

# *All the World's his Stage*

## *A REVEL TO CELEBRATE THE GLOBE'S LEADING PLAYWRIGHT AND APPLAUD THE ARTISTRY THAT KEEPS HIS WORKS VIBRANT TODAY*

On Monday, May 20, 1996, at a lively benefit for the Folger Shakespeare Library, The Shakespeare Guild saluted SIR IAN MCKELLEN with a trophy to preserve an eminent performer's "Praise" and perpetuate his "Character with golden Quill" (Sonnet 85).

Unveiled two years earlier at a Folger ceremony to toast the 430th birthday of the world's most influential playwright and the 90th birthday of the man who has been extolled as our century's most enduring exemplar of the legacy which derives from that playwright, *The Golden Quill* is an elegant John Safer sculpture to be bestowed each spring on the actor, director, producer, or scriptwriter a lustrous selection committee has designated as that year's recipient of the *SIR JOHN GIELGUD AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN THE DRAMATIC ARTS*.

As actor TONY RANDALL and author and television journalist ROBERT MACNEIL noted when the Gielgud Award program was announced on April 24, 1994, it is entirely fitting that there be London theatre prizes to commemorate the legendary Laurence Olivier. It is just as fitting that there be a laurel of "wide and universal" applicability to immortalize Olivier's venerable contemporary. "We cannot hear the great voices of the past," MacNeil reminded his listeners, "but it is safe to say that in our time no actor has spoken Shakespeare with a finer ear for the poetry, or a voice more perfectly tuned to the music, than John Gielgud. Shakespeare could not wish a more noble interpreter." Mr. MacNeil went on to say that "The Shakespeare Guild does honor to itself by devising this way of honoring Gielgud, now and long into the future. And I am flattered to have a small part in bringing it about."

In a statement that followed the 1994 reception, Guild president JOHN F. ANDREWS emphasized that *The Golden Quill* would differ from other awards in two respects. "First," he observed, "it will be a trophy that recognizes dramatic achievement wherever it occurs: in the theatre, in film, television, and radio formats, in audio and video recordings, and in a full spectrum of other media. Second, and equally important, it will be international, rather than national, regional, or metropolitan, in its compass."

Appropriately, ROBERT MACNEIL was one of five Guild jurors for the 1996 Gielgud trophy. He was joined by cultural leader KITTY CARLISLE HART (chairman of the New York State Council on the Arts), playwright KEN LUDWIG (author of *Crazy For You* and *Lend Me A Tenor*), scholar ROGER PRINGLE (director of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in Stratford-upon-Avon), and radio correspondent SUSAN STAMBERG (interviewer and occasional host for *All Things Considered* and other NPR offerings).

A few days after his 92nd birthday, Sir John commended the selection panel's choice. He expressed heartfelt admiration for Sir Ian McKellen and conveyed his warmest congratulations to the initial Gielgud honoree.

### *Sir Ian McKellen: One Man Who In His Time Plays Many Parts*

Best known in America for his riveting *Richard III* (a tour de force which took the United States by storm in 1992 as a Royal National Theatre stage production and has now garnered a brace of Oscar nominations in the 1995 United Artists motion picture that is captivating filmgoers in one nation after another), SIR IAN MCKELLEN has collected more than a score of accolades for performances that have

been as diverse as they've been dazzling. He won an Olivier Award for his rendering of Max in the 1979 world premiere of Martin Sherman's *Bent*. A year later he received a Tony and several other citations for the Salieri he brought to Broadway in Peter Shaffer's *Amadeus*. In 1984, returning to many of the roles he'd played to immense acclaim during the '60s and '70s for the National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company, he collected the third of his Drama Desk awards, this time for *Acting Shakespeare*, a one-man show that had been telecast by PBS in 1982 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington.

In 1981 McKellen depicted D. H. Lawrence in *Priest of Love*, a film whose marquee included Ava Gardner, Sir John Gielgud, Penelope Keith, and Janet Suzman. In 1985 he appeared with Gielgud a second time, in a cinematic treatment of David Hare's *Plenty* that starred Charles Dance and Meryl Streep. Along the way he's made more than a dozen other films, among them *The Ballad of Little Jo*, *Bent*, *Cold Comfort Farm*, *Restoration*, *Scandal*, *The Shadow*, and *Six Degrees of Separation*. In 1991 McKellen was knighted by Queen Elizabeth for his services to the arts. During the same year he succeeded Stephen Sondheim as Professor of Contemporary Theatre at the University of Oxford.

Sir Ian has produced, and written a witty introduction to, an annotated screenplay for *Richard III*, a bold updating of the original text which reimagines Shakespeare in the political life of the 1930s and evokes the *Cabaret* atmosphere that accompanied the rise of Nazism. Through the generosity of Tracy Carns at OVERLOOK PRESS, attendees at the benefit and representatives of the media received complimentary copies of this fascinating illustrated paperback.

