1966, when he went on for Laurence Olivier who fell sick during the run of Strindberg's *The Dance of Death*. The story goes that Hopkins was so good in the role that Olivier made a quick recovery and returned, having only missed four performances. Olivier himself was to record later in his 1982 memoir *Confessions of an Actor*: "A new young actor in the company of exceptional promise was understudying me and walked away with the part of Edgar like a cat with a mouse between his teeth."

On the brink of becoming a young lead at the National, Hopkins left to pursue a film career which began with *The Lion in Winter* in 1968. He returned to the National Theater in 1971 but the following year during a run of *Macbeth*, which was marked by his hostility towards the director Michael Blakemore, Hopkins turned his back on the British theater

and abruptly left for America.

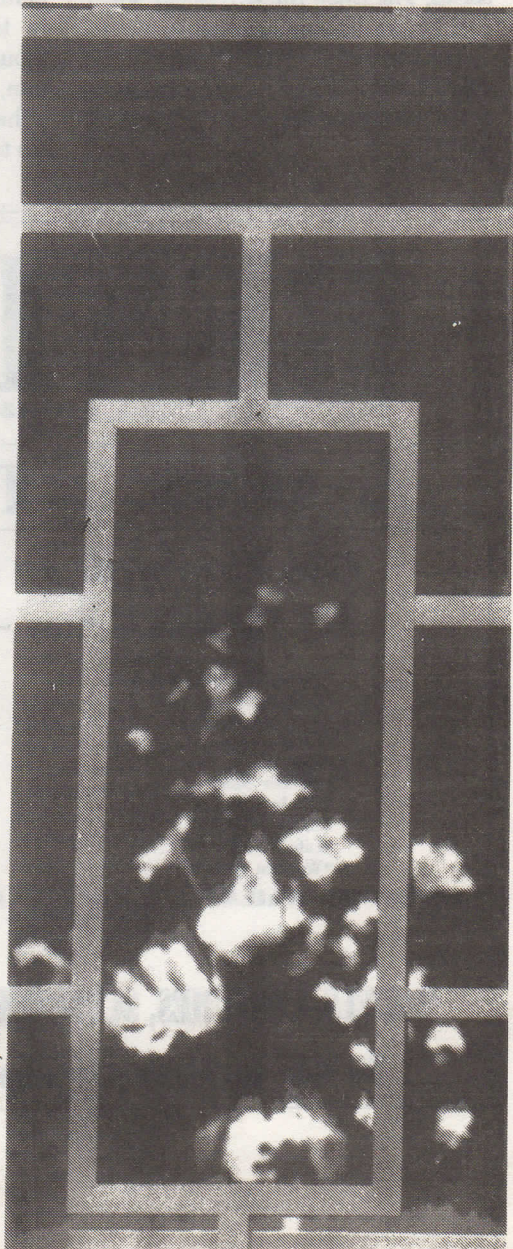
Although he had, by now, acquired a reputation for being an aggressive and unstable actor, John Dexter invited him to play the part of the psychiatrist in the Broadway transfer of Peter Shaffer's *Equus* in 1974. Hopkins was a great success in New York and was named Best Actor by the Drama Desk and the Outer Critics Circle.

In the ensuing years Hopkins worked in the movies in Hollywood, and recovered from his alcoholism. He was lured back to the London stage in 1985 by David Hare and Howard Brenton's *Pravda* with its juicy part of Lambert le Roux—a Murdoch-type newspaper baron. Hopkins was a sensation in the part and re-established himself as a major actor in the country. He then played the leads in *King Lear* (1986) and *Antony and Cleopatra* (1987) at the National. At the end of this strenuous season (he set a record as the first actor in England to play *Lear* for 100 performances), Hopkins announced that he was quitting the stage.

In his dressing room, a few hours before going on stage to play the deluded French diplomat Rene Gallimard, Hopkins talked to *TheaterWeek* about his ambivalent feelings towards the stage.

**Gerard Raymond:** *You did say that you were leaving the stage after Antony and Cleopatra two years ago, didn't you?*

**Anthony Hopkins:** Yes, after the Shakespeares I thought I would never go



Nobby Clark

## ***“I have never felt a part of the British theater. I feel increasingly alien to it.”***

into the theater again. I did far too much work, you know, and I just found it very draining and exhausting. But then I read *M. Butterfly*, and I wanted to work with John Dexter again.

