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THE WASHINGTON POST

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## The Reliable Source

By Ann Gerhart and Annie Groer

### At the Folger, Knights to Remember

All the world was a stage last night at the Folger Shakespeare Library as Sir Ian McKellen received the first Sir John Gielgud Golden Quill award for excellence in the dramatic arts.

"I am absolutely delighted. Otherwise I wouldn't have traveled all this way—would I—to support the Folger," he told *The Source* before the ceremony. The black-tie benefit (tickets cost \$500 and \$1,000) in the library's Elizabethan Theater featured video greetings from Gielgud—he's 92 and couldn't travel here from England—and a tribute to Gielgud from such dramatic personae as

Lynn Redgrave, Kelly McGillis, three-time Helen Hayes Award winner Edward Gero and James Roose-Evans, Sir John's last stage director.

"It all seems to be rather appropriate, in praise of Sir John Gielgud and in praise of acting, which has nothing to do with being English



Sir Ian and Gladys McKellen arrive at the Folger.

but everything to do with what is good in writing and with actors being seen as mouthpieces for writers. Sir John is very much in that tradition," McKellen said.

Among the 300 guests at the ceremony and dinner-dance that followed was McKellen's 90-year-old stepmother, Gladys McKellen.

"Dear Susan Ruby Paxton," begins the handwritten note (with surname slightly misspelled) to the new baby girl of New York Reps. Susan Molinari and Bill Paxton. "I love you already and I haven't even seen you yet. . . . I am an old guy now. I am older than your granddad, my close friend Guy [Molinari]. . . . You will have an exciting life ahead, and I will be cheering for you all the way. Love, George Bush.

P.S. I used to be President of the United States—now I am a happy dad and granddad—that's it. That's the way it should be."

Richard Thompson, of Arlington, took

not one but two prizes for cartooning Saturday night during the Reuben Awards dinner of the National Cartoonists Society. The swanky affair, held at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York, is sort of the Academy Awards for the pen-and-ink wisecrack crowd. Garry

### NOW YOU KNOW



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Leigh, left, golden; Tsongas, sent home; Bambi, in a custody battle?

Trudeau was named cartoonist of the year, for writing "Primary Colors." (We're being facetious.)

Thompson, whose work appears regularly in *The Washington Post*, *U.S. News & World Report*, the *New Yorker* and *National Geographic*, won for newspaper and magazine illustration. He said yesterday he became a cartoonist because "it's all I could ever do. And it's good to have been dropped on your head. My mother had the foresight to fall down a flight of stairs at the hospital before I was born."

British director Mike Leigh won the Golden Palm award for best film at the Cannes Film Festival yesterday, *Reuter* reported. The new movie from Leigh is "Secrets and Lies." He's a cult favorite for his biting satires, which include "Life Is Sweet" and the edgy "Naked."



BY RICHARD THOMPSON

Former Massachusetts senator Paul Tsongas was discharged from a Boston hospital yesterday after doctors determined his bone marrow transplant was taking well, *Reuter* reported. Tsongas, 55, received the transplant from his sister May 1.

Mickey Mouse and Bambi may have to part company. A federal appeals court in San Francisco yesterday reversed a lower court ruling that the story of "Bambi," which the Walt Disney Co. turned into a three-hanky cartoon, is no longer under copyright, Bloomberg news service reported.

A three-judge appeals panel ruled that author Felix Salten's heirs obtained U.S. copyrights in 1926 and 1954 "in an attempt to afford Bambi some protection from the dangerous American hunters." Salten's daughter sold the rights to Twin Books Co., of Stamford, Conn., in 1993, and the company sued Disney a year later for copyright infringement for continuing to use the story. Disney had argued that the copyright expired. The entertainment giant is expected to appeal and the case could go to the Supreme Court.



# Party lines: people, places and politics



Photos by Jim Brantley/The Washington Times

Lynn Redgrave and John Clark (center) talk with British actor Sir Ian McKellen, who on Monday evening received the first Sir John Gielgud Award for Excellence in the Dramatic Arts.

## A grand night for acting honors

**T**he Old Reading Room. Cabaret Seating. What's this? The Folger Shakespeare Library turned into a dance club with a jazz band and groaning board on the spot where scholars usually ponder the Bard of Avon's words?

