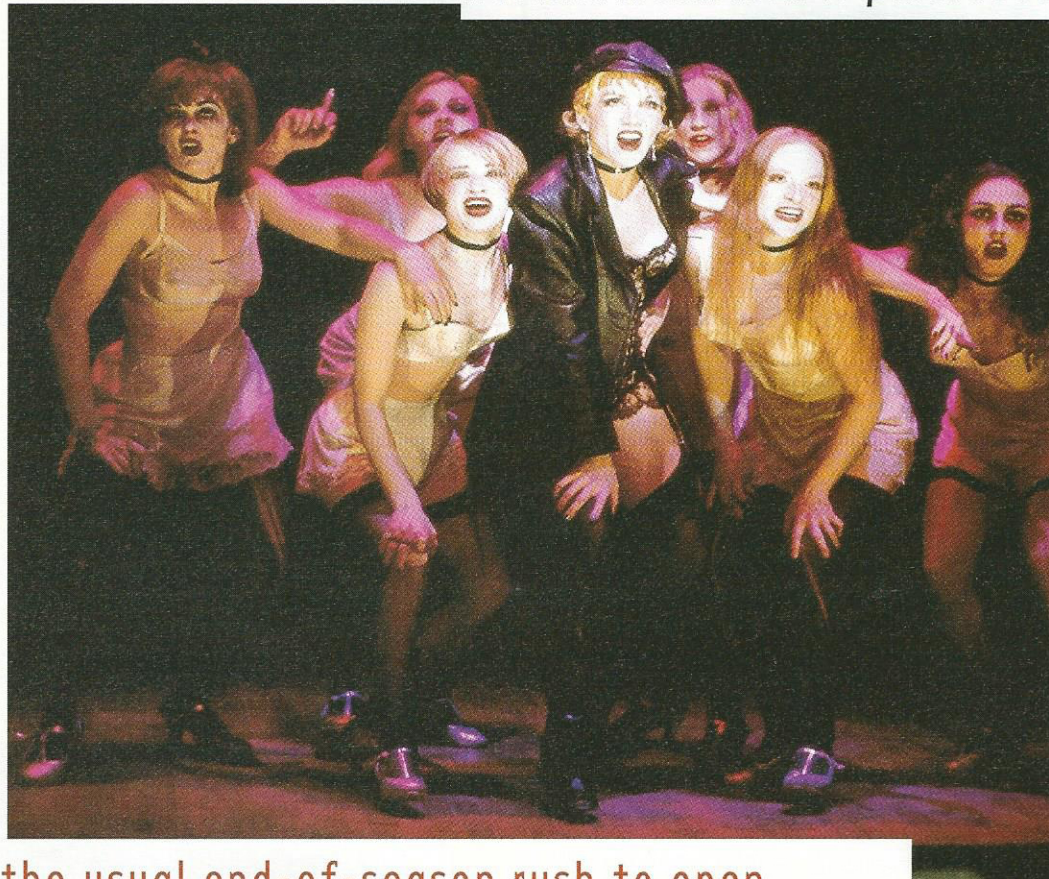


Cabell & Baillie "Onstage"

> Broadway's
duelling critics . . .



Natasha Richardson is purrrfectly kittenish.



In the usual end-of-season rush to open before the Tony eligibility deadline, a host of new shows opened on the cusp of summer.

NAUGHTY NAZIS>CABARET

Cabell> Even before the show begins, the ambiance takes you back to hedonistic pre-Nazi Berlin: the tawdry lobby, the beefy and busty waitresses in nothing but black leather vests, the tufted leopard banquettes, the red lamp lit tables. Alan Cumming exposes the audience to a daring new interpretation of the decadent classic. Natasha Richardson is purrrfectly kittenish; the rest of the troupe—John Benjamin Hickey, Mary Louise Parker, and Ron Rifkin—make up

Broadway's finest ensemble cast.

Baillie> Though neither Richardson nor Cummings have your typical Broadway voice, they are "perfectly marvelous." Cummings is chilling as the emcee. Rifkin and Mary Louise Parker tear your heart out as Shultz and Schneider, while John Benjamin Hickey brings to life the normally bland role of Cliff. Unlike those in the original production, Patrick Vaccariello and the Kit Kat Band's characters were completely fleshed out; they piqued my interest throughout the show.

Cabaret

Kit Kat Club
124 West. 43 Street

High Society

St. James Theatre
246 West. 44 Street

A View from the Bridge

Neil Simon Theatre
250 West 52 Street

The Judas Kiss

Broadhurst Theatre
235 West 44 Street

The Beauty Queen of Leenane

Walter Kerr Theatre
219 West 48 Street

For tickets:

call Tele-Charge (239-6200) or
Ticketmaster (307-4100).

A SOCIAL BORE> HIGH SOCIETY

Cabell> Packed with a *GQ/Vogue* cast of Broadway veterans with booming voices, the first act adds up to a

yawn. Melissa Errico may look and sing like a goddess, but her acting leaves something to be desired. Ditto for Marc Kudisch, whose fine talents are wasted on the underdeveloped character of George. Having said that, Act Two is really quite good. Daniel McDonald is an irascible charmer, but it's veterans John McMartin and Randy Graff who consistently prove they've "Got That Thing." Let's not forget Anna Kendrick, who plays Dinah and steals every scene. She's pure dynamite!

Baillie> Though all the right elements are there, *High Society* still does not make my A-list. Enchanting Melissa Errico sings the daylights out of each song.

