

Scott Glenn was in an out-of-the-way part of Nicaragua, cut off from the outside world, working as hard as he had in years. And yet he felt spoiled. Glenn was teamed with director Ken Loach on the political drama "Carla's Song," and he reveled in Loach's unorthodox approach to filmmaking, which combines improvisation with a thorough exploration of every character.

"The experience of working with Ken was so unique and powerful," says Glenn. "I said to someone there, 'I can't go into another movie right after this. I'd get fired! I'd spend the whole time saying, Why can't you shoot the whole thing in sequence? Why can't we do major scenes that aren't going to appear in the final film just to know where our characters are? Why can't we improvise?'"

"So this person said, 'Well, what do you want to do?' And I said, 'Theatre.'"

The gods must have been listening. The next day, Glenn drove back to Managua and discovered a message waiting, asking if he was still interested in doing a piece he

had read some years earlier, Eric Overmyer's "Dark Rapture."

He was. While most people know the rugged, laconic Glenn from his film work ("The Right Stuff," "The Silence of the Lambs," the current "Courage Under Fire"), he is no stranger to the stage. True, his last New York outing was replacing John Malkovich in "Burn This," a less-than-easy task made harder by having a mere nine days of preparation. Still, his performance earned him the notice of a young director named Scott Ellis. (See story, page 22)

Cut to 1996. Immediately after agreeing to helm "Dark Rapture," Ellis decided that Glenn would be perfect for the lead—totally unaware of Glenn's previous acquaintance with the show.

Now at Second Stage, Overmyer's "theater noir" is a fast-moving drama where the tricky part is figuring out who is lying and who is telling the truth (if anyone). Glenn plays a screenwriter—and thief—who may or may not have set fire to his own house, *Continued on page 52*

Scott Ellis: Not-so-secret "Rapture" admirer

"What I love about "Dark Rapture" is that everybody lies," says director Scott Ellis. "These are not nice people."

Coming from this very nice man, that statement seems a bit odd at first, but in a way, "Dark Rapture" is the logical next step in Ellis' directorial progression. Ellis made his name with the Off-Broadway Kander and Ebb revue "And the World Goes 'Round" and the Broadway smash "She Loves Me," bright and sunny musicals, both. The following year, his palette darkened slightly, as he tackled a revival of William Inge's "Picnic," followed last spring by Turgenev's "A Month in the Country," both for Roundabout.

Then came last fall's revival of Stephen Sondheim's "Company," also for Roundabout. Not only were there nasty characters onstage (well, Joanne anyway)

but some unusually nasty criticism. Making matters worse, "Company" suffered a very public meltdown on its aborted way from its sold-out Roundabout engagement to an open-ended run at the Brooks Atkinson. Perhaps that experience gave Ellis this taste for nastier, edgier material? If so, he isn't showing his hand any more than the tightlipped characters in "Dark Rapture."

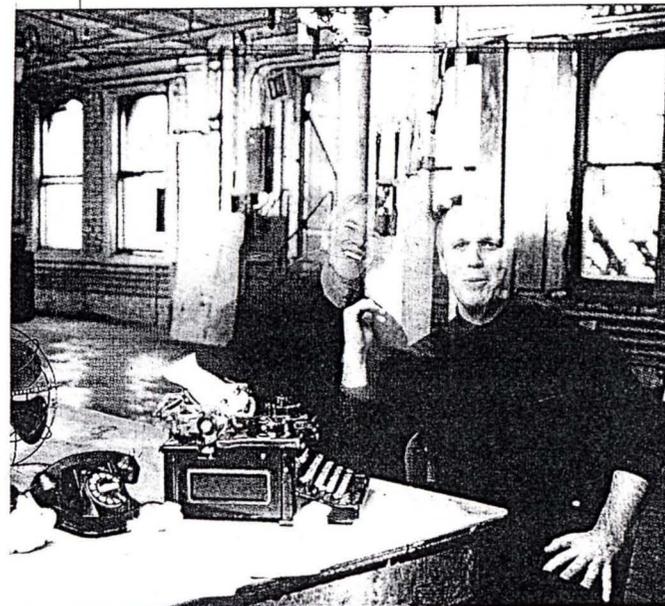
"Painful?" he repeats, when asked if that's how he feels about the "Company" fiasco today. "No. It was an extraordinary group of actors and I walked away from that experience with a show I was proud of. It was the best cast I've ever had."

Ellis may not be able to say that for long, since "Dark Rapture" is the first in a string of high profile projects, including a production of "Death of A Salesman," starring Judd Hirsch. But next up, he jumps into an eight-

week workshop of a new Kander and Ebb musical called "Steel Piers." Set during an Atlantic City dance marathon, it reunites him with "Round's" choreographer, Susan Stroman. And unlike "Company," a Broadway run for "Steel Piers" has just one obstacle to overcome.

Is he waiting for someone to hand him eight or so million dollars to finance it? "No, it's not that," he says brightly. "It's a theatre. We're waiting for a theatre." ★

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GREAT SCOTTS

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and whose tough, never-less-than-duplicious wife (Marisa Tomei) may or may not have been using the money her husband stole to fund an independent movie.

While Glenn is thrilled to return to the boards, his memories of theatre have not all been happy. "I was in a notorious production at Circle Rep called 'Angela's Wedding,' by Julie Bovasso. It was about an Italian wedding where all the skeletons came out of the closet. During the play, each of the characters would face the audience and launch into one of these long monologues." Pause. "Which no one understood." But when Julie got the cards back from preview audiences, instead of cutting the monologues, she expanded them.

"One night I got what I call selective amnesia. I told the people whose cues were affected, 'I am not going to read this shit.' They said, 'You have to.' And I said, 'But I'm not going to; I'm not here to bore an audience.' So the play was going along swimmingly," he says.

"Unfortunately, Julie was in the audience and she stomped out to the back and got in a fight with some of the Circle Rep people. She ended up on the street with another person and she punched him in the nose. Then she stormed back into the theatre and jumped on stage just as intermission began and started telling the audience not to come back after the break. Meanwhile, the guy with the broken nose had called the police and sworn out a complaint against her. So, two cops come into the theater and climb on stage and try to arrest her. She resisted and they had to cuff her and drag her off.

"The audience, of course, thought it was great. It was the best part of the show."

The producers of "Dark Rapture" hope history doesn't repeat itself. ★