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DATEBOOK Section D



DARRYL BUSH / The Chronicle

Lestat, sung by Hugh Panaro, prepares to sink his teeth into Louis (Jim Stanek) in "Lestat," at the Curran Theatre. The musical is scheduled to run on Broadway in the spring.

REVIEW



Lestat: Musical. Book by Linda Woolverton, adapted from Anne Rice's "The Vampire Chronicles." Music by Elton John. Lyrics by Bernie Taupin. Directed by Robert Jess Roth. (Through Jan. 29. Curran Theatre, 445 Geary St., San Francisco. Two hours, 40 minutes. Tickets \$30-\$90. Call (415) 512-7770 or visit www.shnsf.com).

The vampire Lestat has settled in San Francisco. And he's singing in a new musical. Quick! Someone **fetch the garlic** and a wooden stake!

By Robert Hurwitz
CHRONICLE THEATER CRITIC

The creatures of Anne Rice's "The Vampire Chronicles" have survived many things — fire, famine, dismemberment, even a couple of regrettable Hollywood movies. Whether they can survive "Lestat," the Broadway-bound musical at the Curran Theatre, is more open to question.

Didactic, disjointed, oddly miscast, confusingly designed and floundering in an almost unrelentingly saccharine score by Elton John, "Lestat" opened Sunday as the latest ill-conceived Broadway hopeful in the Best of Broadway series (following on the heels of "Lennon" and "Mambo Kings"). It's the first stage production of the new Warner Bros. Theatre Ventures, and if that sounds as if Bugs Bunny's company is trying to follow in the footsteps of Mickey Mouse, it's no accident.

In "Lestat," Elton John and Bernie Taupin have combined their talents for a toothless act.

"Lestat" was put together by director Robert Jess Roth, who staged Disney's first theatrical venture, "Beauty and the Beast," now in its 12th year on Broadway. Linda Woolverton, who wrote the book, adapted "Beauty" from her own Disney screenplay. John, who composed the score for Disney's animated hit "The Lion King," did the same for the vapid Disney musical "Aida." But where "Aida" can be enjoyed for its excessive bad taste, "Lestat," for the most part, is simply not quite undead.

There may still be time to breathe some life into it before its scheduled April opening at New York's

Palace Theatre. The world-premiere run at the Curran is a shakedown cruise, after all. But "Lestat" has been in previews since Dec. 17, during which one major supporting actor has been dismissed and presumably other changes have been made. It needs much more work.

Part of the problem may be the source. "Lestat" is adapted from the first two books of "The Vampire Chronicles" — 1976's "Interview With the Vampire" and 1985's "The Vampire Lestat" — which offer very different, often conflicting versions of three key characters. Woolverton and lyricist Bernie Taupin, John's longtime pop song collaborator, have to make those characters consistent and create a unified tone for the narrative. They're also busy — very busy — trying to cram as many incidents and as much information from both books into one libretto as possible.

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Truman Capote was the first gay man or woman one young interviewer had knowingly met.

Pleased to meet you, Mr. Capote — You can call me Ms. Naive

Philip Seymour Hoffman's portrayal of Truman Capote has generated renewed interest in the eccentric writer. Hoffman has received many honors so far, including a nomination for a Golden Globe (the awards show is next Monday). Below is a reminiscence of Capote by Laura Deutsch, a Mill Valley writer who interviewed Capote in his New York City apartment when she was an intern with Mademoiselle magazine in 1968.

By Laura Deutsch
SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

"I look like a tough little bitch in that one." Truman Capote cocks his head, flips his hand over his shoulder and points to his full-length oil portrait. It hangs adjacent to a wall of windows overlooking Manhattan south.

I was a nice Bryn Mawr girl (in 1968 we weren't called women), unprepared for this outburst, let alone his oddity. Capote was a miniature man compared to the lanky guest editors from Mademoiselle magazine, five college girls, bright, energetic, with questions prepared. I took in his mannerisms and speech — theatrical, sardonic. Thirty-seven years later, Philip Seymour Hoffman is a dead ringer for the baby-voiced author.

In the '70s, I moved to San Francisco, where a waiter with cherry-red lipstick and Carmen Miranda earrings served me dinner on Castro Street. But before that one-hour visit with Capote, I had never knowingly met a

gay man or woman.

Fresh from a year in Europe, I was Daisy Miller Innocent Abroad, back home. I didn't get that I was talking to one of the greatest writers of my time. In fact, I was a bit disappointed because I'd been looking forward to interviewing John Lindsay, New York's handsome star mayor, on his way to great things. Lindsay had canceled; Capote pinch-hit. I was young and knew nothing.

If I were interviewing Capote today, I'd be aware of his brilliance and breadth, from "Breakfast at Tiffany's" to "In Cold Blood." I'd be familiar with his background, might ask how being abandoned by parents and left with eccentric elderly cousins affected his decision to be a writer, his choice of material. Or maybe not. His sharp sibilant tongue, whether slicing himself or others, was evident

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Philip Seymour Hoffman: City Arts & Lectures appearance hosted by Roy Eisenhardt, with film clips. 8 p.m. Jan. 19 at Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco. Tickets: \$25. (415) 392-4400, cityarts.net.



San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

"Multiple Grotto," a sculpture by Olafur Eliasson acquired by SFMOMA, allows viewers to enter it.

SFMOMA's new acquisitions on view — one from the inside

The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art has purchased two important contemporary art works, extending a strong run of collection building that, though it has slowed, stretches back a decade. The museum characteristically refuses to discuss the cost of the acquisitions, though each would probably have a six-figure retail price.

"Multiple Grotto" (2004), an enterable stainless steel sculpture by Olafur Eliasson, foreshadows the survey show — his first in the United States — that SFMOMA will devote to the Scandinavian artist in 2007. Visitors can see the piece on the fifth floor, among a new rotation of works from the permanent collection.

Kenneth Baker Art Notes

A spiky sphere, 15 feet in diameter, composed of what look like rosettes of slightly truncated stainless steel tail fins, "Multiple Grotto" stands open at one side. The viewer who enters it sees glowing, translucent polyhedrons in every direction. The light that enters each tailfin through the small opening at its end ricochets among the form's reflective interior surfaces, generating the illusion of a radiant, faceted solid. As the shapes of the tail fins and their apertures vary, so do the shapes of

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