

# theater

Karen Finley... Tracers... Lee Atwater

## Broadway

Now Playing

**1776**—The book of this 1969 musical, the gifted Peter Stone's masterpiece, is surely one of the best ever. Thrillingly incorporating the potentially divisive issue of slavery, it succeeds in keeping us, despite our knowledge of the outcome, in a state of wonderfully paradoxical suspense. Certainly there are few if any musicals in which so large a cast of characters achieves, down to its least members, individual profile and personal savor. Splendid as was Peter Hunt's original production, this Scott Ellis revival very nearly matches it—its blocking and pacing is nowhere to be faulted, and here and there a deliciously new detail. It will provide you not only with three hours of choice theatergoing, but also with three very rich hours of life. Music and lyrics by Sherman Edwards. (Simon: 8/25/97). \$65; kids 17 and younger pay half price. Tues.—Sat. at 8, Wed., Sat., and Sun. at 2. Through 11/9. *Roundabout Theatre's Stage Right, 1530 Broadway, at 45th St. (869-8400).*

**Annie**—Nell Carter stars as Miss Hannigan in this twentieth-anniversary production of everyone's favorite orphan musical. \$40–\$70. Wed.—Sat. at 7:30, Sun. at 1 and 6, Wed. and Sat. at 2. Opened: 3/26/97. *Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. (239-6200).*

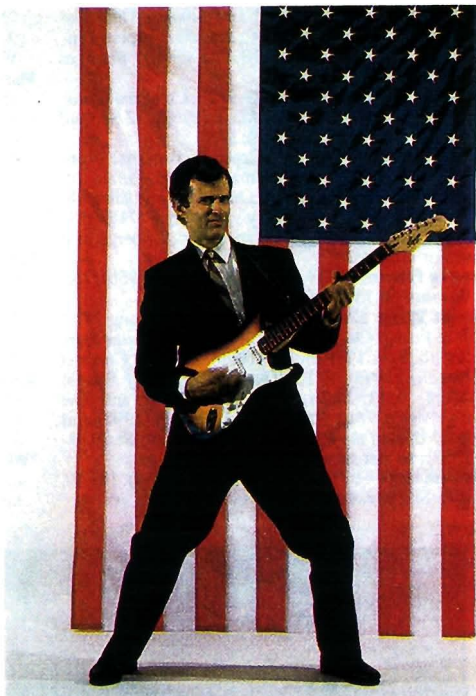
**Barrymore**—William Luce's play gives you a chance to experience Christopher Plummer, the greatest living actor in the English language. It is a quasi monodrama in which the legendary thespian, a month from his rendezvous with death, prepares to put on *Richard III* once more. Sometimes he spars with his unseen, sardonic prompter in the wings (well intoned by Michael Mastro); for the rest, he gloriously indulges himself. (Simon: 4/7/97). \$25–\$55. Tues.—Sat. at 8, Wed. and Sat. at 2, Sun. at 3. Opened: 3/25/97. *Music Box Theatre, 239 W. 45th St. (239-6200).*

**Beauty and the Beast**—A musical based on a movie based on a fairy tale. Setting box-office and, presumably, merchandising records even as we speak. Kerry Butler plays the girl; Chuck Wagner plays the (hairly) boy. With Tony-award-winning costume design by Ann Hould-Ward; lyrics by Tim Rice and the late Howard Ashman; score by Alan Menken. \$22.50–\$70. Tues.—Sat. at 8, Wed. and Sat. at 2, Sun. at 3. Opened: 4/18/94. *Palace Theatre, 1564 Broadway, at 47th St. (307-4100). 2 hrs. 30 mins.*

**Bring In 'da Noise, Bring In 'da Funk**—George C. Wolfe and Savion Glover's Tony-winning meditation on the pre-Hollywood ethnic roots of tap dancing. \$20–\$70. Tues.—Sat. at 8, Wed. and Sat. at 2, Sun. at 3. *Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. (239-6200). 2 hrs.*

**Cats**—Now and for the foreseeable future. By Andrew Lloyd Webber, of course, with an assist from T. S. Eliot. \$37.50–\$65. Dark Thurs. Opened: 10/7/82. *Winter Garden Theater, 1634 Broadway, at 50th St. (239-6200). 2 hrs. 30 mins.*

**Chicago**—It was a gamble to transfer the Encores! production of *Chicago* to Broadway, but since *Chicago* is about women who kill their men and the mercenary lawyer who gets them off, gambling seems like the merest peccadillo. Especially



## Opening Beelzebubba

The late Lee Atwater, a Republican strategist with an affection for Bo Diddley and a genius for mud warfare (remember Willie Horton?), died at the tender age of 40 in 1991. But Atwater still made his mark—not only because he played blues guitar at a 1988 inaugural ball but also because his ruthless, nihilistic approach to campaigning transformed dirty politics into an art form. In his one-man show, *Atwater: Fixin' to Die*, Bruce McIntosh plays this southern-fried legend, starting with Atwater's college years—when politics barely mattered to him—and ending with his dying days, when Atwater was riddled with not only cancer but the fear that he had lived an ignoble life. Performances begin September 11.