Daniel McDonald and Marc Kudisch look good while crooning beautifully. However, the trio never connect. The best moments come when the sensational Randy Graff struts her stuff to the number "Right Guy" and when the irresistible Stephen Bogardus sings "You're Sensational." After all, how bad can an evening of Cole Porter ditties be?

A BREATHTAKING VIEW> A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

Cabell> Anthony LaPaglia easily turns in this season's most gritty and disturbing performance, though Allison Janney, as his wife, is not far behind. The nubile Morgan Brittany plays the naive siren stunningly, sparking the fire of LaPaglia's raging incestuous desires. Though Arthur Miller expanded this one-act to a semi-full-length show, the book is still underdeveloped and many of the characters are underwritten. The cast and director Michael Mayer are the reasons for the kudos of this production.

Baillie> Some of the best performances of the season can be found in *A View From The Bridge*, the classic that has been revived in this gutsy production. Who could guess that one of the underage stars of *Clueless* could captivate Broadway audiences with her performance? Congratulations Brittany.

THE KISS OF DEATH> THE JUDAS KISS

Cabell> *Judas Kiss* literally opens with a bang, as a naked maid and porter inexplicably warm up the linens for the arrival of Oscar Wilde. Though the first act is somewhat enjoyable—filled with a fine performance by Liam Neeson as the gilded wit and Tom Hollander as his pouting little lord

boy toy—the second act is one of the most horrifying experiences in the history of modern theatre. See act one, then walk across the street to the St. James and see act two of *High Society*, and you'll have a salvageable evening.

Baillie> Although Neeson is magnetic as Wilde, this portrayal of the acclaimed wit's no-win relationship with Lord Alfred Douglas (Bosie) is a bore. It's better played in *Gross Indecency*. Import Tom Hollander plays Douglas as such a simpering, self-absorbed twit that you wonder how Wilde, a man of wit, intelligence, and charm, could love him.

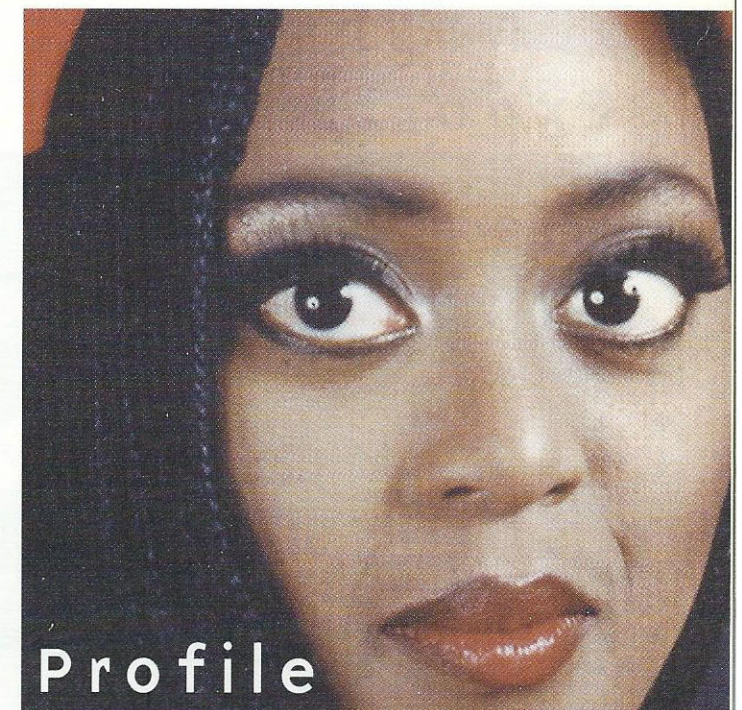
A FLAWED BEAUTY> THE BEAUTY QUEEN OF LEENANE

Cabell> This Irish Tugboat Annie-goes-to-the-Ozarks sent me home to light a candle in homage to Tennessee Williams. Anna Manahan as Mag Folan was amazingly demented, like the fat crazy witch in a Bugs Bunny cartoon; Marie Mullen as Maureen Folan gave a fine performance as the endlessly victimized daughter. But, unfortunately, the play didn't come together.

Baillie> I don't get it. Sean McDonough has written yet another small-Irish-town drama about an aging manipulative mother and her spinster daughter who wishes for a happy life. Although the show offers some fine performances, the script is often slow and flat. *Beauty Queen of Leenane* is a third runner-up.★

> by Robert W. Cabell
and Dan Baillie

THEATRE



Profile

>by Ellis Nassour

TSIDII LE LOKA

RAFIKI, THE LION KING

Picture elephants, rhinos, lions, crocodiles, wildebeests, gazelles and antelopes sauntering down the aisles of the New Amsterdam Theatre—not to mention colorful birds, giraffes, hornbills, a meerkat and a flatulent warthog onstage. So how did Tsidi Le Loka steal the show? All too easily. Onstage, her authentic make-up and costuming as the shaman priestess all but hide the striking beauty of the stylish actress, who could easily pass for a high fashion model. This pretty face proves that her beauty is far from skin deep. She holds two bachelor degrees in economics and music from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Though there's little in New York that reminds Le Loka of her home in Johannesburg, "New York pulsates with all sorts of energies. It's scary and exciting, depending on where you focus. I love the cosmopolitan lifestyle, the diversity of cultures. There's so much to experience, learn from, and grow." Le Loka's colorful homeland fashions have stirred as much sensation off stage as as they have onstage. "I create my own wardrobe," she shares. "It's another spill of my creative energy."