### *The Inaugural Gielgud Gala*

The revel at which the 1996 *Golden Quill* was conferred proved to be an enchanting medley of drama, music, and other bardic entertainment. Its title, ALL THE WORLD'S HIS STAGE, appropriated a theme from the most familiar speech in *As You Like It*. In the process it alluded to a solo theatre anthology, *Ages of Man*, that Gielgud made famous in the 1950s and '60s through tours that took him to several continents. Meanwhile it focused attention on the global renown of the first actor to be feted in Sir John's name. By spotlighting the niche the playwright continues to occupy in twentieth-century life, moreover, it reminded viewers that Shakespeare's charms re-main as potent today as in eras past.

A theatre professional who's well acquainted with both Gielgud and McKellen scripted a sizable portion of the initial Golden Quill pageant. JAMES ROOSE-EVANS, who directed *The Best of Friends*, a 1988 Hugh Whitmore drama in which Sir John made his last foray onto the boards of the West End, will soon be opening a London revival of *84 Charing Cross Road*, an epistolary narrative by Helene Hanff that Roose-Evans adapted for the stage in an award-winning production of 1981. On April 17, 1996, Mr. Roose-Evans took a camera crew to the Gielgud pavilion near Aylesbury for a video-recording session with Sir John. Excerpts from that interview, along with memorable moments from the actor's eight decades as a theatre and screen artist, were combined with footage on Sir Ian McKellen to create a montage of unforgettable impressions. When these recorded elements had been interwoven with all the recitations, melodic interludes, and anecdotes that laced the Folger festivities, the result was a tapestry which paid its respects not only to a pair of extraordinary thespians but to a multifaceted genius who's long been proverbial for the "infinite Variety" of his *dramatis personae*.

Anchoring the 1996 installment of *All the World's his Stage* was ROBERT MACNEIL, a master of ceremonies who was ideally suited to set the mood, introduce participants, and effect smooth transitions between the segments of a tribute that evoked a 400-year show-business tradition. In *Wordstruck*, a memoir about his love for the language a Renaissance poet did so much to advance and dignify, Mr. MacNeil had penned an eloquent paean to the author of *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and the *Henriad*. A few years

earlier Mr. MacNeil had devoted a chapter to the playwright in his series on *The Story of English*. Still more to the point, in April 1982 he'd provided a tour of the Folger during an interval in PBS's two-hour airing of *Ian McKellen Acting Shakespeare*. The troupe over which Mr. MacNeil presided on May 20th was headed by several personalities who had brought their talents to the Elizabethan Theatre on previous occasions.

BRIAN BEDFORD, who played Ariel to Sir John Gielgud's Prospero in a 1959 Peter Brook production of *The Tempest* at Covent Garden's illustrious Theatre Royal Drury Lane, has enjoyed a stellar career as actor and director. A native of Yorkshire, Mr. Bedford is a marquee attraction for audiences throughout the English-speaking world. He's appeared in virtually all of the leading roles in Chekhov, Coward, Ibsen, Shakespeare, and Shaw, and since 1989 he's offered playgoers a solo piece on *The Lunatic, the Lover, and the Poet*. Mr. Bedford won a Tony Award for his part as Arnolfe in *School For Wives* (1971), and Tony nominations for *Two Shakespearean Actors* (1991), *Timon of Athens* (1993), and *The Moliere Comedies* (1994). He's received kudos for his work in titles such as *The Cocktail Party* (1968), *Waiting for Godot* (1984), and *Educating Rita* (1988). He's performed in numerous films and television shows, among them *Grand Prix* (1966), *Blithe Spirit* (1982), *Othello* (1994), and *Nixon* (1995). And for nearly two decades he's been a mainstay at Canada's Stratford Festival, a theatre operation that houses what is often hailed as the finest classical repertory company in North America. In 1988 and 1989 Mr. Bedford took the role of Shylock in two Michael Langham productions of *The Merchant of Venice*, one for The Shakespeare Theatre at the Folger in Washington, the other for the Festival Theatre that visitors to Ontario see mirrored in the waters of a New World Avon.

EDWARD GERO enacted Gratiano in the 1988 Folger rendition of Michael Langham's *Merchant of Venice*. Long heralded as one of the most gifted actors in a city that's gaining heightened status as a theatre capital, Mr. Gero has won Helen Hayes Awards for his Macduff in the 1990 Shakespeare Theatre production of *Macbeth*, for his Bolingbroke in the 1994 *Richard II*, and for his Hotspur in the 1995 *Henry IV*. He's captured Helen Hayes nominations for three other roles at The Shakespeare Theatre: Mistress Quickly in the 1985 *Merry Wives of Windsor*, Cassio in the 1985 *Othello*, and MacHeath in the 1989 *Beggar's Opera*. Along the way he's received praise not only for the forty-plus characters he's played at The Shakespeare Theatre but for work he's done at Studio Theatre (*Conversations with my Father* and *Three Sisters*), at Arena Stage (*What the Butler Saw*), and at the Olney (*Broken Glass*). Mr. Gero has notched several film and television credits, among them *Die Hard 2* and *The Guiding Light*. He's acquitted himself capably as an educator, overseeing the undergraduate acting program at George Mason University and directing nimble student productions for GMU's theatre ensemble. In addition he's in constant demand as a consultant, serving on such task forces as the National Committee for Standards in the Arts.