*Dexter has a reputation for being very difficult to work with and you have not had the best of relationships with him.*

Well that was a long time ago. John is very demanding. He doesn't like talking about a scene, he says "just do it." But at least with him you know that there is somebody going to put on a production.

I am very demanding myself, you know. I used to be difficult. As an actor I still am. When I am working on a play I am very unstable because I have these huge surges of energy which come from

nowhere. Sometimes it comes out as anger, I don't know why. Whenever I do plays like *King Lear* or *Antony and Cleopatra* I create hell around me. I just charge into them like somebody on fire. Maybe it's my Welsh background.

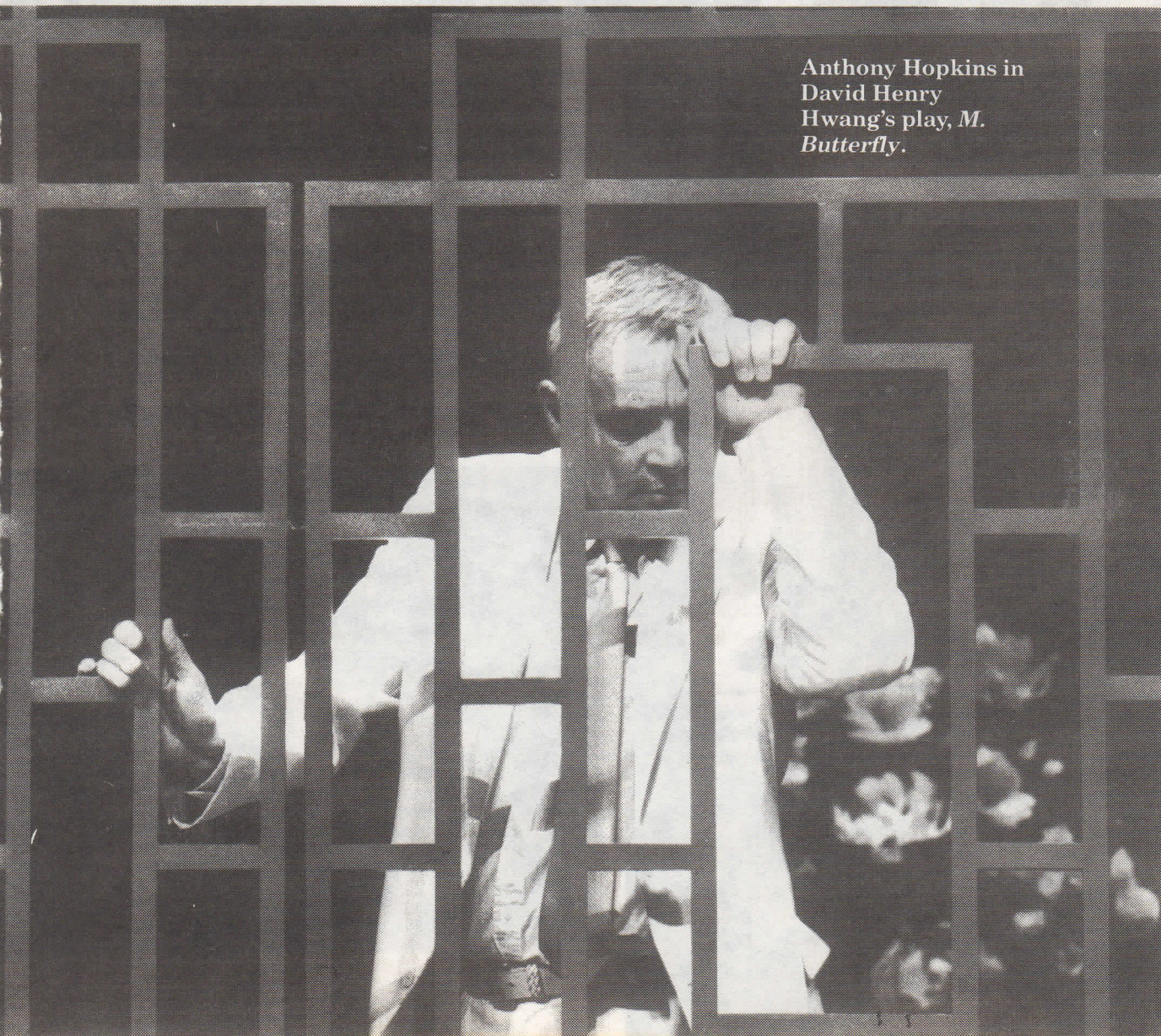
*Your decision to leave for America seventeen years ago was seen as a setback to your career in the British theater. What made you return?*

