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Special Entertainment Issue

# IN NEW YORK

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## Moving On Mary-Louise Parker Does it All

CELEBRITIES HEAT UP  
THE GREAT WHITE WAY





# FROM SCREEN TO STAGE



Facing page: Currently treading the boards are the familiar faces of Tom Hanks (in *Forrest Gump*, top), Jane Lynch (from *Glee*, bottom) and Bette Midler (in *Beaches*, right). This page: One Divine Miss M portrays another—Bette Midler as agent Sue Mengers in *I'll Eat You Last: A Chat With Sue Mengers*.

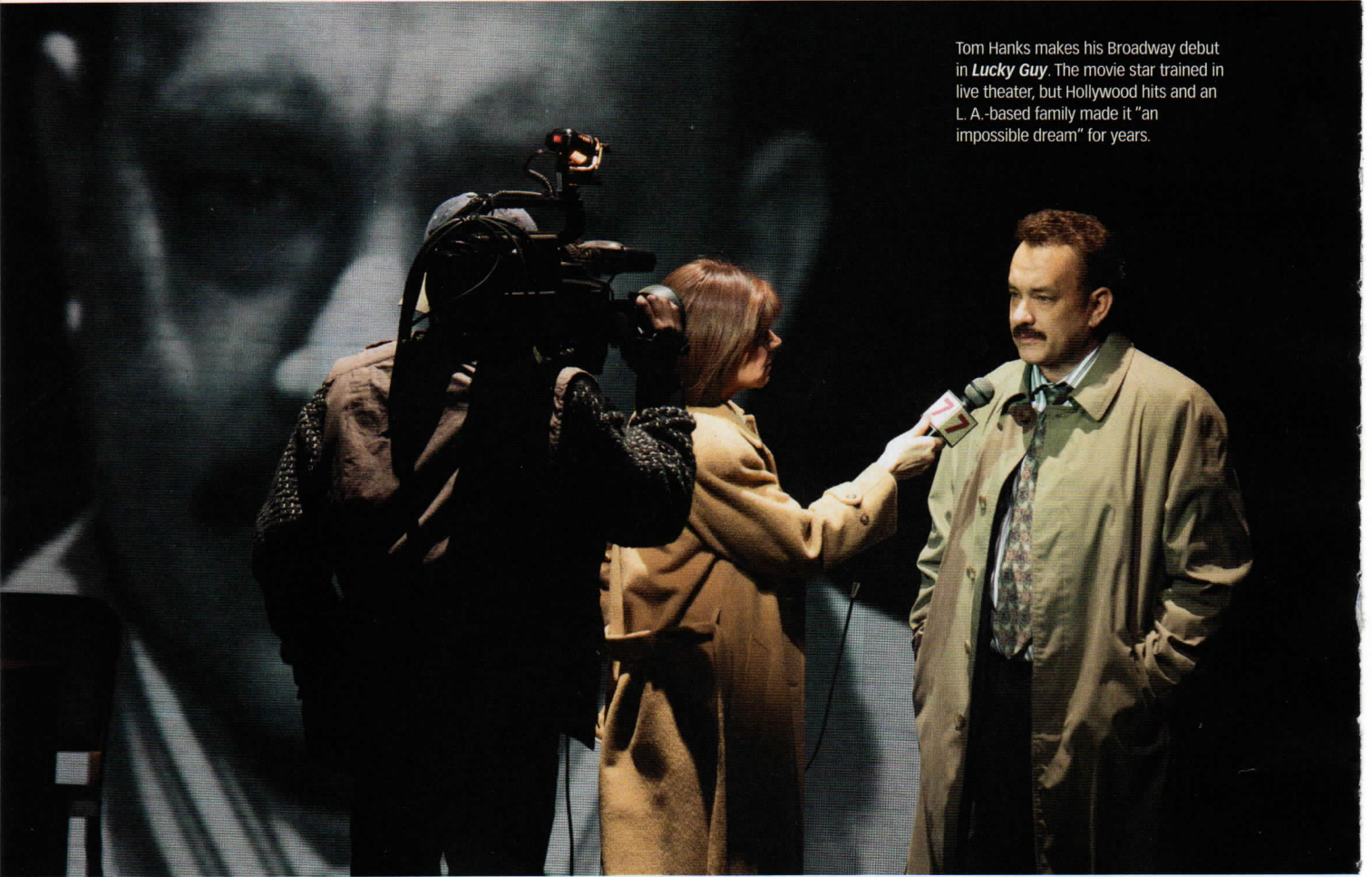
PHOTOS: TOM HANKS, PARAMOUNT PICTURES/PHOTOFEST; JANE LYNCH, COURTESY OF FOX; BETTE MIDLER, TOUCHSTONE PICTURES/PHOTOFEST; I'LL EAT YOU LAST, RICHARD TERMINI