KELLY MCGILLIS played Portia in a striking 1988 *Merchant of Venice* at the Folger's Elizabethan Theatre. A year later she won a Helen Hayes trophy for the Viola she portrayed on the same stage in Michael Kahn's 1989 *Twelfth Night*. Since the Shakespeare Theatre's move to the Lansburgh, Miss McGillis has appeared in three other timeless roles: Isabella in a 1992 *Measure for Measure*, Beatrice in a 1993 *Much Ado About Nothing*, and Helena in a 1996 *All's Well That Ends Well*. During the summer of 1995 Miss McGillis resurrected her Viola for a "Shakespeare-Free-For-All" *Twelfth Night* in the Carter Barron Amphitheatre, and in 1996 she returns to that sylvan glade for an encore as Isabella. Miss McGillis has performed frequently in made-for-television dramas, but she is best known for feature films such as *Reuben, Reuben* (1983), *Witness* (1985), *Top Gun* (1986), *Made in Heaven* (1987), *Promised Land* (1988), *The House on Carroll Street* (1988), *The Accused* (1988), *Winter People* (1989), and *North* (1994).

LYNN REDGRAVE gave the first public presentation of her one-woman show, *Shakespeare For My Father*, on the Folger stage in December of 1991. Since then she's taken it to Broadway, where it received Tony and Drama Desk nominations in 1993, and to a number of other venues, among them Washington's storied Ford's Theatre. A daughter of Sir Michael Redgrave and Rachel Kempson, whose careers intersected with those of luminaries like Peggy Ashcroft, John Gielgud, Vivien Leigh, Laurence Olivier, Joan Plowright, and Ralph Richardson, Miss Redgrave has appeared in such plays as *Born Yesterday*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *Hayfever*, *Knock Knock*, *Love for Love*, *The Master Builder*, *Mother Courage*, *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Saint Joan*, and *Three Sisters*. The film for which she is most widely recognized, of course, is *Georgy Girl*. For her title role in that comedy she earned an Oscar nomination and several accolades in 1967, among them a Golden Globe and a New York Film Critics citation. Other motion pictures in which Miss Redgrave has acted include *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex*, *Getting It Right*, *The Happy Hooker*, *Sunday Lovers*, *Tom Jones*, and *Shine*. Her television listings include several BBC productions, among them *The Fainthearted Feminist* and *Fighting Back*, along with such American entries as *The Carol Burnett Show*, *Steve Martin's Best Show Ever*, and *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane*. Miss Redgrave just completed a popular run on Broadway, where she and Robert Goulet co-starred in Ken Ludwig's *Moon Over Buffalo*.

Joining these Washington favorites was outgoing Republican SENATOR ALAN SIMPSON of Wyoming, an ardent friend of the Library, who opened the evening by welcoming a throng of 300 guests with the observation that he'd always regarded the Tudor reading room as "a retreat from the slings and arrows of outrageous reporters," a refuge in which he could replenish his rhetorical arsenal before he sallied back to the Capitol to "take arms against a sea of political troubles." After Senator Simpson praised the Library's director, WERNER GUNDERSHEIMER, and its acting director, BARBARA MOWAT, who is serving in Dr. Gundersheimer's stead while he enjoys a sabbatical, he introduced a four-minute video survey of the Folger's innumerable treasures.

Senator Simpson then yielded the podium to the Benefit Chairmen for the 1996 *Golden Quill* revel, the Honorable WINTON M. BLOUNT, a Folger trustee, and his wife CAROLYN, in whose name a magnificent theatre complex now affords a splendid setting for the ALABAMA SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL. A former Cabinet member, Mr. Blount served as Postmaster General from 1969 to 1973. In recent years he's become widely respected as a bipartisan spokesman for federal, state, and corporate support of America's embattled cultural institutions. In that capacity he delivered the 1995 Nancy Hanks Lecture on the Arts and Public Policy, a timely and powerful address which was published a few weeks later as a March "Outlook" article for *The Washington Post*.

With his radiant partner standing at his side, Mr. Blount pointed out that he claimed descent from the "Ed. Blount" who collaborated with publishers William and Isaac Jaggard as a printer of the 1623 First Folio, an indispensable collection of Shakespeare's dramatic works for which the Folger holdings are by far the most extensive on the planet. Mr. Blount quipped that the Folio's "Ed" had returned to life in the guise of Montgomery's "Red." He thanked everyone who had given financial support to the gala, expressed appreciation to the Honorary Patrons for *All the World's his Stage*, His Excellency the British Ambassador, SIR JOHN KERR, and LADY KERR, and greeted host Robin MacNeil as a man "whose love of Shakespeare equals our own."

Acknowledging Mr. Blount's compliment, Mr. MacNeil confessed that he'd have difficulty proving his love of Shakespeare with the kind of devotion that has led one observer to dub the Blounts "the First Couple of American Philanthropy." He feigned offense at Senator Simpson's "gratuitous slur" about "outrageous reporters" and said that one of the things that had always consoled him during the decades he'd covered the nation's capital was his awareness that, like other players, "scurvy politicians" finally "have their exits as well as their entrances."