This was the spot assigned \$500-a-head, formally clad ticket buyers at Monday's benefit revel, titled "All the World's His Stage," during which British actor Sir Ian McKellen, just days short of his 58th birthday, received the first Sir John Gielgud Award for Excellence in the Dramatic Arts. No doubt old William would have loved it.

A lack of convention — and loads of verbal wit and homilies — marked the evening, which had a fantasy quality about it, like a cruise ship on one of those expensive theme tours.

Richer folk paying \$1,000 each were seated — and served — separately amid giant peonies and fake palm trees at tables named for characters in the master's plays. That didn't sit so well with the likes of Lynn Redgrave, daughter of actor Sir Michael Redgrave. Hadn't she been invited to dine with the grandees, who included evening co-chairman Wynton Blount, former postmaster general, Folger trustee and donor of the \$22 million Alabama Shakespeare Festival? "Apparently not," she replied.

Mr. McKellen, in great form, was seated at "Richard III," the stage and film role that has made him famous in America. An

excerpt from his film version was shown to a combined audience of 300 at the show and ceremony in the Elizabethan Theater beforehand. (The cabaret scene in the movie was not shown; a scene of "Richard III" in the men's room was. That startled many unfamiliar with the actor's unconventional interpretation of the part.)

Also contributing their talent to the show were actors Brian Bedford, Edward Gero and Kelly McGillis, her hair sheared in preparation for her role in the upcoming "Measure for Measure" at the Carter Barron Amphitheatre. They mixed and mingled with a buffet crowd that included one of the town's most notorious gate-crashers, shameless in gold sequins and bluff.

Others speaking in praise of Gielgud and the library were Shakespeare Guild President John F. Andrews and British director James Roose-Evans. Sen. Alan Simpson provided a comic prelude ("For me the Folger offers respite from the slings and arrows of misfortune"), with Robert MacNeil his match as emcee. ("Politicians, like all players, have their exits.")

It was octogenarians' night out as well, with a bevy of 80-plus ladies that included Mr. McKellen's 90-year-old stepmother, Gladys McKellen.

Gielgud, now 92, was present on video, speaking from his home in England to bestow wishes upon the gathering. The award itself, which is to be made annually to honor actors in the grand tradition, was a striking prototype quill sculpture — another Shakespeare allusion — created by Washington's own John Safer. The final version will be cast in bronze, but, playing the jester, Mr. McKellen could put this one on his forehead like a hat and by his side like a sword

before launching into a moving and dramatic acceptance speech.

"Sir John," Mr. McKellen noted, "is one of those rare actors who enjoy seeing other people at work."

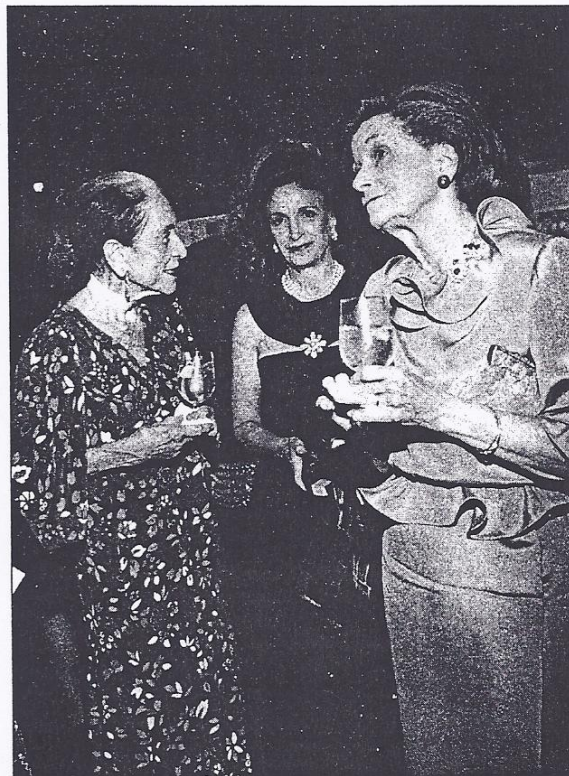
He also made a pitch for continued exchange of English and American actors on both countries' stages.