when, as here, it pays off. Minimalism prevails. All is concise, calibrated, calculated, but nothing is stunted on. Every bosom, pelvis, and long leg is in business to keep the women in the audience identifying, the men panting. If *Chicago* in the twenties was like this, it was more fun than Periclean Athens. Starring Bebe Neuwirth, Marilu Henner, and Joel Grey. (Simon: 12/2/96) \$20–\$75. Tues.—Sat. at 8, Wed. and Sat. at 2, Sun. at 3. Opened 11/14/96. *Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. (239-6200). 2 hrs. 30 mins.*

**A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum**—A new revival of the 1962 musical, featuring David Alan Grier as Pseudolus. \$60–\$75. Mon.—Sat. at 8, Wed. and Sat. at 2. *St. James Theatre, 246 W. 44th St. (239-6200). 2 hrs. 20 mins.*

**Grease!**—It's back, after a brief hiatus. A crowd-pleasing, neon-heavy rock-and-roll musical about a group of high-school seniors in 1959. Book, music, and lyrics by Jim Jacobs and Warren Casey; directed and choreographed by Jeff Calhoun. Jeff Conaway plays D.J. Vince Fontaine and Darlene Love plays Teen Angel. \$30–\$67.50. Tues.—Sat. at 8, Wed. and Sat. at 2, Sun. at 3. Opened: 5/11/94. *Eugene O'Neill Theatre, 230 W. 49th St. (239-6200). 2 hrs. 30 mins.*

**Jekyll & Hyde**—Man turns into beastly man, all in the name of science. Book and lyrics by Leslie Bricusse, score by Frank Wildhorn. \$45–\$75. Tues.—Sat. at 8, Wed. and Sat. at 2, Sun. at 3. Opened 4/28/97. *Plymouth Theatre, 236 W. 45th St. (239-6200).*

**The King and I**—Along with Lincoln Center's recent *Carousel* and the recent Broadway production of *State Fair*, the Rodgers and Hammerstein renaissance continues apace with their famous musical adaptation of the memoir *Anna and the King of Siam*, featuring Kevin Gray, a former phantom from *Phantom*, in the role created by Yul Brynner. Faith Prince stars as Anna. \$25–\$75. Tues.—Sat. at 8, Wed. and Sat. at 2, Sun. at 3. *Neil Simon Theatre, 250 W. 52nd St. (307-4100). 2 hrs. 45 mins.*

**The Last Night of Ballyhoo**—This romantic comedy, set in 1939 Atlanta on the eve of the premiere of *Gone With the Wind*, is Alfred Uhry's first effort since *Driving Miss Daisy*. The wait clearly paid off; he won the 1997 Tony award for Best Play. \$55. Tues.—Sat. at 8, Wed. and Sat. at 2, Sun. at 3. Opened: 2/27/97. *Helen Hayes Theatre, 240 W. 44th St. (307-4100).*

**Les Misérables**—The implacable Inspector Javert hounding the innocent ex-convict Jean Valjean; the pathetic Fantine, wronged by the entire world, dying as she entrusts her daughter, Cosette, to the now-prosperous Mayor Valjean; the dastardly Thénardiens bringing up Cosette as a scullion while cosseting their own daughter, Eponine—what a story! Just synthesizing the plot brings tears to the iciest eyes. (Simon: 3/31/97). \$15–\$75. Tues.—Sat. at 8, Wed. and Sat. at 2, Sun. at 3. Opened: 3/12/87. *Imperial Theatre, 249 W. 45th St. (239-6200). 3 hrs. 15 mins.*

**The Life**—A contemporary street opera set in eighties Times Square. Lillias White and Chuck Cooper just picked up Tony awards for their performances. Music and lyrics by Cy Coleman and Ira Gasman; book by Coleman, Gasman, and David Newman. \$40–\$75. Tues.—Sat. at 8, Sat. at 2, Sun. at 2 and 7. Opened 4/26/97. *Ethel Barrymore Theatre, 243 W. 47th St. (239-6200).*

**Miss Saigon**—This reworking of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, set in Vietnam during the fall of Saigon, has just celebrated its fifth anniversary on Broadway. Score by Claude-Michel Schönberg; lyrics by Alain Boublil and Richard Maltby Jr.; directed by Nicholas Hytner. \$15–\$75. Mon.—Sat. at 8, Wed. and Sat. at 2; dark Sun. Opened: 4/11/91. *Broadway Theatre, 1681 Broadway, at 53rd St. (239-6200). 2 hrs. 30 mins.*

**The Phantom of the Opera**—Andrew Lloyd Webber's blockbuster continues to pack them in, recently edging into sixth place among the longest-running musicals. And strangely—or wisely, depend-