Mr. MacNeil now took a moment to comment upon three objects that adorned the Folger stage. One of them, he said, was new, the trophy that sculptor JOHN SAFER had donated in his desire to help the Guild seal a superb actor's reputation "with golden Quill." Calling Mr. Safer a "a man of great elegance and generosity," Mr. MacNeil asked him to stand and receive the audience's applause. He went on to describe two items from the Folger collection. The first, centered at the rear before a backstage curtain, was an ornate, allegorical chair that had been designed by William Hogarth and commissioned by David Garrick, the eighteenth-century actor and impresario who probably did more than anyone else in Shakespeare's eventful afterlife to carve a pedestal for the Bard in popular culture. The second, to the left of the chair and positioned upon a taller column than the one to the right that bore *The Golden Quill*, was a stand-in for the marble bust of the poet that Garrick had commissioned in 1758 from sculptor Louis Francois Roubiliac.

Having identified these symbols of an illustrious heritage, Mr. MacNeil called upon the cast for a tribute that James Roose-Evans had compiled for Sir John Gielgud, a living monument of that heritage. At this point Mr. Roose-Evans and his four colleagues provided a stately fifteen-minute review of "An Actor's Life." Their narrative included accounts from such notables as critics James Agate, Brooks Atkinson, and Michael Billington, and performers Lynn Fontaine, Alec Guinness, Cedrick Hardwicke, Paul Scofield, Peter Ustinov, and Irene Worth, and it concluded with a reflection from director Peter Brook.

John is always in the present. He is modern in his restless quest for truth and new meaning. He is also traditional, for his understanding of the past. He links two ages. He is unique. As he himself has said, "There is always tomorrow's audience and tomorrow's inspiration which may yet, I hope, surprise me into doing my very best."

As they completed their choral panegyric, the five actors bowed to a photograph of Gielgud in his final stage play. Then they withdrew as Robert MacNeil invited everyone to enjoy the present that James Roose-Evans had brought with him from Sir John's living room in Wotton Underwood. On this cue the video monitors at either side of the set began glowing with the figure of the Award's namesake, rosy-cheeked and resplendent in a pink tie, as he thanked Mr. Andrews and all the others who'd taken the initiative to create a new trophy in his honor. Sir John apologized for his inability to be in Washington for the initial presentation of *The Golden Quill*. He spoke with relish of the parts he's still able to perform on film, television, and audio recording. He lauded the many achievements of Sir Ian McKellen, with particular mention of his roles in *Macbeth*, *Coriolanus*, and *Richard III*. And he singled out a younger group of actors for all their efforts to keep Shakespeare and other classics alive for today's playgoers and screen enthusiasts.

As Sir John bade a smiling adieu, Mr. MacNeil asked the progenitor of the Gielgud Award to step forward. Following a jest about his fear that the unusual late-spring heat, bearing down upon an overcrowded Elizabethan Theatre, might generate a new definition for "global warming," Guild president JOHN ANDREWS recalled the words MacNeil had spoken about drama prizes two years earlier. He expressed appreciation for the "small part" that Robin had continued to play through his participation in the selection process for the 1996 *Golden Quill* recipient. He paused to remember a former panelist, *Washington Post* drama critic RICHARD L. COE, who had died in November. And he noted that, in keeping with the criteria that Mr. Coe and the other committee members had helped formulate, the Gielgud Award had come into being as a laurel which would recognize a broad range of notable accomplishments in the dramatic arts, and which would thus commemorate the endeavors of a performer, director, producer, or scriptwriter for whom it is no exaggeration to assert that "all the world's his stage." It was clear, he asserted, that "these criteria are anchored in the values we've long

associated with Sir John Gielgud.” It was just as clear that “they apply with equal validity to Sir Ian McKellen, the first dramatic artist to be honored by the Guild in Gielgud’s name.”

Mr. Andrews drew his remarks to a close with an epistle that had arrived – not in the old-fashioned way by telegram, but in a newer way, by fax – the previous afternoon from an actor whose plans to take part in the 1996 festivities for *All the World’s his Stage* had been altered when he got an urgent request to assume the starring role in a Los Angeles production of the J. B. Priestley play for which Mr. MacNeil’s son Ian had won an Olivier Award for design in 1994.

Dearest John,

As tomorrow approaches, I wanted you to know once again how much I yearn to be with you. *An Inspector Calls* opened to very favorable notices, and I am enjoying Arthur Birling, but quite frankly, my heart is in D.C. at this moment in time. I would deeply appreciate your conveying the following message to Sir Ian McKellen: "A very special thank you for your inspiration, and for your unselfish generosity in sharing your talent with the world. You have given all of us many wonderful and mem-orable moments, and I know there will be many more."

Warmest congratulations,  
Stacy Keach

Having transmitted this benevolent missive, Mr. Andrews welcomed JAMES ROOSE-EVANS back to the rostrum for the consummation to which all the solemnities had been proceeding.

