

SUNDAY NOW

KEVIN SPACEY

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winner
returns to
Broadway

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Kevin Spacey in the
revival of "A Moon
for the Misbegotten."



Man on the 'Moon'

Kevin Spacey is in heaven now that his acting world revolves around the theater

BY MICHAEL GILTZ



It's not just Kevin Spacey that has come to New York with a revival of Eugene O'Neill's "A Moon for the Misbegotten," opening Monday for a scheduled run through June 10. It's the Old Vic itself — the 188-year-old London company that Spacey has revived as artistic director and plans to helm for a good decade to come — that has taken root at the Brooks Atkinson Theatre. And Spacey couldn't be happier.

"I'm very happy that we're bringing our entire ethos with us," Spacey says. "It's not just a show coming; it's a whole company coming. We have workshops through the entire run with kids from New York City schools. We're doing a U.S. and U.K. exchange of playwrights. We're doing 24-hour plays [a program in which a one-act is written and staged within 24 hours to get young people excited about theater]. That's in June. And we have student seats every night at \$25.

"These are things that we fought for, because there's no point in coming unless it's the company coming. There are 11 people on our staff who are going to be here over the next number of months doing all the work that we do in London." Howard Davies helms the show.

Although the collaborative nature of making movies is often obscured by those famous faces people see at the multiplex, theater is undeniably a from-the-boards-up team effort. And Spacey — despite being a two-time Academy Award-winner and A-list presence last seen on film as supervillain Lex Luthor in 2006's "Superman Returns" — clearly loves the inclusive nature of the stage, a path he set aside after moving into film in the early '90s, when he gave memorably acidic turns in 1992's "Glengarry Glen Ross" and 1994's combo of "The Ref" and "Swimming With Sharks."

"I made a conscious effort after 'Lost in Yonkers' [the 1991 Neil Simon comedy that won Spacey a Tony for Best Featured Actor in a Play] to focus on film for a decade," says the 47-year-old, New Jersey-born actor.

"It was an absolutely conscious decision," Spacey adds. "And then, at the end of 1999, I was like, 'Well — that went better than I thought.'"



STAGE MAN COMETH Kevin Spacey returns in "A Moon for the Misbegotten." Photo by David Handschuh/Daily News



LONG VOYAGE HOME

Spacey and Eve Best get cozy as '20s-era lost souls in "A Moon for the Misbegotten."



TABLE AND STARES Spacey commanded the room as Hickey in Broadway's 1999 "The Iceman Cometh" (above); he won a Tony for 1991's "Lost in Yonkers" (with Irene Worth).



That's an understatement. Spacey won a Best Supporting Actor Oscar for 1995's "The Usual Suspects" and a Best Actor Oscar for 1999's "American Beauty," making him part of a short list of actors to win both those awards, including Jack Nicholson, Meryl Streep, Robert De Niro, Denzel Washington and Jack Lemmon (one of Spacey's acting idols as well as his "Glengarry" co-star).

"So, that worked okay ..." is how Spacey describes his own astonished inner monologue after "American Beauty," "now what am I supposed to do?"

After his first Oscar, Spacey costarred in "Seven," "A Time to Kill" and "L.A. Confidential"; after the second, he did "Pay It Forward," "The Shipping News" and "The Life of David Gale," among others. He has directed two films, including his dream project, 2004's "Beyond the Sea," about the life of singer Bobby Darin. (Coming up, he has smaller roles in several films, including this year's Vince Vaughn comedy "Fred Claus.")

But theater was what he had his eye on after tackling Hollywood. In 1999, just before "Beauty" hit movie theaters, he had red-hot success with a revival of O'Neill's "The Ice-

man Cometh" (his affinity for the playwright was earlier demonstrated on Broadway in 1986's "Long Day's Journey Into Night," also with Lemmon.) In "Moon," he co-stars with Eve Best, who plays the rough-hewn good-time gal Josie to Spacey's besotted, failed actor James Tyrone. Colm Meaney plays her swindler of a father, and all three drink and bicker and tell lies in 1920s Connecticut.

Sitting in his dressing room before previews, Spacey gladly states that his priority for the next 10 years is the Old Vic.

Orson Welles once said directing a movie was like getting to play with the world's biggest toy train set, but to Spacey, there's no question which is more fun.

"Running a theater company, hands down," he says. "If I never made a movie again for the rest of my life, I would still die a happy person."

Does his agent know?

"Actually," Spacey laughs, "my agents and managers have been unbelievably supportive of this decision. I don't feel that pressure [to do film work]. I only ever feel it because people seem to have some perception that I've walked away from something."

"But in fact I've walked towards some-

thing. I didn't walk away from anything. If a movie comes along that I think is good, with people I'd like to work with, and it fits into our schedule at the theater, I'll consider it. If it doesn't, then I won't. It's so not an ordeal."

His comments don't surprise, really. Running a theater company gives him far more control than he could ever have in film, even working double time as a director. And having worked under Joseph Papp at New York's Public Theater, Spacey saw firsthand the impact artistic directors can have.

Besides, he has been preparing for this role his whole life.

"It goes back to when I was 13," says Spacey, "and I became close friends with a classmate, another future actor named Val Kilmer [the two attended school together in Chatsworth, a town in Southern California]. Val's dad lived on Roy Rogers' former ranch, where Roy had named a street Trigger Street.... And ultimately that has become the name of my production company, Trigger Street."

"Val and I, at a very young age — I still have the designs on a napkin — decided we wanted to build a theater on Trigger Street. There was going to be an amphitheater."

How many seats did it hold? "It was a good size," he smiles. "We were thinking big." ♦

The Old Vic has given him a new direction.

Spacey's films have included "L.A. Confidential" (l., with Danny DeVito), "The Usual Suspects" (near r.), which got him his first Oscar, "American Beauty" (center, with Mena Suvari), which got him his second, and "Beyond the Sea."