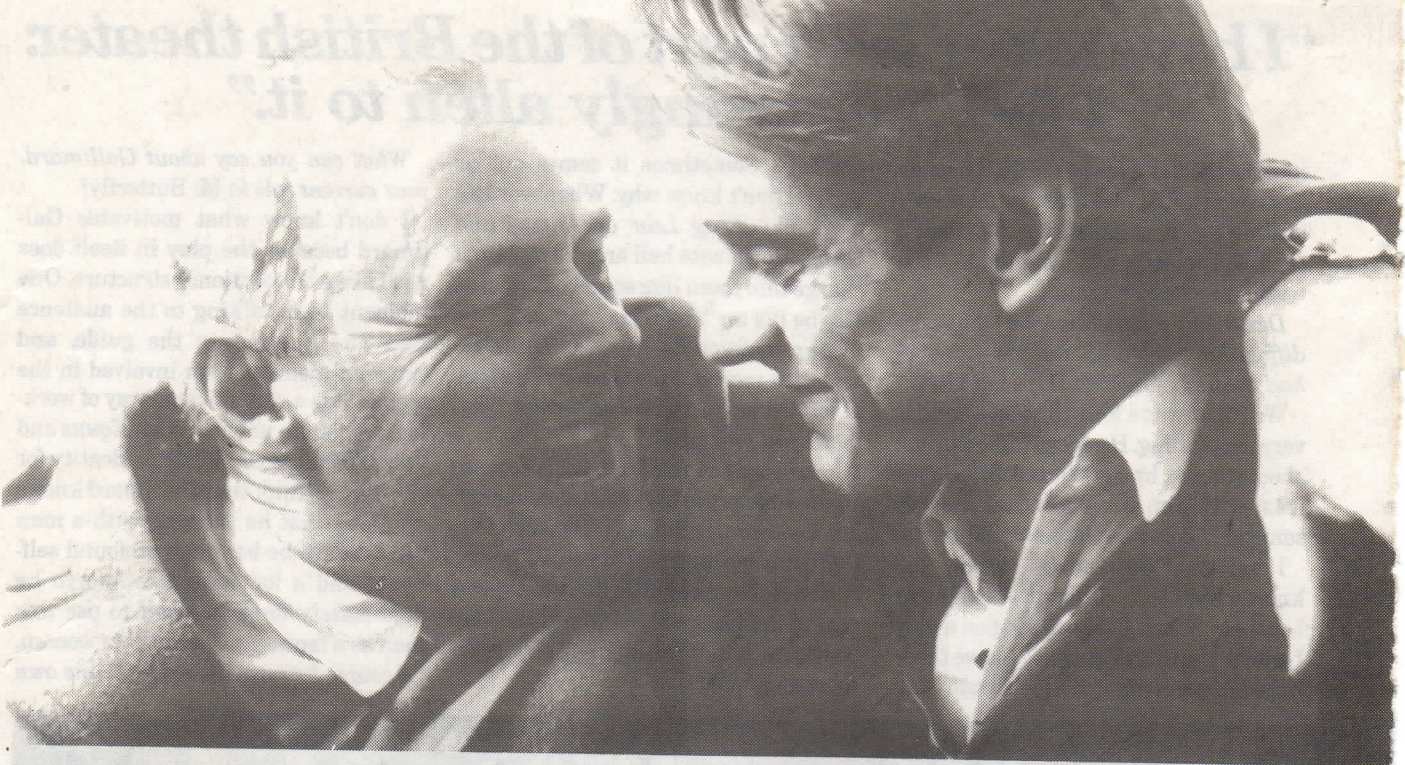
I accepted the role in *Pravda* because I wanted to prove to myself that I hadn't lost my courage. But once I was on stage there was nothing else to prove. I had no desire to play *Lear* or *Antony* but it was part of the National Theater deal. I am basically not interested in the great roles anymore.