With an eloquence that was made all the more fervent by his lengthy friendship with the initial *Quill* recipient, Roose-Evans spoke of Sir Ian’s many contributions to the profession he’d represented with such élan. He marveled at McKellen’s “tornado-like energy.” He noted that when a youthful Ian conquered theatre audiences at the 1969 Edinburgh Festival with Christopher Marlowe’s *Edward II* and William Shakespeare’s *Richard II*, he received a congratulatory telegram from Sir John Gielgud, a man who had himself excelled in the second of those roles. Here, as Roose-Evans put it, was “one of the greatest living English actors, as it were, handing on the torch to the next generation of classical actors.”

Roose-Evans emphasized that, like Gielgud, McKellen had also triumphed in the current repertory, having won an Olivier Award in *Bent*, a new script by an American playwright, and a Tony in *Amadeus*, a contemporary drama by a British author. A few years later, Roose-Evans said, “following, as it were, in the footsteps of Sir John Gielgud,” McKellen “set off on a tour of America with his solo show, *Acting Shakespeare*.” By the mid-’90s, Roose-Evans observed, Sir Ian was ready to “bulldoze his way into the jungle of the film world, and to write, produce, and act in a film of *Richard III* which has opened up the play to a huge audience, many of a younger generation, in a language that they can understand, and which has won him, deservedly, world acclaim.” To illustrate his comments, Roose-Evans called for the well-trodden “Now is the Winter of our Discontent” speech in the startling form in which it re-emerges in McKellen’s *Richard III*.

Upon this prompting, the stage monitors became animated with a coronation ball that featured a big-band vocal rendering of Marlowe’s “Come Live With Me and Be My Love.” Then, with a tap on the microphone to garner the full attention of a frolicsome and distracted court, McKellen, playing Richard Duke of Gloucester as a general in fascist military attire, intoned a hollow victory oration to his older brother, recently married and even more recently installed as King of the realm. Once the play’s opening soliloquy became personal and private, a more sinister Crookback bustled into a sumptuously

appointed Edwardian men's room, where he relieved himself at the urinal and then washed his hands while he smirkingly addressed his deformed countenance in an "amorous looking-glass."

At the moment when, boasting of the plots he had laid, the title character exited with a beckoning finger to the spectator, a drum-roll from the *Richard III* soundtrack ushered Sir Ian to the Folger stage. Embracing him in front of Hogarth's symbolic "Seat of Shake," James Roose-Evans underscored "the climax of the evening" with a reference to "the long line that goes back to David Garrick, to Edmund Kean, to William Charles Macready, to Henry Irving, the first English actor to be knighted, to Laurence Olivier, and to John Gielgud." Now, he concluded, "Sir IAN MCKELLEN is in that great tradition of actors. And therefore, with great personal pleasure and privilege, on behalf of Sir John and The Shakespeare Guild, it gives me enormous delight" to honor him with "THE SIR JOHN GIELGUD AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN THE DRAMATIC ARTS."

Sir Ian nestled the trophy in his arms for a moment. Then he whimsically experimented with its power to double as a sword, whether on his crotch or by his side, and as a feather atop his cap. At last, with a gentle caress, he returned it to the column upon which it had awaited his advent.

Once he began speaking, Sir Ian commenced with words of gratitude for James Roose-Evans and for the actors who had assisted Roose-Evans in the evening's amusement. He thanked The Shakespeare Guild, its president, and the selection committee that had chosen him for the 1996 Gielgud Award. He recalled "with great affection Dick Coe, who was always friendly and welcoming whenever I was in Washington." He applauded the patronage of the British Ambassador and his wife, and the bounteous magnanimity of Mr. and Mrs. Blount. And finally, he conveyed a cordial word of appreciation to the Folger, "for having me back here tonight."

His thoughts returned to the reception, hosted by the Reagans, that preceded his 1982 performance at the Library. He'd found it "very moving," he said, "to hear an actor in the White House talking in praise of this building." And he'd been especially impressed when Ronald Reagan lifted up a copy of Shakespeare's works and quoted "a wise man" who had "once said that if the world would only understand and digest all the precious words in this book, it would be a better place." For McKellen this was "a wonderful line which, three months later, when he was seeking re-election to the office," the President employed again, "somewhere in the Bible Belt," as he held aloft "a copy of the Holy Scriptures." Sir Ian wasn't sure whether Mr. Reagan had been relying upon an "actor's instinct" or a "politician's instinct," but either way it was obvious that he knew "you never throw away a good line."

As he recollected instances in which he'd come into direct or indirect contact with Gielgud, McKellen said "Sir John and I first crossed paths in a moment of violence." McKellen then summoned up an evening when, as a young man in the upper balcony of a theatre in the north of England, he'd been perturbed when the woman in front of him started giggling while Sir John moaned "Howl, howl, howl, howl, howl" during the final moments of *King Lear*. "So angry was I that she might be upsetting my hero down on stage that I rolled up my program and hit her on the head." Thereafter, he said,

I saw Sir John acting in many plays; not just Shakespeare, of course; in Anton Chekhov's plays, and Alan Bennett's, and so on through David Storey and Harold Pinter. He would not be pleased to be remembered simply as an actor of Shakespeare.

