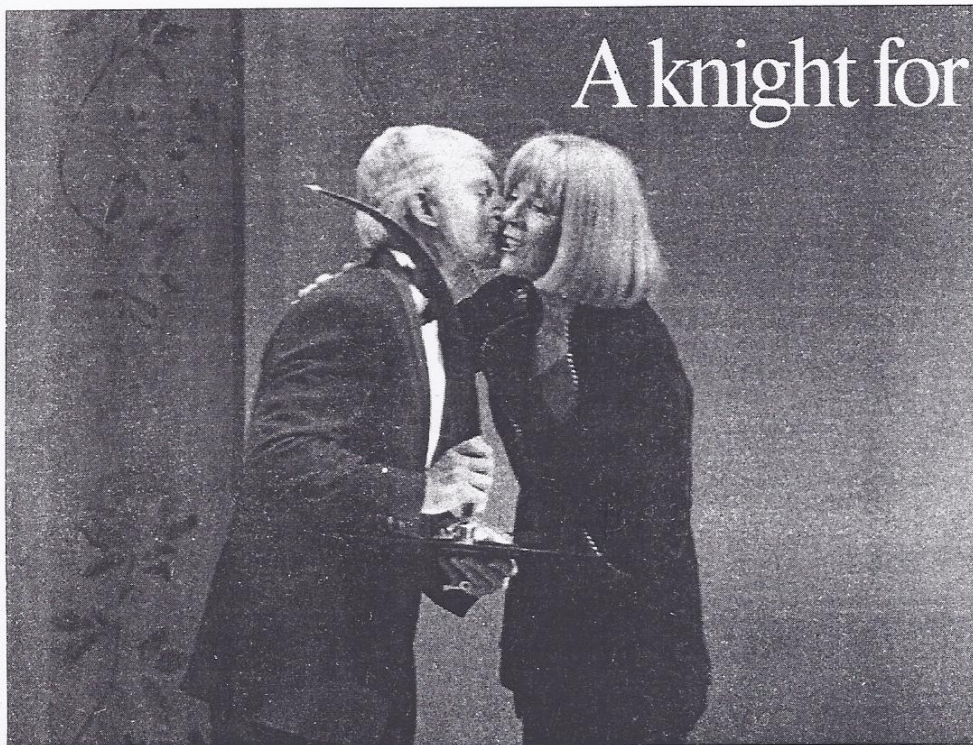


Party lines: people, places and politics



A knight for Shakespeare

Photos by Jim Brantley/The Washington Times

Sir Derek Jacobi accepts the Sir John Gielgud Award for Excellence in the Dramatic Arts from Dame Diana Rigg on Monday night. Below: Gala chairwoman Samia Farouki welcomes British Ambassador Sir John Kerr (right) as her son, Iarek, looks on.

With this, who needs an Oscar?" exulted **Sir Derek Jacobi**, beaming broadly as he held aloft his Sir John Gielgud Award for Excellence in the Dramatic Arts on Monday night.

Mr. Jacobi, who already has most of the acting world's top honors — a Tony and a Helen Hayes Award for "Cyran de Bergerac"; a British knighthood in recognition of his stellar performances in such title roles as "Richard II," "Brother Cadfael" and "I Claudius" — easily won over yet another audience after rising to accept his sleekly sculpted prize at the Folger Shakespeare Library's 65th anniversary "Muse of Fire" celebration.

"I love acting; I love the theater; I love the fraternity of actors," he said softly before going on to tease the crowd with a long litany of "thank yous" to everyone he could think of, including his parents and United Airlines.

"The link between actors and childishness," he reminded them with a wink, "is a direct line unbroken by maturity."

His tribute, which took place in the library's impressive, wood-columned Elizabethan Theatre, included testimonials from fellow drama greats that were noteworthy even by the overblown standards of today's ubiquitous awards-and-honors ceremonies.

"Sir Derek has had a classical career of unparalleled integrity. . . . He is the most popular of actors' actors," lauded fellow player Kenneth Branagh in a message read by **Dame Diana Rigg**, the evening's master of ceremonies.

Director Peter Shaffer's encomiums



were more praiseworthy still: "His positive, palpable, deep-seated need to be on the stage is not for glamour . . . or vainglory . . . or for pain, but for truth, and humanity."