A table mate at dinner asked Mr. McKellen how he could manage to orate so magnificently without seeming to take a breath. "I owe it all to smoking," he joked.

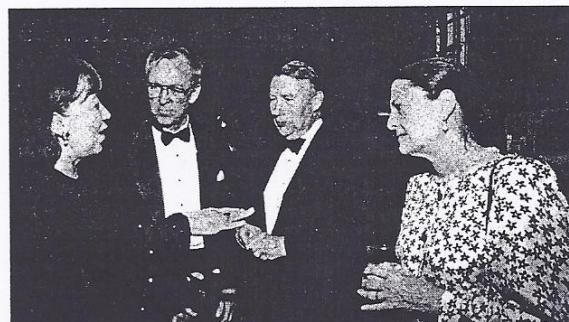
After a visit to see relatives in Boston, he is off to Hollywood for a film adaptation of a Stephen King novel. "I play a 78-year-old Nazi," he said with a gleam in his eye.

Others in and around the cabaret included lawyer-playwright Ken Ludwig and Evelyn and Patrick Hayes.

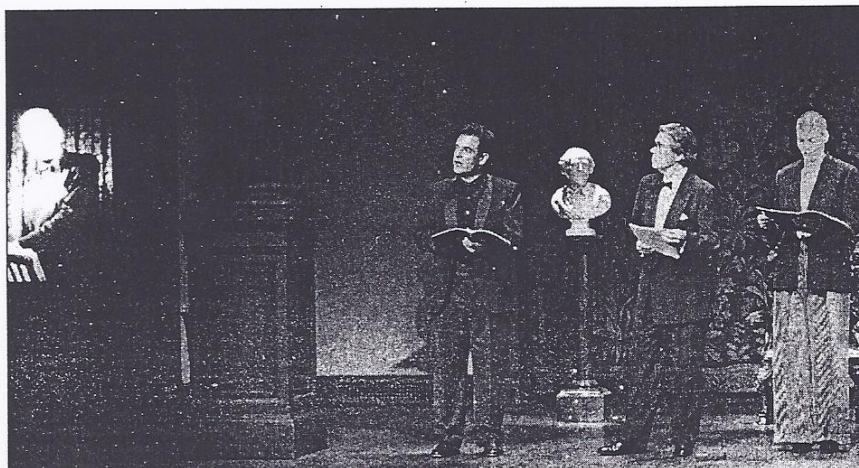
— Ann Geracimos



Guests at the gala at the Folger Shakespeare Library included (from left) Lolo Sarnoff, Selwa "Lucky" Roosevelt and Mary Weinmann.



Dr. Lydia Bronte (left) makes a point to Shakespeare Guild President John F. Andrews and Robert and Donna MacNeil.



Actors Edward Gero, Brian Bedford and Kelly McGillis pay tribute to Sir John Gielgud (on video monitor).

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come face-to-face with...a demon from hell? An alien from space? A waiter from Schrafft's? Damned if I can tell. Based on an F. Paul Wilson book, *The Keep* wastes a fine cast (Scott Glenn, Jürgen Prochnow, Ian McKellen, Gabriel Byrne) while playing like *Alien* on downers.

The director returned to scenes of crime with his next film, **MANHUNTER** (1986, Warner, R, \$14.95). This adaptation of the Thomas Harris best-seller *Red Dragon* has gained a cult rep as the better of the two films that feature the character of Hannibal Lecter. It shouldn't be oversold, though: It's creepier but less flashy than Jonathan Demme's *The Silence of the Lambs*. William L. Petersen plays another terse Mann's man, an ex-detective with a knack for thinking like a serial killer, but it's Tom Noonan who burns up the frame as Petersen's primary prey, one of the freakiest madmen Hollywood has ever given us. Still, Mann's aural/visual aesthetic rules the movie; you'll never listen to "In-a-Gadda-da-Vida" without locking the doors again.

The director pulled a 180-degree turn with his version of James Fenimore Cooper's **THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS** (1992, FoxVideo, R, \$14.98). Surprise: It's his best movie. Not as coherent as *Manhunter*, *Mohicans* is a pleasant reminder that you don't need coherence when you've got iconic stars like Daniel Day-Lewis and Madeleine Stowe, an intoxicating score, and viscerally cinematic forward momentum. Yes, *Mohicans* turns the French and Indian War into an MTV love story—but it's still better than the book.