James has told you about the telegram I received after *Richard II*. It's absolutely typical of Sir John that he knows exactly what is going on, and does to this day, not just in the theatre, but in the cinema. He's one of those very rare actors who enjoys seeing other people at work.

The tradition that he and I, and my colleagues here, like to think we belong to is nothing to do, essentially, with the classical theatre, the voice beautiful, knighthoods, and all that Englishness. Sir John is the first to say, and I am the second, that we both feel as much at home on the stages of the United States as we do on the stages of the United Kingdom. And I dislike any obstacle that's put in the way of free exchange of actors between our two countries. It's an enormous pleasure at the moment that at the National Theatre in London Mike Nichols should be starring in a new play and having a great success, just as the Royal Shakespeare Company, having been to the Kennedy Center here, are successfully presenting *A Midsummer Night's Dream* on Broadway. That's as it should be.

The tradition we belong to is, I think, not to do with stardom but to do with companies of like-minded people gathering together to put on a play for your delectation. If it were not for Sir John's own companies in the '30s and the '40s, which set the pattern for the sort of dream that the National Theatre brought into realization, there might well have been no National Theatre as we know it today. And he, of course, has worked there, and

with the Royal Shakespeare Company, and all of us as actors on stage here know that we function at our best, whether we're playing the leading part or the smallest, in a company of actors.

And the tradition we belong to is that, essentially (thinking of Sir John), of the spoken word, which brings us back to Shakespeare. Shakespeare lived at a time when the spoken word was preeminent, whether uttered from the throne, or from the pulpit, or in the marketplace, or in a theatre such as this, where, as we are reminded tonight, there was no benefit of scenery, nor not much costume, all done by daylight, and the concentration was on the actor and his voice, and the words of Shakespeare. And it's with Shakespeare's words I'd like to end this evening.

If I have one achievement that Sir John might envy, it is that I'm perhaps the last actor who will ever play – or rather create – a leading part by William Shakespeare. Let me tell you how that happened. When he was a young man, he and other playwrights got together to write a play called *Sir Thomas More*, and this by chance was never performed during Shakespeare's lifetime, and in fact received its first professional performance back when I played that part during the four-hundredth celebration of Shakespeare's birth [in 1964]. This was in a theatre in Nottingham, where I was working. The great speech that Shakespeare contributed to that play is one which remains ever relevant, and I'm sure you can respond to it.

It's moving that it is the one example of Shakespeare's manuscript which remains in existence, not in the Folger Library, but in the [British] Library in London, where you can see these words actually written in Shakespeare's own handwriting.

The situation in the play is this. A crowd is out in the streets of London, behaving like a mob, complaining about the strangers in their midst. By *strangers* read "immigrants," or indeed any minority you care to think of. And on the day that the Ryan White Bill was signed in the Roosevelt Room of the White House (and I was privileged enough to be there to see the President do that), well there's another minority that might come to mind.

The usual complaint about minorities: they take our jobs, they take our housing, they eat our food, they behave in a peculiar way. "Best to get rid of them," says the crowd, "get them removed, send them back where they came from." And Thomas More, the lawyer, is sent out to argue in favor of justice and good order. And, being by Shakespeare, of course it ends with a ringing plea for humanity.



Someone in the crowd shouts that the strangers should be removed, and Sir Thomas More replies:

Grant them removed and grant that this your noise  
 Hath chid down all the majesty of England,  
 Imagine that you see the wretched strangers,  
 Their babies at their backs, with their poor luggage  
 Plodding to th' ports and coasts for transportation,  
 And that you sit as kings in your desires,  
 Authority quite silenced by your brawl,  
 And you in ruff of your opinions cloth'd,  
 What had you got? I'll tell you, you had taught  
 How insolence and strong hand should prevail,  
 How order should be quell'd, and by this pattern  
 Not one of you should live an aged man,  
 For other ruffians, as their fancies wrought,  
 With self-same hand, self reasons, and self right,  
 Would shark on you, and men like ravenous fishes  
 . . . feed on one another. . . .

. . . [D]esperate you are,  
 Wash your foul minds with tears, and those same hands  
 That you like rebels lift against the peace  
 Lift up for peace, and your unreverent knees,  
 Make them your feet, to kneel and be forgiven. . . .

. . . You'll put down strangers,  
 Kill them, cut their throats, possess their houses,  
 And lead the majesty of law in lym\* \*leash  
 To slip him like a hound; . . . say now the King,  
 As he is clement if th' offender mourn,  
 Should so much come too short of your great trespass  
 As but to banish you, whither would you go?  
 What country by the nature of your error  
 Should give you harbor? Go you to France or Flanders,  
 To any German province, Spain or Portugal,  
 Nay, any where that not adheres to England,  
 Why, you must needs be strangers; would you be pleas'd  
 To find a nation of such barbarous temper  
 That breaking out in hideous violence  
 Would not afford you an abode on earth,  
 Whet their detested knives against your throats,  
 Spurn you like dogs, and like as if that God  
 Owed not nor made not you, nor that the elements  
 Were not all appropriate to your comforts,  
 But charter'd unto them? What would you think  
 To be thus us'd? This is the strangers' case  
 And this your mountainish inhumanity.

