

Talent

# Lights! Camera! Actor!

**A**s an actor, **Joe Mantello** has never been more visible, winning a Tony nomination for his role as the argumentative Louis in *Angels in America*. But it's Mantello the director who's center stage now. He's directing Faith Prince on Broadway in *What's Wrong With This Picture?* And when Jerry Zaks stepped away from *Love! Valour! Compassion!*—the new Terrence McNally play at the Manhattan Theatre Club—Mantello took on that as well...despite one week during which he was rehearsing both plays. Though *L!V!C!* was written by McNally and Mantello ultimately landed talent like Nathan Lane, John Glover, and Stephen Spinella, casting was tough. "It's very hard," says Mantello, "to cast plays right now; particularly when you try to cast men in their late thirties and forties. The casting director would hand us a list of people's names that would say 'not interested,' 'not available,' 'doesn't want to play gay.' It really is like calling in favors to get people." Early on, Mantello also had reservations about the audience at the MTC. "They were described to me as 'withholding,' as a group that refused to give Julie Andrews entrance applause. (But) the response has been great; I'm shocked



Mantello and the "L!V!C!" cast.

at how well it's going over." Broadway, of course, provides other shock waves. "If I actually stopped to think how much money was being sunk into [*What's Wrong*], I would be unable to go to work," Mantello admits. "So I'll just blindly continue on and pretend I'm doing a little showcase on 47th Street."

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