After Mr. Jacobi's elevation into the after-world Valhalla, the event's high-brow program continued throughout an entertainment segment that included a reading by the honoree from "Richard II," a pas de deux from Prokofiev's "Romeo and Juliet" by Miami City Ballet soloists **Franklin Gamero** and **Iliana Lopez**, and a piano performance by **Marvin Hamlisch** featuring songs from "West Side Story" and other shows with

Shakespearean themes.

Dinner was suitably grand as well in the 2-story-high Reading Room, where tables with sumptuous silken coverings, spring flower arrangements and tall candelabra with 30-inch tapers added to the aura of bedazzlement already enhanced by illuminated oil portraits and the reflection of light through exquisite stained-glass windows.

Guests paying \$1,000 apiece to dine on Chilean sea bass, breast of pheasant and a theme-inspired "Muse of Fire" bombe helped raise about \$300,000 for the Folger and its event co-sponsor, the 10-year-old Shakespeare Guild (which established the Gielgud Award in 1994 as part of its overall Bard-boosting efforts).

This year's chairman, Palestinian-American arts patron and textile designer **Samia Farouki**, got much of the credit for the largess — and for bringing in a major influx of new patrons to what previously had been regarded as one of the capital's WASPiest Old Guard social events.

"Lots of friends supported me when I told them about the Folger's programs with high school students," the ebullient Mrs. Farouki said as she accepted the congratulations of her guests, many of whom were Arab-speaking, at evening's end. You can never forget, she added, "that Shakespeare is international and universal and appreciated everywhere."

— **Kevin Chaffee**

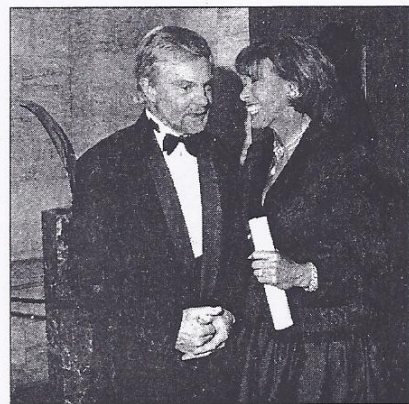
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The Folger's Reading Room was sumptuously decorated for dinner in the grand manner.



Etiquette columnist Letitia Baldrige greets Judith Terra and her guest, Avner Ben-Uziel. Below: The honoree chats with Joy Safer, whose husband, John, designed the award.



Backstage

'Chicago's' Quick-Study Stand-In

By Kara Swisher
Washington Post Staff Writer

Producers of the touring version of "Chicago"—now running at the National Theatre—should probably be smacked upside the head for keeping it under wraps before the opening here that star player Charlotte d'Amboise had been sidelined with a knee injury.

But they've made it into Backstage's good graces for having tapped veteran hooper Belle Calaway to understudy the d'Amboise role of the murderous Roxie Hart. Calaway, who continues in the part, takes the stage by storm, delivering songs like "Roxie" and "Nowadays" as if she'd been doing the show for years.

In fact she took over for d'Amboise on overnight notice and with only one rehearsal. Calaway had been playing the role of Hunyak the Hungarian, the only innocent among a bunch of ne'er-do-well vamps. She then had to shift to the most hard-boiled moll of them all.

"I always seem to go on with only one rehearsal," says Calaway, who understudied leads in "The Will Rogers Follies" on Broadway and "I Do! I Do!" off-Broadway. "So I learned early to get as much under your belt as possible just in case." Since it was early in the tour, Calaway got a bit of help from members of the show's creative team, who were still around.

But it was still scary taking over the part—for both Calaway and Jasmine Guy, who plays Roxie's partner in crime. "She has been great considering she had to couple with another actress and pull it off after one day," says the California-born Calaway. "Our second rehearsal together was in front of 2,000 people."

D'Amboise is expected back within weeks, and then it's back to Hunyak for Calaway. The show's next stop, after its D.C. run ends June 1, is Chicago itself.

"It can take the wind out of your sails to go back after having a big role, but you knew when you signed the contract what the deal was," says Calaway. "But I have been really grateful to do the show, and it's certainly been a lot of fun."