Having completed this speech, a cry for tolerance and compassion which he had tactfully related to the "minority" that would benefit most from "The Ryan-White Comprehensive AIDS Care Act," Sir Ian bowed to an assembly that burst immediately into thunderous ovations. He then urged Brian Bedford,

Edward Gero, Kelly McGillis, Lynn Redgrave, and James Roose-Evans back to the stage to share the cheers of an auditorium that reverberated with hurrahs.

The following morning, readers who opened up the lead story in *The Washington Post* discovered that earlier on May 20th – a few hours before Sir Ian invoked a stirring rebuke from the pages of a sixteenth-century playscript – the United States Supreme Court had “struck down a Colorado constitutional amendment that barred government efforts to protect homosexuals from discrimination.” According to the *Post* reporter, the Court had declared that “no state may ‘deem a class of persons a stranger to its laws.’”

### ***Ancillary Activities for Participants in the 1996 Golden Quill Celebration***

On Saturday, May 18th, as an added attraction for aficionados of the first Gielgud awardee, The Shakespeare Guild and the AMERICAN FILM INSTITUTE co-hosted *AN EVENING WITH SIR IAN MCKELLEN*. In a clip-illustrated two-hour dialogue with Guild president John Andrews, Sir Ian discussed highlights from the cinema and television roles he'd played in *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *Plenty*, *Richard III*, and *Scandal*. Then on Sunday night, May 19th, Sir Ian returned to the Kennedy Center as the AFI THEATRE showed full-length versions of *Richard III* and *Priest of Love*.

Sir Ian attended both AFI events, as he would the Folger revel, in the company of his stepmother Gladys, his Georgetown cousin Joanne Reiss, and Joanne's husband David. They in turn were joined by the McKellens' friends Nick and Jenny Littlefield. It was through the offices of NICK LITTLEFIELD, staff director and chief counsel for the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee and an aide to Senator Kennedy (one of the sponsors of the Ryan White Bill), that Sir Ian was invited to watch the White House signing – and meet President Clinton – on May 20th.

On Tuesday morning, May 21st, LADY KERR hosted a reception at the beautiful Residence of the British Ambassador to the United States. Several of the stars – including Sir Ian and his step-mother – and many of the guests who had enjoyed the gala the previous evening were on hand for coffee and cakes. They had an opportunity to meet some of the BRITISH EMBASSY personnel, among them social secretary Amanda Downes, who had been so helpful with arrangements for the benefit. They also had the good fortune to share the pleasure with which Red and Carolyn Blount accepted a Folger gift bestowed by Barbara Mowat: a framed reproduction of the stained-glass Library window that memorializes the heraldic insignia for Folger printer Edward Blount.

On Sunday evening, May 19th, at a gracious reception in the home of JOHN AND JOY SAFER, the Blounts had been among the first recipients of an earlier gift, supplied through the kindness of Karen Day and her colleagues at CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS: an inscribed collection, *William Shakespeare: His World, His Work, His Influence*, which had been boxed in a handsome case by the Folger's skillful bookbinder, J. Franklin Mowery. The Scribners set includes an essay by Sir John Gielgud, and copies of it also went to several of the other principals in the May 20th revel.

### ***Media Coverage of the Initial Gielgud Award Presentation***

Press reaction to the 1996 Golden Quill Gala was overwhelmingly positive. In “The Reliable Source” for the May 21st *Washington Post*, ANN GERHART and ANNIE GROER published a photograph of Sir Ian McKellen and his stepmother Gladys, and quoted the honoree as “absolutely delighted” to be the first thespian to receive the Gielgud Award. The headline for the *Post* story, “At the Folger, Knights to Remember,” succinctly captured the spirit of the event.

In a full-page article on “A Grand Night for Acting Honors” for the May 22nd *Washington Times*, reporter Ann Geracimos said that “A lack of convention – and loads of verbal wit and homilies – marked the evening, which had a fantasy quality about it, like a cruise ship on one of those expensive theme tours.” Ms. Geracimos went on to mention that “The award itself, which is to be made annually to honor actors in the grand tradition, was a striking prototype quill sculpture – another Shakespeare allusion – created by Washington’s own John Safer. The final version will be cast in bronze, but, playing the jester, Mr. McKellen could put this one on his forehead like a hat and by his side like a sword before launching into a moving and dramatic acceptance speech.”

The May 22nd “Morning Report” of the *Los Angeles Times* noted that “All the world was a stage Monday night at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington as Sir Ian McKellen received the first Sir John Gielgud Golden Quill award for excellence in the dramatic arts. The black-tie benefit in the library’s Elizabethan Theater featured video greetings from Gielgud – he’s 92 and couldn’t travel from England – and comments from Lynn Redgrave and Kelly McGillis.” Meanwhile, wire-service accounts of the gala, dispatched by the Associated Press and by United Press International, appeared on radio and TV stations and in newspapers around the nation.

