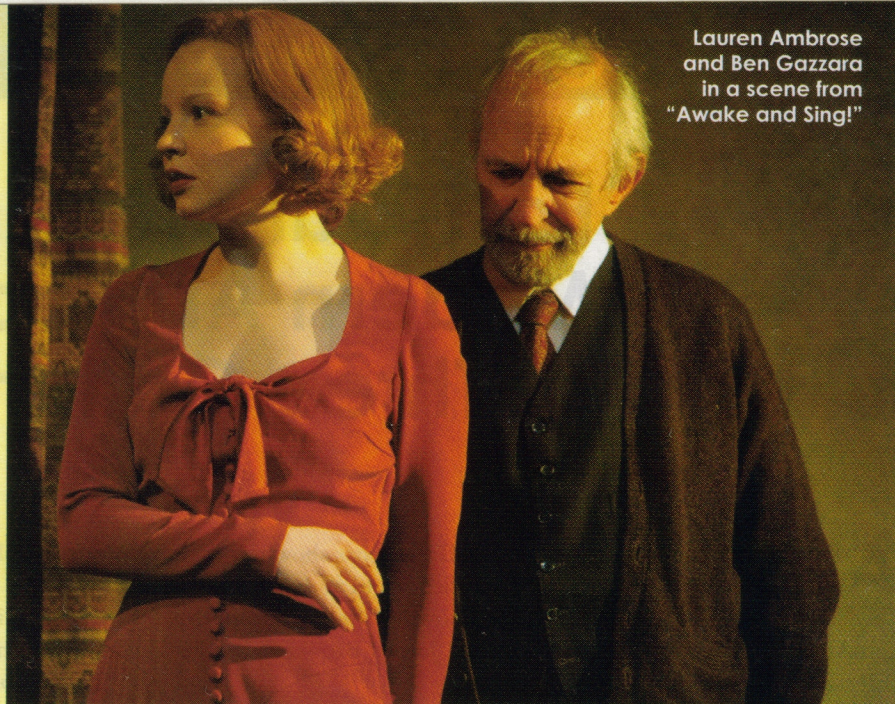


It's Tony Time!

By Iris Weiner



Lauren Ambrose and Ben Gazzara in a scene from "Awake and Sing!"

Photo by Paul Kolnik

The Tony Awards should be exciting for the theatre world this year, seeing as how so many of the nominees are avid theater players while few of the nominated shows feature big names (sorry Julia). Although early buzz has singled out some who have shone on the Big White Way this year, it's hard to say who will be honored on June 11th.

Ensemble pieces dominate in the Best Play category, with *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* almost a sure bet thanks to Martin McDonagh's penchant for gripping writing. David Wilmot is also nominated for his work as Padraic in *Inishmore*, a performance that has already garnered a Lucille Lortel Award.

Best Revival of a Play will be a tough category, with favorites *Awake and Sing!*, *The Constant Wife*, *Seascape*, and *Faith Healer* up against each other. Oddly enough, Best Revival of a Musical shouldn't be much of a competition. Critically applauded *The Pajama Game* and *Sweeney Todd* are going up against the trashed new version of *The Threepenny Opera*.

When it comes down to Leading Actor and Actress in a play, anything could happen. In addition to David Wilmot, Seljko Ivanek of dud *The Caine Mutiny Court-Martial* and Ralph Fiennes of *Faith Healer* will be in the running. Cynthia Nixon will crawl out of her *Rabbit Hole* to see stage vets Kate Burton, Lisa Kron, and/or Lynn Redgrave take the prize. Judy Kaye can stay home for the evening; her nomination comes from *Souvenir*, a play that few saw and even fewer enjoyed.

The musical categories are invigorating, with true talent taking all slots. For the ladies, Sutton Foster is a Broadway baby, and the votes usually slide to her like magnets to a refrigerator. Plus, *The Drowsy Chaperone* has received so much positive press that most would guess her to be a shoo-in. Patti LuPone and Kelli O'Hara, co-stars in *The Pajama Game*, will most likely split any *Sweeney Todd* votes, leading to an easy victory for Foster.

Stephen Lynch, one of few comedians to ever get nominated for Best Performance by a Leading Actor in a Musical, sorely deserves to take the prize, but might have to take down Bob Martin, the mas-

termind behind *The Drowsy Chaperone* and John Lloyd Young of *Jersey Boys*. Young is just the type of actor that voters tend to go for — an up and comer with extraordinary talent and little name in the business. How many voters will actually go for the *The Wedding Singer's* funny man is a mystery.

Awake and Sing! should garner one of its supporting players a win. Pablo Schreiber and Mark Ruffalo each put in charming, sensational performances. If their votes split, Domhnall Gleeson could take a Tony for *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*.

Zoe Wanamaker is ready to break at the seams as the agitated matriarch in *Awake and Sing!*, but she may share votes with Tyne Daly of *Rabbit Hole* in the Best Supporting Actress in a Play slot.

The Best Featured Actor and Actress in a Musical awards may be the toughest categories to predict. Danny Burstein is making his Broadway debut in *The Drowsy Chaperone*, and some say his craft is far better than his resume boasts. Christian Hoff is one of the biggest highlights of *Jersey Boys*. But the prize will most likely go to stage vet Jim Dale, the only redeeming aspect of *The Threepenny Opera*. Carolee Carmello's nomination for

Lestat is a nice gesture but an easy let down. The Color Purple most likely has this award; Felicia P. Fields and Elisabeth Withers-Mendes are both nominated. Anika Noni-Rose (*Caroline, or Change*) took this award two years ago for embracing the role of the challenged minority, and this year looks as though a similar scenario will play out.

While Kathleen Marshall donned double duty as choreographer and director of *The Pajama Game* and was rewarded with nominations in both categories, many people were snubbed in spots that seemed to be locked in. Cherry Jones, last year's winner of every award in New York, was ignored for her work in *The Faith Healer*, as was Gabriel Byrne who just won the Outer Critics Circle Award for *A Touch of the Poet*.

And of course, Julia Roberts was not nominated for her role in the most talked about show of the year, *Three Days of Rain*. To make matters worse, only eight women were eligible to be nominated in her category! ■

Broadway
Vets Reap
Award Nods
(Sorry Julia)