



Smithsonian Institution

National Museum of African American History and Culture

Playbill for Ma Rainey's Black Bottom

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OLYMPIC GOLD

After a triumphant sprint through Europe and Los Angeles, the Royal Shakespeare Company arrives on Broadway

[[image - color photograph of Sinead Cusack and Derek Jacobi in RSC's Much Ado About Nothing at the Gershwin Theatre. The two actors also star in Cyrano de Bergerac which plays in repertory with Much Ado.]]

In a reactionary time, the theatre is inclined to start looking for matinee idols as well as tap shoes and there can be no doubt that in Derek Jacobi the Royal Shakespeare Company have found themselves Britain's most romantic leading classical actor since the long-lost 1950's when Richard Burton and John Neville used to swap roles at the Old Vic to teenage cheers from the gallery. But with the productions of Cyrano de Bergerac and Much Ado About Nothing, which open on Broadway this month after a triumphant European tour and a season at the L.A. Olympic Arts Festival, Jacobi and his Gaelic co-star Sinead Cusack are reaching the end of a punishing two-year stint.

At Stratford-on-Avon, the Barbican in London and his recent travels, Jacobi has been playing not only Benedict and Cyrano but also Prospero in The Tempest and Peer Gynt, sometimes achieving all four in a single week. Miss Cusack (though she has only recently joined the Cyrano company as the ravishing Roxane) has been working no less hard. Theirs is a purely professional partnership, Miss Cusack being privately, if sometimes stormily, married to another recent Broadway star from the other side of the Atlantic, Jeremy Irons, and although romantic-star duos have not been exactly Stratford's house style since the great days of the Oliviers, there can be no doubt that public enthusiasm for the Jacobi-Cusack team has been stronger in both Europe and America than for any other Shakespeareans of recent times.

It helps, of course, that both Much Ado and Rostand's Cyrano are hugely romantic plays (now in superb new productions by the RSC's joint artistic director Terry

by Sheridan Morley

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[[advertisement]]

[[image - man and woman about to kiss an open bottle of Cointreau Liqueur Specialite]]

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[[/advertisement]]



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