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National Museum of African American History and Culture

Playbill for Further Mo'

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A THEATERGOER'S NOTEBOOK by Kathy Henderson

SHAKESPEARE BY PAPP

Lining up for free tickets to Shakespeare in the Park has become a beloved summer ritual in the 28 years since Joseph Papp inaugurated the series from the back of a flatbed truck. Thinking back to our own favorite evenings at the Delacorte (Meryl Streep, Raul Julia in *The Taming of the Shrew*; Kevin Kline, Blythe Danner in *Much Ado about Nothing*), we decided to ask Mr. Papp to share his special memories of Shakespeare under the stars.

"One of the best *Romeo and Juliets* we ever did was the very first production in Central Park," he recalls. "The young woman's name was Bryarly Lee, and she had an extraordinary bearing and carriage. The young men (Stephen Joyce) was a very interesting actor; they were both so young and fragile."

"In the late sixties, we were in desperate debt, as usual, and decided to do the entire *Wars of the Roses* in a single night. Starting at dusk we did Henry IV, Parts I and II, and ended with Richard III. At sunrise, we were still there, and the cast of *Hair* came over and sang 'Let the Sunshine In.'"

Papp's favorite recent productions include *Cymbeline*, *Coriolanus* and *A Winter's Tale* at The Public and Kevin Kline's work in *Hamlet*, *Henry V* and *Richard III*. "I'm looking forward to seeing Denzel Washington play Richard," he adds, referring to the current attraction at the Delacorte.

Reflecting on the loyalty of audiences in the park, Papp says, "we have this wonderful hard-core group that refuses to leave, even when the rains come. They'll sit drenched to the gills. Last year, we had people starting to get on line the night before."

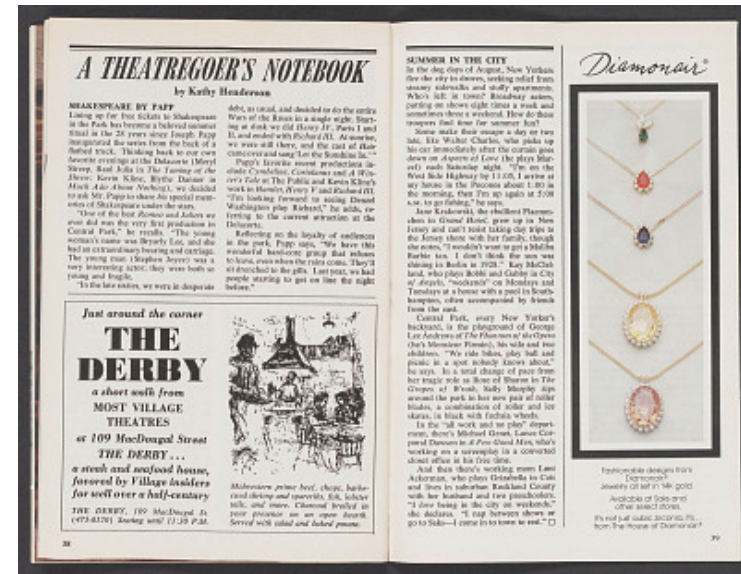
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SUMMER IN THE CITY

In the dog days of August, New Yorkers flee the city in droves, seeking relief from steamy sidewalks and stuffy apartments. Who's left in town? Broadway actors, putting on shows eight times a week and sometimes three a weekend. How do these troopers find time for summer fun?

Some make their escape a day or two late, like Walter Charles, who picks up his car immediately after the curtain goes down on *Aspects of Love* (he plays Marcel) each Saturday night. "I'm on the West Side Highway by 11:05, I arrive at my house in the Poconos about 1:00 in the morning, then I'm up again at 5:00 A.M. to go fishing," he says.

Jane Krakowski, the ebullient Flaemmchen in *Grand Hotel*, grew up in New Jersey and can't resist taking day trips to the Jersey shore with her family, though she notes, "I wouldn't want to get a Malibu Barbie tan. I don't think the sun was shining in Berlin 1928." Kay McClelland, who plays Bobbi and Gabby in *City of Angels*, "weekends" on Mondays and Tuesdays at a house with a pool in Southampton often accompanied by friends from the cast.

Central Park, every New Yorker's backyard, is the playground of George Lee Andrews of *The Phantom of the Opera* (he's Monsieur Firmin), his wife and two children. "We ride bikes, play ball and picnic in a spot nobody knows about," he says. In a total change of pace from her tragic role as Rose of Sharon in *The Grapes of Wrath*, Sally Murphy zips around the park in her new pair of roller blades, a combination of roller and ice skates, in black with fuchsia wheels.

In the "all work and no play" department, there's Michael Genet, Lance Corporal Dawson in *A Few Good Men*, who's working on a screenplay in a converted closet office in his free time.

And then there's working mom Loni Ackerman, who plays Grizabella in *Cats* and lives in suburban Rockland County with her husband and two preschoolers. "I love being in the city on weekends," she declares "I nap between shows or go to Saks-I come in to town to rest."

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