A month later, in a June 21st profile with a tongue-in-cheek title, “Mad Dog and Englishmen,” DAVE KARGER of *Entertainment Weekly* praised “the latest screen treatment of *Richard III*.” He observed that Ian McKellen, “who exec-produced and cowrote the Oscar-nominated film,” had managed to make the title character “at once endearing and repulsive – stuffing his mouth with chocolates, wine, and cigarettes before flashing a dastardly smile.” Karger then alluded to the Gielgud trophy: “‘I regard *Richard III* as the most brilliant Shakespearean film ever made,’ says John Andrews, president of the Shakespeare Guild, which presented the actor with the Guild’s first Golden Quill award on May 20. ‘I think it’s going to have a life of its own.’” According to Karger, “That’s in part because of the sneaky asides McKellen delivers throughout the film. Just before accepting his crown – the achievement Richard’s been anticipating his entire life – he glances at us and says with faux arm-twisting hesitation, ‘I’m not made of stone.’ It’s a performance some critics contend should have been rewarded with an Oscar nomination.”

### ***Background on The Shakespeare Guild***

Incorporated in 1987, The Shakespeare Guild is a tax-exempt nonprofit organization that seeks to foster a deeper appreciation of the heritage that emanates from the author a prestigious twentieth-century novelist nicknamed “Shapesphere.” Through an extensive array of educational and cultural initiatives – eventually to include the publication of an accessible, illustrated magazine and the development of a varied menu of theatre, television, radio, multimedia, and travel offerings – the Guild aspires to bring the poet and his influence to a larger and more engaged public in every region of the earth. In keeping with this objective, the Guild views the Gielgud Award as a means of maintaining the ideals and propagating the example of a man who, more perhaps than any other classical performer, has defined our era’s approach to the interpretation of Shakespeare and of the modern and post-modern artists who’ve drawn most profoundly from his unique inspiration.

The Shakespeare Guild is gratified that it was possible for the 1996 Gielgud Award presentation to be held in the Folger’s Elizabethan Theatre, the setting at which *The Golden Quill* was unveiled two years earlier. On that occasion, after TONY RANDALL spoke of Gielgud’s greatness and described some of the actor’s most endearing personal traits, SUSAN STAMBERG read a March 1994 letter in which SIR JOHN said “Please give my love and greetings to all who are at the celebration you are so kindly sponsoring. I only wish I could have been able to join you myself and respond in person to your great warmth and kindness. My times in America have brought me so many cherished memories, and I always feel it is my second country.”

### *Production Team for the 1996 Gielgud Award Ceremony*

ED YOE and his colleagues at ARTIST SERVICES, INC. assisted the Guild and the Folger with talent searches and production management for the initial Gielgud Award program. Mr. Yoe directed the April 1992 60th Anniversary Gala for the Library and the April 1994 unveiling of *The Golden Quill*, and he has worked with a broad range of entertainers and performing groups, among them Steve Allen, Maya Angelou, Susan Anton, Burt Bacharach, Tony Bennett, David Brenner, George Burns, Dick Cavett, Judy Collins, Bill Cosby, The Drifters, Dame Edna, The Fifth Dimension, Roberta Flack, Aretha Franklin, Art Garfunkel, Lou Gossett, Joel Grey, Marvin Ham-lisch, Maurice Hines, Bob Hope, Marilyn Horne, Sally Kellerman, Jay Leno, Hal Linden, Rich Little, Melissa Manchester, Wynton Marsalis, Maureen McGovern, Liza Minnelli, Melba Moore, Willie Nelson, Aaron Neville, Rosie O'Donnell, Mandy Patinkin, Itzhak Perlman, Leontyne Price, Helen Reddy, Chita Rivera, Joan Rivers, Kenny Rogers, Bobby Short, Ringo Starr, Barbra Streisand, Toni Tennille, Tommy Tune, Dionne Warwick, and Mary Wilson. On April 18-20 Mr. Yoe produced *The 49th Annual Horatio Alger Awards*, a benefit that brought Denyce Graves, Rita Moreno, and other singers to the Supreme Court, to Ford's Theatre, and to the Grand Hyatt Hotel in DC. A PBS show with highlights from that weekend was aired on May 30th.

The director assigned by Artist Services to *All the World's his Stage* was TERRY D. KESTER, a gifted stage and film specialist with wide experience in the crafting of benefit shows. Mr. Kester was ably seconded by such colleagues as BILL BROCKSCHMIDT, MITCH CURTIS, and STEFAN.

Guild president JOHN ANDREWS helped supervise the first *Golden Quill* presentation as script consultant and conceptual coordinator. MISSY PEARSON, Director of Annual Giving at the Folger Shakespeare Library, served as the Library's manager for *All the World's his Stage*. Assisting her were ALISA CARREL and KATIE NICELY. Overseeing all of the Folger components of the event was JANE KOLSON, Director of Development.

The Benefit Consultant for *All the World's his Stage*, and the person who secured the invaluable participation of James Roose-Evans, was JAMES P. ELDER, a member of the Advisory Council for The Shakespeare Guild and a former Director of Development at the Folger.