*What can you say about Gallimard, your current role in *M. Butterfly*?*

I don't know what motivates Gallimard because the play in itself does not have a conventional structure. One moment I am talking to the audience like *The Entertainer*, the guide, and the next moment I am involved in the scenes. It is a very unusual way of working, even more unusual than *Equus* and very difficult to establish an identity for the man. I think that Gallimard knows all along that he is living with a man but because he has such profound self-doubt and a low sexual self-worth he deliberately forces himself to use this man as a fantasy of the delicate woman. Of course he pays the price for his own

Anthony Hopkins in David Henry Hwang's play, *M. Butterfly*.





***“I cannot spare my valuable time actually analyzing a part. I have done enough self-searching and self-analysis that I know what I can do.”***



John Haynes



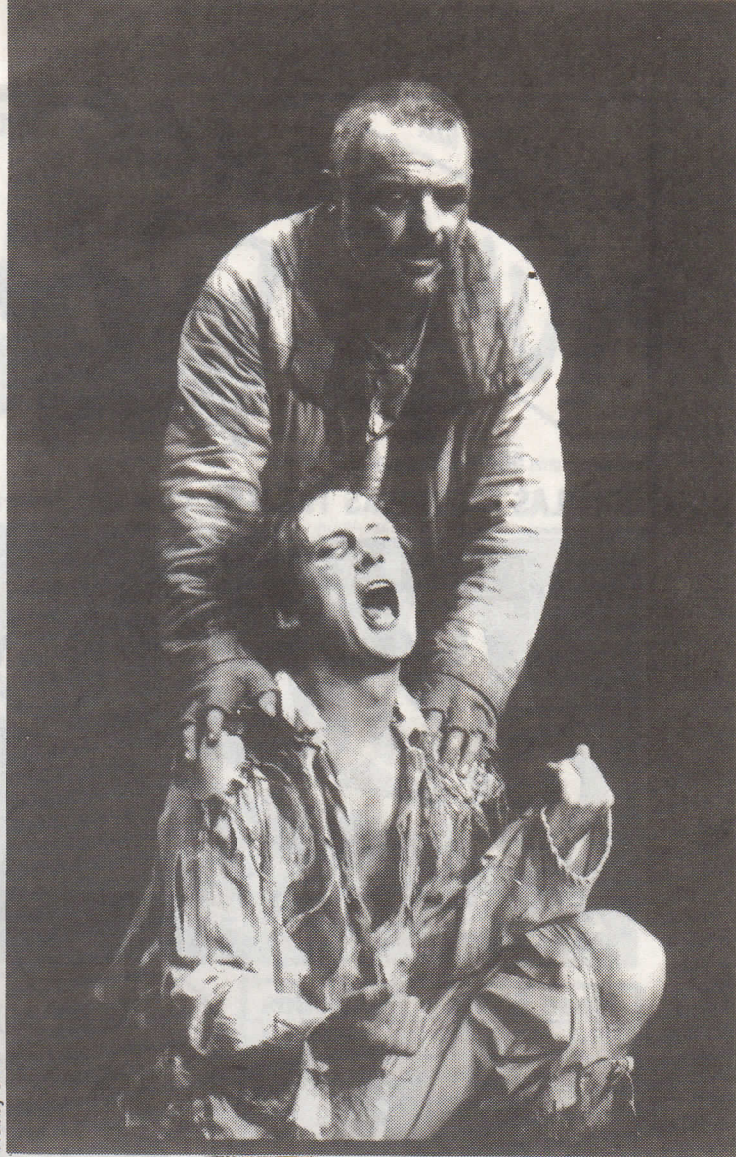


Nobby Clark



Nobby Clark

Susan Cook/Martha Swope



Pages 18-19, clockwise from top left: Anthony Hopkins and Jeremy Irons in the film, *A Chorus of Disapproval*, Hopkins with G.G. Goei in the London production of *M. Butterfly* at the Shaftesbury Theater, Billy Nighy as Edgar and Hopkins as Lear in the National Theater production of *King Lear*, Jane Alexander (l.), Hopkins, and Marsha Mason (r.) in Harold Pinter's *Old Times* at the Roundabout Theater (1984), Judi Dench and Hopkins in *Antony and Cleopatra* at the National Theater, Hopkins with G.G. Goei in *M. Butterfly*.

self-deception.