SEEMS LIKE MORE STARS THAN THERE ARE IN HOLLYWOOD ARE ON BROADWAY THESE DAYS. WHY DO FILM AND TV BIG SHOTS TAKE PAY CUTS, LEAVE BEHIND FAMILY, FORGO WELL-DESERVED DOWNTIME TO DO LIVE THEATER? READ ON, AS THE LUMINARIES EXPLAIN WHY THEY CAN'T STAY AWAY FROM THE NYC STAGE.  
BY GERARD RAYMOND



A crowd of fans throngs the stage door at the Broadhurst Theatre, waiting for Tom Hanks. Nearby, in Shubert Alley, another group waits patiently outside the Booth Theatre, eager for a glimpse of Bette Midler. Over at the Stephen Sondheim, meanwhile, the tension mounts as devotees hope that Cicely Tyson will emerge. There's definitely a cinematic cast to the star power glittering on the Great White Way this summer, with faces famed for their screen work

Tom Hanks makes his Broadway debut in *Lucky Guy*. The movie star trained in live theater, but Hollywood hits and an L. A.-based family made it "an impossible dream" for years.



dominating the marquee. The current cluster is coincidence to some extent. But it also reflects how Broadway remains a magnet for film and video thespians. "Theater is like the *Good Housekeeping* seal of approval for actors," says Charlotte St. Martin, executive director of The Broadway League, the trade organization for theater owners and producers. "With movies and television you get many takes that you can improve on, but live theater—it's considered the epitome of great acting."

It's also "the hardest and most fun work you can imagine," says Tom Hanks, who is making his Broadway debut

in *Lucky Guy* (Broadhurst Theatre, 235 W. 44th St., 212.239.6200, thru Jul. 3). The two-time Oscar winner originally trained as a stage actor, trying unsuccessfully to work in New York in the 1970s. After he became a movie star, casting doors would have doubtless swung open, but in between living in Los Angeles and raising kids, Broadway became "an impossible dream": "You've got to move a lot of boulders in order to be able to take the eight months out of your life in order to do it," he explains. So, how and why *Lucky Guy*, in which he plays real-life, controversial tabloid reporter Mike McAlary? "I did this to hang out

PHOTOS: LUCKY GUY: JOAN MARCUS; VANVIA AND SONIA AND MASHA AND SPIKE: CAROL ROSEGG





Associated with action films, Sigourney Weaver (with David Hyde-Pierce) loves doing Christopher Durang's plays, like *Vanya and Sonia* and *Masha and Spike*.

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 —The Broadway League Executive Director Charlotte St. Martin

with Nora,” Hanks says—Nora being Nora Ephron, the screenwriter/director of his movie hits *Sleepless in Seattle* and *You’ve Got Mail*, who died of cancer last June.

It helped that Hanks’ kids are grown; for cast-mate Courtney B. Vance, *Lucky Guy* means a temporary absence from his 7-year-old twins in Los Angeles. “We had to figure out what the new rhythm is, about Dad not being in their lives for six months; how to remain in contact via fiber optics and to arrange visits back and forth. It was a very topsy-turvy rehearsal period for us,” he recalls, explaining that his wife, actress Angela Bassett, was simultaneously in New York shooting a movie (the twins stayed with Grandma on the West Coast). Trained in theater, Vance has several stage credits, last appearing on Broadway in *Six Degrees of Separation* in the early ’90s. Since then, he has worked primarily

in film and TV, notably a five-year stint in *Law & Order: Criminal Intent*. Returning to live theater, he says, “everything comes back very quickly, except for the vocal muscles. You have to get onstage to regain the strength to do it eight times a week without wearing yourself out.”

