

Peters, who delivers the most moving and fearless portrayal of this character I've seen to date. While the entire cast is very fine and utterly committed to Mendes' heart of darkness vision, it is Peters who haunts the memory.

Witnessing her vicious, volcanic rendition of "Everything's Coming Up Roses" or her emotionally naked "Rose's Turn" is almost painful, but it is the multitude of quiet subtleties that make her unforgettable. Just watch the grim, relentless need and ugly desperation on her face as she sees her daughters perform, and if you don't feel both pity and terror you're dead.



Bernadette Peters is Gypsy Rose Lee

here she gives a courageous performance that is often unwatchable in its intensity—and yet utterly mesmerizing. This is the most crazed Mary Tyrone in history—one minute a pathetic, cringing, trembling wreck, the next a hysterically violent harpy. In a flash she can move from wrenching, animalistic sobs to a lucid honesty that freezes the blood. It is quite the piece of work.

Ms. Redgrave is matched, however, by her fellow cast members. Brian Dennehy is perhaps a bit too fleshy and rough-edged to be the ideal James Tyrone, but he man-

ages to pull off the role with power and tragic stature. Robert Sean Leonard is perfect casting as the poetic Edmund, and he gives a touching performance, but it is Philip Seymour Hoffman (who you remember from such roles as the creepy reporter in *Red Dragon* and doomed friend Freddie in *The Talented Mr. Ripley*) who truly delivers with an account of the tormented Jamie so raw and dangerous it's harrowing to watch.

Hoffman is also responsible for directing one of the off-Broadway season's highlights—a beautifully realized production of Stephen Adly Guirgis' play *Our Lady of 121st Street*. Guirgis is a passionate new voice in the theater, and this study of misfits and lowlifes has a gut-punching acid intensity. As performed by a blistering cast who seem to not so much act as live their roles, this is one strong evening of theater.

Would that the season's most praised new Broadway drama packed the same punch. Richard Greenberg is a marvelous playwright, but I was left cold by his Tony-winning *Take Me Out*. The coming out of a gay baseball star is certainly ripe, not to mention timely, material for dramatic conflict, but this unwieldy script never quite came together for me as either social drama or metaphor.

There is no faulting Joe Mantello's polished direction or the fine cast. And a good enough reason to see the show is the superb performance of gay actor Denis O'Hare as a gently fey gay man who finds an ecstatic reason for living in the mysteries of baseball. It's one of the most touching and funny characters to grace this or any other season.

There are other small delights to be found on New York stages this year. Jonathan Tollins, the author of the portentous *Twilight of the Golds*, has come back with a far more effective new work called *The Last Sunday in June*. The conceit here is that for the first half of a somewhat slight one-act we seem to be watching a self-referential compendium of every gay play written since 1969. But then things start to take a surprising turn, and the last half of the evening gets into some decidedly murky waters.

Rounding out this highly enjoyable season is the off-Broadway cult hit *Zanna, Don't!*, a delightful trifle with a nice little satiric sting. The style is Disney High School musical, but the gimmick is that all the Ken and Barbie apple pie students are gay and that the leading couple must hide their shocking hetero romance.

Zanna, Don't! delights with a peppy score and often deliriously funny book and lyrics, and the cast perform with the perky panache of eager cheerleaders. As in your whole trip to the stage in New York City this year, what's not to love? [A]

For ticket information visit www.broadway.com.

JON KRETZU is associate artistic director of Portland's Artists Repertory Theatre and the biggest theater queen you're ever apt to meet.

Another remarkable mother is on stage over at the Plymouth Theatre, where Robert Falls' production of Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey Into Night* is the dramatic highlight of the year. This lacerating family drama, "written in tears and blood," demands everything from its cast, and the current revival's quartet is thrilling.

Leading the pack is Vanessa Redgrave's already legendary portrait of Mary Tyrone, the family's haunted, drug-addicted matriarch. She is an astonishing actress who works without a net, and

Broadway bridge

Tony Awards puts a face on queer for TV viewers nationwide

BY JIM RADOSTA

We certainly didn't need any more evidence that the Great White Way is queer central, but the 57th annual Tony Awards removed any doubt June 8.



Scott Wittman (left) and Marc Shaiman smooch during the 57th annual Tony Awards

The ceremony included a same-sex smooch between Marc Shaiman and Scott Wittman, personal and professional partners for 25 years, who were honored for the score of *Hairspray*. The musical version of queer director John Waters' 1988 cult film swept with eight awards altogether, including a Best Actor trophy for legendary actor and playwright Harvey Fierstein, who filled the high heels of the late, great Divine.

But wait—there's more queer accolades. *Take Me Out*, a play about a gay baseball player that features generous amounts of full-frontal nudity, won Best Play and Best Featured Actor in a Play for Denis O'Hare, who thanked his boyfriend sitting in the audience.

Michele Pawk, who was named Best Featured Actress in a Play for her role in *Hollywood Arms*, summed up the evening best: "I have never been more proud to be a member of this community. Men kissing each other on stage. Drag queens. Children. It's a perfect world. As it should be." [A]

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