



The cast of *Noises Off*, including Edward Hibbert (in khaki suit, second from right), Peter Gallagher (far left), and Patti LuPone (with sardines, center)

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## Hibbert on

Out actor Edward Hibbert talks about the *Noises Off* revival, his side career as an agent, and the best antidote to anthrax **By Michael Giltz**

**A**ctor Edward Hibbert is appearing in the hit Broadway revival of *Noises Off*, a comedy about the performance of a tired farce that goes horribly wrong. So it's only natural that everything in his own life is going right.

Hibbert, 45, has a recurring role on NBC's *Frasier* as the snooty food critic Gil Chesterton; first-class stage credits, including Paul Rudnick's *Jeffrey* and Oscar Wilde in *Gross Indecency*; a hot second career as a literary agent, with clients like Chuck Palahniuk (*Fight Club*) and Christopher Bram (*Father of Frankenstein*, which begat *Gods and Monsters*); and a new romance with a handsome, younger screenwriter.

And every night in *Noises Off* he plays Frederick Fellowes, a vain but minor actor who struggles to maintain his dignity while at one point hopping up stairs with his pants around his ankles and brandishing a plate of sardines.

Working on the show after September 11 was both difficult and healing for Hibbert, who knows New York audiences really need the release of a comedy. "We're the antidote to anthrax," he says.

Born in New York City, Hibbert moved to England when he was 2 and subsequently attended a boarding school. Acting was always in the cards. "At age 11," he says, "I turned my mother and father's back garden into an open-air theater. I wrote and starred in my own production of *The Fairy Forest*, in which I played Sparkie Eyes, prince of the fairies."

He studied at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts and broke into film with a small part in *Britannia Hospital*, a satire of British health care starring Malcolm McDowell. "I spent my first day with a surgical mask on, staring down at Malcolm McDowell's penis," says Hibbert. "I [later] reminded him, 'Malcolm, I met your penis and then I met you.'"

The two actors met again in a short-lived ABC revival of *Fantasy Island*.

Though Hibbert fell into his agenting career almost by accident—"I need to be incredibly busy," he says—he's worked steadily as an openly gay actor. Still, for a man raised in the United Kingdom, the love that once dared not speak its name can still be quite discreet.

"I haven't had that sit-down with my family, partly because they're in England and partly because it's never come up," says Hibbert. "I think in England it's not the same. It's unspoken but understood. Still, I've been seeing someone now for the last seven months, and I've been enjoying it greatly. I've been thinking: If this continues, then I would have every intention of taking him over to meet the family." ■

*Giltz writes for periodicals including the New York Post.*