

enter glowing



Who needs a spotlight? Not these luminescent beauties, who are giving the season a jolt of eclectic, high-wattage stage glamour.

By Erik Jackson

The prolific playwright Jean Kerr once said, "I'm tired of all this nonsense about beauty being only skin-deep. That's deep enough. What do you want, an adorable pancreas?" While she has a point, there is something to be said for that quality that lies just beyond the glamorous surface, an extra oomph that only a select few women possess. This spring, we celebrate seven diverse actresses who each offer something above and beyond good bone structure and flawless skin: a singular comic flair, a beguiling naiveté, an intangible allure. You might know them from TV or film, but heed our advice and catch these stars onstage—celluloid and pixels just can't do justice to their in-the-flesh radiance.

isabella rossellini *The Stendhal Syndrome*

The title of Terrence McNally's latest work is a reference to a sensation of dizziness tourists often feel in the presence of Italy's great works of art. Will audiences undergo their own rapturous fits when faced with this leading lady's celebrated beauty onstage? Rossellini laughs off that suggestion, stressing that she's 51 in an accent that echoes a mix of mother Ingrid Bergman's Swedish and filmmaker father Roberto Rossellini's Italian. 51? Could that be possible? "You know, I don't think it's a compliment to tell women that they don't look their age," she confides. "It's the same as saying to a black man, 'You don't look black,' or to a gay person, 'You don't look gay.'" Well then, Isabella, you look every minute of 51—and 51 has never looked so good. *The Stendhal Syndrome* runs through March 27 at 59E59 (59 East 59th Street, New York City; 212-279-4200).

maggie gyllenhaal *Homebody/Kabul*

"She's fantastically smart, politically engaged and immensely talented, the kind of actor playwrights live to write for." So said Tony Kushner of this 26-year-old who first hit radar screens as the abuse-loving assistant in the S&M fest *Secretary*. For the past year, Gyllenhaal has acted as Kushner's muse while he refined *Homebody/Kabul*, his epic about a grieving girl who travels to Afghanistan in search of her mother. When Gyllenhaal played the part in L.A. last spring, she was surprised at the number of walkouts. "I think a lot of people leave because it's hard," she has said. "You can't just sit back and be entertained, and a lot of people can't handle it." Call us masochists, but we'll be there, undoubtedly riveted. *Homebody/Kabul* runs May 11–30 at the BAM Harvey Theater (30 Lafayette Avenue, Brooklyn, New York; 718-636-4100).

This page: Danielle Levitt/Curtis Oudine. Opposite page: Carlo Dall'Oliero/Curtis Oudine





tonya pinkins

Caroline, or Change

How do you define glamour, Ms.

Pinkins? "A great shoe," coos the star. "I love the '40s for the line of the heel and the way it creates a beautiful line up the leg and the calf." But as this musical's title character, a decidedly dowdy maid in '60s-era Louisiana, the fiercely talented Tony winner (*Jelly's Last Jam*) found herself in a fashion-free zone. Caroline Thibodeaux's footwear of choice? "She's got on some ill' ol' maid loafers," Pinkins says with a comic sigh. The 41-year-old looker, who will spend her nights on Broadway and her days as a tough-talking attorney on *All My Children*, clearly relishes her complex stage role, but she can't help pining for just a bit of glitz. "Every time I see [Caroline costume designer] Paul Tazewell, who's known for doing clothes that get standing ovations, I say, 'When am I getting the chiffon maid's uniform?'" *Caroline, or Change* begins April 13 at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre (230 West 49th Street, New York City; 212-239-6200).