Given that successful artistic stretch, it's disheartening to see Mann retrench into a crime thriller—and not even a fresh one at that. Essentially a remake of his 1989 made-for-TV movie *L.A. Take-down*, *Heat* is most notable for its moods: From the noonday chaos of the opening armored-car robbery to the doom-ridden showdown between cop Al Pacino and criminal mastermind Robert De Niro, Mann puts you into a scene with a specificity no other working director can match. Unfortunately, home video cripples Dante Spinotti's wide-screen photography, forcing viewers to pay closer attention to the script and performances.

They don't measure up. De Niro is fine and taut as a man fully alive in his isola-

tion, but Pacino is at his merry-rottweiler worst, while Val Kilmer and Jon Voight, among many others, don't have the time to do more than posture and move on. Mann fashions brilliant cinematic parts here—De Niro pulling his team out of a nighttime heist when he realizes the cops are watching, the two stars meeting in a

diner—but the parts don't create a whole. "I gotta hold on to my angst," says Pacino's character at one point, and in a funny way, that reflects Mann's willful opacity. His movies preserve angst, all right, but too often at the expense of his art. *Heat*: **B-** *Thief*: **B** *The Keep*: **D** *Manhunter*: **B+** *Last of the Mohicans*: **A-**

IAN MCKELLEN OF 'RICHARD III'

## MAD DOG AND ENGLISHMAN

SHAKESPEARE'S QUEEN ELIZABETH says it best: Richard III is a dog. Embodying the Bard's ruthless king-to-be in the latest screen treatment of *Richard III*, Ian McKellen—with his droopy cheeks, leathery complexion, and vicious growl—is the wickedest celluloid cur since Cujo.

Richard's canine characteristics did not go unnoticed by McKellen, who also exec-produced and cowrote the Oscar-nominated film, available on video this week (see review on page 76). "In an early draft of the screenplay, every time Richard appeared, you heard an *arf, arf, arf*," laughs the 57-year-old British actor, whose latest film role is as *Cold Comfort Farm*'s melodramatic preacher, Amos Starkadder. "We were going a bit far." McKellen's primary goal was to bring Shakespeare's formidable text down to earth, transporting *Richard III*'s narrative to the more accessible 1930s. "The more believable their world is, the more we're likely to relate it to our own lives," reasons McKellen, whose own interest in British politics led him to cofound the gay-rights lobbying organization the Stonewall Group in 1989. "I hope nobody would come out of *Richard III* without thinking 'What is this guy I'm voting for really like?'"

A good question, but futile in the case of the enigmatic Richard. Sir Ian (he was knighted in 1991)

has made him at once endearing and repulsive—stuffing his mouth with chocolates, wine, and cigarettes before flashing a dastardly smile. "I regard *Richard III* as the most brilliant Shakespearean film ever made," says John Andrews, president of the Shakespeare Guild, which presented the actor with the Guild's first Golden Quill award on May 20. "I think it's going to have a life of its own."

That's in part because of the sneaky asides McKellen delivers throughout the film. Just before accepting his crown—the achievement Richard's been anticipating his entire life—he glances at us and says with faux arm-twisting hesitation, "I'm not made of stone." It's a performance some critics contend should have been rewarded with an Oscar nomination. Or at least a Milk-Bone. —Dave Karger



THE PLAYER: McKellen was key to the Bard update



SIR JOHN GIELGUD  
SOUTH PAVILION  
WOTTON-UNDERWOOD  
NR. AYLESBURY  
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

July 20.36.

Dear John Andrews.

I was so delighted to hear and  
read of the celebration at the  
Folger. It sounds such a very  
successful and exciting  
event and obviously carried out  
with much care and good will  
by everyone concerned.

There is a possibility that  
I may be playing a part  
in a film project taken  
from a Joseph Conrad  
story in which I  
understand I am  
McKellan is also  
hoping to appear.  
Of course I should  
like that very much.  
We are supposed to be  
shooting it in September  
if all goes well in  
preparation.

Kindest regards and  
very grateful thanks.

Ever sincerely.

John Gielgud