*How did you prepare for the part?*

I cannot spare my valuable time actually analyzing a part. I don't care about the deep analysis of a character. I have done enough self-searching and self-analysis that I know what I can do. I have a very limited range—though within that range I suppose I am quite good. But I am rather world weary of trying to analyze and dissect characters and that is the reason why I never want

to play Shakespeare again.

It was Olivier who taught me about analysis. He said: 'How can you analyze a part? We don't know.' I remember feeling a tremendous relief when he said, 'learn your lines, learn them so well that when you go into rehearsal you know them inside out.' From then on, for the six, seven or eight weeks if you are fortunate enough, it is analyzed for you subconsciously and, in fact, you come out into the part.

The process of acting is very odd actually, because sometimes if you are tired, and you don't feel like doing it, suddenly something extraordinary can happen on stage. And that is usually because you let the guards down and this huge energy will come out. I think that's why people in this business drink and take a lot of drugs—they try to enhance that. They even unconsciously try to put themselves into a position where they exhaust themselves. It's not

*the musical comedy hit!*

# Nunsense

"HILARIOUS!"  
Liz Smith



**4<sup>th</sup> 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 CD's

# Sardi's

234 West 44th Street 221-8440

**Head Shots • Portfolios**



**JIM MOORE**  
Photographer

**Specialist in the**  
**Performing Arts**

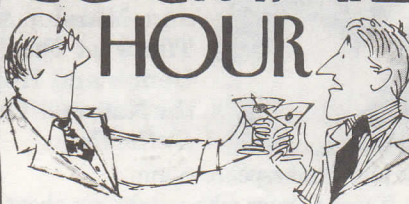
Call for information  
212•619•0152

**TheaterWeek Classifieds**  
announces the premiere of the  
**\$4. per line Classified Ad**

Call Today  
**(212)-627-2120**

**"A BEAUTY! THE LAUGHTER IS CONTINUOUS. AS FAST AS LIGHT AND MUCH FUNNIER!"**  
—Edith Oliver, The New Yorker

**THE COCKTAIL HOUR**



NANCY MARCHAND      HOLLAND TAYLOR  
RICHARD BACKUS      BURT EDWARDS

**THE COCKTAIL HOUR**  
A new comedy by  
A.R. GURNEY  
Directed by  
JACK O'BRIEN

Tix by Phone: (212) 580-1313

**PROMENADE THEATRE,**  
B'way and 76th St.

an efficient way of doing it, but I used to when I drank. I used to work very well on hangovers. Of course it's very dangerous and I am not prepared to pay the price.

*The critic Michael Billington once referred to you being a "muscular actor" in the "heavyweight" category. . .*

But that quality, although it is very useful, very startling, is a very limited quality. I am grounded and can't really take off. One is held by gravity, and in the classics you have to really be like a balloon. Olivier, Gielgud, Richardson, and people like that, have this finely tuned, larger range. They may not have the weight, but they are wonderful at speaking verse.

*You are, nevertheless, highly regarded as a classical actor.*

When you perform in Shakespeare you have to be a superb technician and have a very sensitive awareness of verse. I think that is particularly an Anglo Saxon gift. People say that the Welsh tend to be very musical. That maybe so, but I don't think that we are finely tuned. I sound very peasant. I am a Celtic peasant, very rough and very crude as an actor.

There are some wonderful classical actors in this country; people like Ian McKellan and Derek Jacobi are real creatures of the theater. They love it, they are almost carnal about the theater. It is a kind of appetite and I don't have that.

I have had a troubled relationship with the theater. It has been less trouble this time so I think I have learnt something. I have found something—some sort of peace—in the theater, but it is not enough.

*Does this mean that you will not be renewing your contract for M. Butterfly in October?*

I have reached a crossroads in my life. I realized at the National Theater, in fact, where I was offered some marvelous work, that something in me died. Some part of me, the great need to act, has died. I want to be more creative. I want to write and direct and withdraw gradually from acting.

