



Smithsonian Institution

National Museum of African American History and Culture

Playbill for Ma Rainey's Black Bottom

Extracted on Jan-30-2023 02:15:19

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Both Cyrano and Much Ado have caught a moment when there's a move towards a lyrical kind of stage romance

[[image - black & white photograph of Derek Jacobi as Cyrano de Bergerac]]

Hands), and they both seem to have caught a moment in theatergoing taste when there is a distance move away from the chillier and more academic classic and back towards a more lyrical and picturesque kind of stage romance. Certainly Cyrano, the more recent of the two productions, is for all who love a parade. The adaptation/translation is by the novelist Anthony Burgess who first worked on the play as a short-lived Broadway musical for Christopher Plummer more than a decade ago, and though this is now a somewhat revised text, certain of the longer speeches still sound as if they could have done with a with a musical accompaniment by Stephen Sondheim or at the very least Andrew Lloyd Webber. In the title role Jacobi himself, who has been obsessed with Cyrano for very nearly as long as Burgess, goes all out for the voice beautiful and the gorgeous profile (even the famously long nose is here trimmed to manageable proportions), while Terry Hand's marvelously agile and active production is forever allowing its star to leap into the kind of poses that must have been used to advertise the play on its original turn-of-the century posters.

What we have in Cyrano is a curiously sexless pageant dedicated to chivalry and mindless heroism: Early critics find it a useful antidote to the new-fangled neuroses of Ibsen and Strindberg, and indeed it still works much after the fashion of a Douglas Fairbanks silent movie with wonderful set-piece highlights like the arrival of Roxane on the battlefield or the great death in the orchard where both Cyrano and his virginal beloved seemed to be slowly drowning in a sea of falling leaves.

The same director's equally glamorous Much Ado, set in the period of King Charles I, is a strong companion piece not only because of the cross-casting but more importantly because it too is about the importance of distinguishing between fashionable surface sentiment and genuine emotion. In both plays Jacobi grows from court jester to tragic hero through the power of love, and in both plays Cusack is the object of that love. Both productions also star the designer Ralph Koltai, whose sets are little short of magical, and if overall Cyrano seems to win by a nose, at least for English audiences, that may well have been because the play was the less familiar of the two - Much Ado has been much revived in both London and Stratford of late.

Not surprisingly, Jacobi now feels like a marathon runner at the end of a long Olympic Arts spring, "hanging on by an eyelash" as he always says after a two-year theatrical glory trip which has won him a handful of British stage awards and may well line him up for a Tony if Broadway's love affair with the London stage is not yet quite over:

"I know," he said recently, "that there will probably never be times like this for me again. There is a small voice inside me saying, 'Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,' but I try not to listen to it." Now 46 and resolutely unmarried, Jacobi has dedicated his life wholeheartedly to the business of being an actor, though his arrival

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[[advertisement]]

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Taste Victory!

Laser Technology Victorious in Cracking Taste Barrier!

[[four colored lines]]

[[image - boxed drawing of filter end of cigarette in 2 sections with paper wrap underneath & sides, open at top to expose the 2 sections. text describes different parts: FILTER FIBER, FLAVOR CHAMBER, LASER SLOTS, and MOUTHPIECE]]

[[image - color drawing of two TRUE cigarette packs]]

New True laser-cut "flavor chamber" filter improves taste...without increasing tar! Test it against the only taste that counts. Yours!

[[image - color photograph of a man and woman each holding a cigarette]].
It tastes too good to be True.

NEW BREAKTHROUGH TRUE

[[BOXED TEXT]]
Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined That Cigarette Smoking Is Dangerous to Your Health.
[[/BOXED TEXT]]

Regular: 4 mg. "tar", 0.5 mg. nicotine;
Menthol: 5 mg. "tar", 0.5 mg. nicotine,
av. per cigarette by FTC Method.

[[/advertisement]]

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