Jane Lynch, who stars as the Glee Club-hating coach on TV’s *Glee*, also carved out time to move east from Los Angeles to make her Broadway debut as the moppet-hating orphanage matron Miss Hannigan in the musical *Annie* (Palace Theatre, 1564 Broadway, 877.250.2929, thru Jul. 14). “I love doing a piece from beginning to end without stopping, having that kind of energy and focus, and the rapport with the audience,” she explains. “It can’t be beaten.” Performing on Broadway means she is working all through her summer hiatus from the hit FOX-TV series. But, says



Lynch, "I like being busy and I'm excited to spend a chunk of time in New York. I like having days free and nights always engaged." And, she adds, she gets to do something she just can't do at home: "Walking! Walking to the theater, walking around town and through Central Park."

Cicely Tyson says she's found "the perfect project" in *The Trip to Bountiful* (Stephen Sondheim Theatre, 124 W. 43rd St., 212.239.6200, thru Sept. 1). The revival of Horton Foote's poignant 1953 drama about a woman who yearns to return to her Texas home town marks Tyson's return to the New York stage after a 30-year absence; nevertheless, live theater is "my true home," insists the Man-

hattan native who became an icon of African-American womanhood in films and TV miniseries such as *Souder* and *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*. Well known for picking parts with social significance, the octogenarian actor notes that these days "elders are tossed aside or placed in a home, totally disregarded by family members or close friends;" she would like the audience to leave with a "real appreciation for what we still have to offer." By contrast, her co-star, Oscar-winner Cuba Gooding Jr., is making his professional stage debut playing Tyson's son. "One big difference between film and stage is the ability, per the course of the run, to grow with your character," says Gooding.

Moving back and forth from stage to screen enables actor Alan Cumming "to bring a fresh energy to everything I do."



Screen gems: Cicely Tyson and Cuba Gooding Jr. in *The Trip to Bountiful* (her first Broadway show in 30 years, his first ever).



Alan Cumming thrives on interspersing experimental dramas like his one-man *Macbeth* with TV series like *The Good Wife*.



“When you film a movie you have to say goodbye,” he elaborates. “Onstage, you get to inhabit the role for much longer and connect with audiences over and over.”

In contrast to first-timers and returning prodigals, other familiar film faces shuttle fairly regularly between screen and stage. Alan Cumming, recognizable as campaign manager Eli Gold on the TV series *The Good Wife*, has, in fact, been on Broadway three times in the last 15 years, and currently stars in a one-man version of *Macbeth* (Ethel Barrymore Theatre, 243 W. 47th St., 212.239.6200, thru Jul. 14). A New York resident, the Scottish-born actor deems the variety crucial to his craft: “I’m able to bring a fresh energy to everything I do because each project is so different from the last thing I’ve done—it’s just how I work best,” he says. Plus, “I love having separate fan bases.”

Similarly, Sigourney Weaver is known around the world for her kick-ass roles in the *Alien* movies and *Avatar*, but is no stranger to the New York stage, appearing regularly both on and Off-Broadway—especially whenever a play by Christopher Durang is involved. She’s currently embodying a neurotically, hilariously self-centered actress in Durang’s new Chekhov takeoff, *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike* (John Golden Theatre, 252 W. 45th St., 212.239.6200,

thru Jun. 30). “I’ve always felt irrationally at home in his world,” says Weaver of her Yale School of Drama classmate’s work. “The roles are so meaty, and regardless of size, you are asked to throw yourself inside out to show the good and the bad.” Weaver felt so “at home,” in fact, that when the play, originally slated for a limited Lincoln Center run, transferred to Broadway, she agreed to stay with it, up until she goes off to film the sequel to *Avatar* this summer.

When playwrights wish upon a star, they can get lucky. Bette Midler was John Logan’s first choice to impersonate Sue Mengers, formidable 1970s Hollywood super agent, in his one-woman work *I’ll Eat You Last: A Chat With Sue Mengers* (Booth Theatre, 222 W. 45th St., 212.239.6200, thru Jun. 30). “You need someone who can be wickedly funny and smart, and who can hold the audience with nothing but her voice, just talking,” says Logan. It was something of a stretch for concert and movie star Midler, who literally hadn’t done any legitimate theater since making her Broadway debut in the original production of *Fiddler on the Roof* in the 1960s. She agreed to do Sue because “actors are supposed to take jobs that will challenge you, or force fans to see you in a different light.” That’s what we all hope for, when the stars come out to shine on Broadway.