*Any regrets at leaving the British theater?*

No, I don't think so. I have never felt a part of the British theater. I feel increasingly alien to it, now more than ever. Working here with this group of people

is wonderful, and it has caused me some anguish and some depression actually, because I realize that there is something in me that doesn't fit in.

I feel, in fact, that something is beginning to happen to me, you know. I think when you go through emotional, spiritual and psychic changes in your life there are lots of symptoms: deep depression, anxiety, emotional tearfulness and melancholia. I know I am getting glimmerings of another future; the fact that I am going to be more creative, I think, in the directing field. I am currently attempting to write a film script that I am going to direct next year.

I won't give up acting, but I think with the theater, for sometime anyway, this has to be the end of it.

*It seems as if your return to England to do Pravda tied up a lot of loose ends in your life.*

My life seems to be circles within circles. It has been an amazing journey. I have gone through a lot of upheaval and relatively painful times, not severely painful, but severe enough I suppose. But I have come out of them and learnt a great deal. I think coming back here to England has been quite an eye-opener, a revelation, because it has given me back a sense of strong self-esteem and I feel more confident. I just feel this yearning now to do something else because I am very restless.

But the restlessness is something I have been born with. Had I not married my present wife [Jenni] my life would have been a disaster. I probably would have died. I think I would have destroyed everything. I don't know what it is she does, but for the last fifteen years, whenever I start coming off the rails, she has given me stability. Now it's becoming too safe. I don't want to be too stable. I have got to be cured of the cure and just move on a bit. □

*Anthony Hopkins plays the Welsh director Dafydd in Michael Winner's film version of Alan Ayckbourn's A Chorus of Disapproval, which opens in New York this month. He can also be seen as the convict Magwitch in the Disney Channel's production of Charles Dickens's Great Expectations on cable TV. Too Good to Waste, an authorized biography of the actor by Quentin Falk, was published recently by Columbus Books in England.*

# Playwrights Horizons

## Theatre School

**Classes year-round  
in Acting, Directing & Playwriting with:  
Larry Arrick, Neal Bell, Andre Bishop, Jeni Breen,  
Dana Ivey, E. Katherine Kerr, Kevin Kuhlke,  
Ada Brown Mather, Robert Moss, Peter Parnell,  
Travis Preston, Willie Reale, Tim Sanford,  
Melodie Somers, Daniel Swee, Joan Vail Thorne,  
John Wulp, Dana Zeller-Alexis, Mark Zeller**  
**Call for a brochure (212) 967-1481**

### SHAKESPEARE 20 Plays on Computer Disk

READY TO USE WITH  
WordStar, WordPerfect, Microsoft Word,  
MacWrite, Professional Write,  
and most other word processors

Twenty plays: \$175

Antony & Cleopatra/As You Like It  
Comedy of Errors/Hamlet  
Henry IV 1 & 2/Henry V/Julius Caesar  
Lear/Macbeth/Merchant of Venice  
Midsummer Night's Dream/Much Ado  
about Nothing/Othello/Richard II  
Richard III/Romeo & Juliet/Taming of  
the Shrew/Tempest/Twelfth Night

Four formats available:

5¼" IBM            3½" Macintosh  
3½" IBM            3½" Apple-GS

For more information, or to order by  
Visa/MC, call (800) 446-2089. Or send  
check or credit card information to:

SHAKESPEARE ON DISK  
PO Box 299, Clinton Corners, NY 12514

### E. Katherine Kerr's **CREATIVE EXPLOSION**



A TWO DAY WORKSHOP  
FOR ACTORS, DIRECTORS,  
SINGERS AND WRITERS  
THAT CREATES THE ENERGY  
FOR BREAKTHROUGH

FEE: \$250

(212) 757-6300

## The Drama Book Shop, Inc.

Founded in 1921 by the  
New York Drama League

Specializing in books on film and all aspects of the  
performing arts.  
Scores and vocal selections available.  
Books published in other countries.  
Folkwear patterns.

723 Seventh Ave.  
(corner of 48th St., 2nd floor)  
New York, NY 10019  
(212) 944-0595  
Mon.-Fri. 9:30-7:00 (Wed. until 6:00)  
Sat. 10:30-5:30 Sun. 12:00-5:00



Annotated Bibliographies available upon request.  
Please indicate subject.