Magisterial Moment

Last Monday's guests at the Golden Quill Award ceremony in honor of Sir Derek Jacobi were treated to quite a surprise. The gala event—sponsored by the Shakespeare Guild and held at the Folger Shakespeare Library—featured composer Marvin Hamlisch playing piano, the Miami City Ballet's Franklin Gamero and Iliana Lopez performing a pas de deux, and actress Dame Diana Rigg (looking stunning and refreshed after a week on a private

Caribbean beach where, she said, she could skinny-dip) reading aloud testimonials from Kenneth Branagh, Peter Shaffer and Sir John Gielgud.

All of which was part of the scheduled festivities.

But then Rigg presented the award to Jacobi, who graciously stepped onto the Folger stage. After thanking a long list of people ("This is beginning to sound like an Oscar speech," he joked), he talked about the filming of "Richard II," in which he played the title role. Then suddenly he was reciting—in character—a succession of the king's speeches



Belle Calaway, putting "Chicago" on the map with her change of roles.

from Act 4, when he loses the crown. For a full 10 minutes, Jacobi riveted the startled crowd, his performance a slow, heart-rending tour de force of magisterial anger, humiliation and failure; a standing ovation followed immediately. Not even the event planners knew he was going to do it.

Notes From All Over

Le Neon French-American Theatre Company will host a 10th-anniversary party tonight at the French Embassy, featuring an assortment of the best moments from its repertoire.

Tomorrow the Theater of the First Amendment will host a silent auction of theater props, mostly glass objects from its most recent production, "Things That Break." It's from 2 to 5 p.m. and all part of a "Grand Tour of the Arts" at the Center for the Arts at George Mason University.

Also tomorrow and next Sunday, the Washington Shakespeare Company will host panel discussions after the matinees of its current "Twelfth Night." This week the topic is "Gender-Bending the Bard: Creating Roles for Women in the Plays of Shakespeare." Panelists include Ida Prosky, author of "You Need Four Women to Play Shakespeare," Jeanne Addison Roberts, professor at American University and curator of a recent Folger exhibit titled "Shakespeare's Unruly Women"; and "Twelfth Night" director Delia Taylor. Next week the topic will be "Screenplay by William Shakespeare: The Resurgence of Shakespearean Film."

And on Monday night, for those not attending the annual Helen Hayes Awards at the Kennedy Center, the Corcoran Gallery of Art hosts director Julie Taymor, who will give a talk about her work. She is now at work on what is likely to be an innovative theatrical production of "The Lion King" for Disney, featuring the fantastic costumes, masks and puppets that Taymor is famous for. It's to open in New York in the fall.

Special correspondent William Triplett contributed to this report.

SHOWTIMES

KENNEDY CENTER
CONCERT HALL—Dark.
EISENHOWER—African Odyssey: "Valley Song," 2:30, 7:30.
OPERA HOUSE—"The King and I," 2, 8.
TERRACE THEATER—Mary Lou Williams Women in Jazz Festival, 7:30.
THEATER LAB—"Just So Stories," 11 a.m., 1, 3; "Shear Madness," 6, 9.
ARENA
FICHANDLER—Dark.
KREEGER—"Sunday in the Park With George," 8.
OLD VAT—"Down at the Old Bull and Bush," 8.
STAGE
CHURCH STREET—"Cat on a Hot Tin Roof," 8.
DANCE PLACE—Dark.
FOLGER—Dark.
FORD'S—"Paper Moon," 7:30.
NATIONAL—"Chicago," 8.
NEW WORKS—Dark.

OLNEY—"Romeo and Juliet," 8.
ROUND HOUSE—Dark.
SHAKESPEARE—"Mourning Becomes Electra," 8.
SCENA—Dark.
SIGNATURE—"Melville Slept Here," 8.
SOURCE—Dark.
STAGE GUILD—"Indiscretions (Les Parents Terribles)," 2:30, 8.
STUDIO—"Sylvia," 2, 8.
WASHINGTON SHAKESPEARE—"Twelfth Night," 8.
WARNER—"A Fool and His Money," 8.
WOOLLY MAMMOTH—Dark.
DINNER THEATER
BURN BRAE—"Crazy for You," dinner 6, show 8.
LAZY SUSAN—"The Boyfriend," dinner 7, show 8:30.
TOBY'S—"Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat," dinner 8:15, show 8:15.
WEST END—"Bye Bye Birdie," dinner 6, show 8.