elizabeth berkeley

Sly Fox

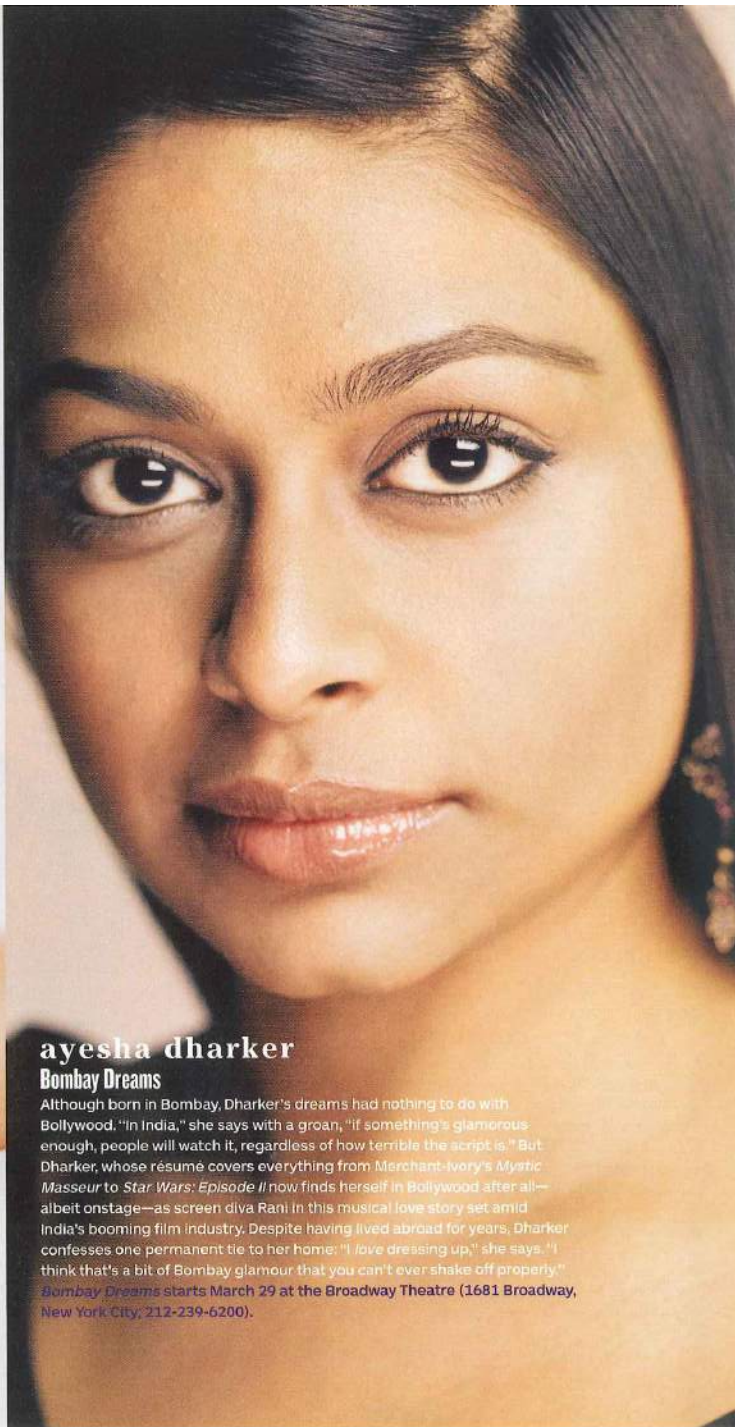
Those who only know Berkeley from the gloriously over-the-top T&A flick *Showgirls* have a lot to catch up on. Since then, the affable 31-year-old has gone on to appear in the notable indies *The Real Blonde* (1997) and *Roger Dodger* (2002) and in the West End opposite Eddie Izzard in *Lenny* (1999). She's currently playing the part of wife, having tied the knot in November to Ralph Lauren's nephew, Greg, a noted painter. His subject? The nude female form. His primary muse? Guess who. Says Berkeley, "He really celebrates all aspects of women when he paints, even the pain beneath the beauty." Hopefully, Berkeley won't be feeling any pain when she plays the "innocent, virginal and angelic" Mrs. Truckle in *Sly Fox*. And if that atypical role doesn't erase her image as a sexy young thing, Berkeley won't be too bummed. Quoth the knockout, "There are worse things to be known for." *Sly Fox* is at the Barrymore Theatre (243 West 47th Street, New York City; 212-239-6200).

From left: Jeffrey Mordel/ONYX; The Short Photography; Antonio Virgilio/ONYX; Corinne O'Connell/ONYX; Colin Bell/ONYX

ayesha dharker

Bombay Dreams

Although born in Bombay, Dharker's dreams had nothing to do with Bollywood. "In India," she says with a groan, "if something's glamorous enough, people will watch it, regardless of how terrible the script is." But Dharker, whose résumé covers everything from Merchant-Ivory's *Mythic Masseur* to *Star Wars: Episode II* now finds herself in Bollywood after all—albeit onstage—as screen diva Rani in this musical love story set amid India's booming film industry. Despite having lived abroad for years, Dharker confesses one permanent tie to her home: "I love dressing up," she says. "I think that's a bit of Bombay glamour that you can't ever shake off properly." *Bombay Dreams* starts March 29 at the Broadway Theatre (1681 Broadway, New York City; 212-239-6200).





**kristin
chenoweth**
Wicked

"Cute." That's the word everyone uses to describe this four-foot-eleven firecracker. "I said to my mom one time, 'Why can't I be beautiful?' " remembers Chenoweth. "And she said, 'When you're short, you're cute. If you were tall, you'd be beautiful.' Then she said, 'But let me tell you something: At least they're not saying you're ugly.' " No, they're definitely not saying that. The Tony winner (for *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*) has no shortage of admirers after her effervescent turn as goody-goody Glinda in *Wicked*. And the 35-year-old Oklahoman wants to set the record straight on certain assumptions: "Because I'm petite and blond and I have an . . . interesting speaking voice," drawls Chenoweth, "I find that people don't always take me seriously. The fun thing for me is to shock the crap out of them because they're not expecting smarts."

Wicked is at the Gershwin Theater (222 West 51st Street, New York City; 212-307-4100).

From left: Chris Sullivan/Corbis; Outlines; Len Pirro



gretchen mol
Chicago

"It's fun to dress up and have people do your hair and makeup and feel pretty," says Mol, "but then at some point it becomes part of the job." Wised up after a *Vanity Fair* cover in 1998 prematurely predicted her as the Next Big Thing ("It was the cart before the horse," as Mol puts it), the 31-year-old star has adopted a sort of actor's Atkins diet, cutting back on empty-calorie "girlfriend" roles in movies for meaty parts onstage. Mol's palpable vulnerability in *The Shape of Things* grabbed attention, and through February, her Roxie razzle-dazzled 'em on Broadway in *Chicago*. "When you're doing a play," she says, "there's something very old-fashioned about the whole gypsy lifestyle and the stamina it requires to get up and do it night after night. And after a show, the high you get from it—you never get that with film." Playwrights, are you listening?