

NOCTURNALIST

SARAH MASLIN NIR

For Theater People, a Night, and T

It was 3 on Monday morning when we found ourselves recumbent on the floor next to the actor and director **JOEL GREY** in a hotel suite that goes for up to \$15,000 per night, filled with Broadway luminaries of every stripe, when *Nocturnalist* finally thought, "Wow, these people do know how to party."

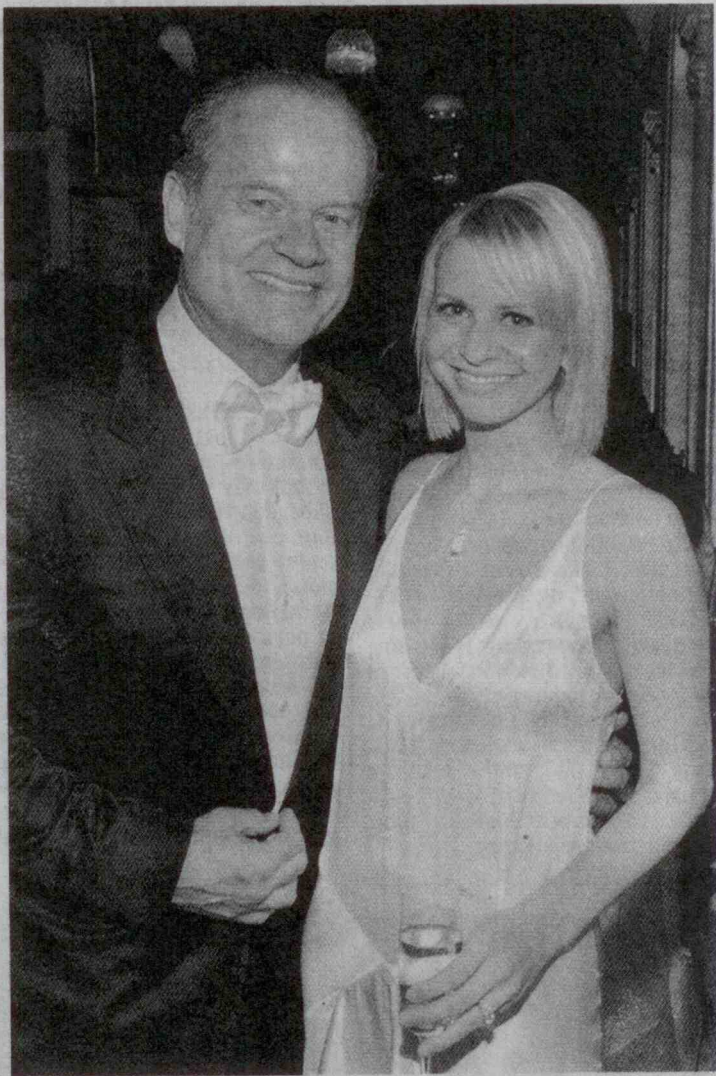
That had been up for debate earlier in the evening at the Tony Awards, held at the Beacon Theater on the Upper West Side. Celebrities snaked down Amsterdam Avenue along the thronged red carpet, fans held at bay by barricades. The best star-watching was had by the residents of the West 74th Street Home, an assisted-living residence whose entrance happened to be right where the red carpet entered the theater's back door.

Several residents sat in chairs on the pavement waving at the stars and complimenting the outfits of passers-by. "Nice Pucci!" one older woman called to *Nocturnalist* (it's our mother's). Past the adoring elders, the stars were sniffed by Maxwell, an explosives detecting Labrador whose credits include the premiere of "Sex and the City II."

If the night-life columnists in attendance wondered what the theater world thought of them, our seat assignment was our answer: Shunted to the back row on a balcony, we had to stand if we wanted actually to see the whole stage. But it was the first time *Nocturnalist* was ever thankful for poor seats. Cocktails were forbidden in the orchestra because of the live telecast, so the balcony bar was packed during every commercial break, with stars skipping out to fortify themselves for the awards show, lasting hours.

Slightly dazed by the interminable pageant, and miffed by the amount of Broadway insiders who sniffed at us when we inquired about who was who, we headed to the official afterparty at the Plaza Hotel.

It was the largest party we'd ever been to, ranging several floors and so many rooms that attendants handed out maps at the entrance. But not even **CHRIS ROCK**, **KELSEY GRAMMER** or a miniature copy of the theater with



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Kelsey Grammer and his wife, Kayte Walsh, at the Tony Awards afterparty at the Plaza Hotel, where the mood was sedate.

cupcakes in the seats — or rumors of **HUGH JACKMAN** spotted nearby, naturally — could liven up the staid tone. (One guest may have found it exciting: she fainted and lay in her gown on the carpet while the actress **JUDITH LIGHT** spoke animatedly with friends, oblivious of the toppled woman almost at her feet.)

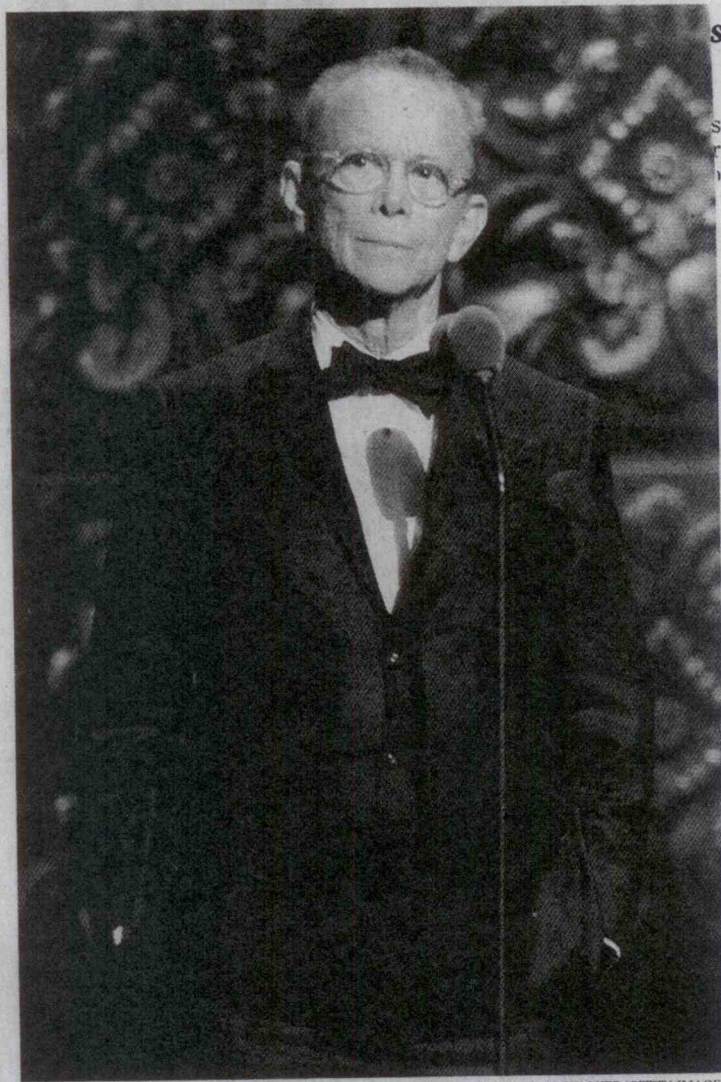
We left and at 2 a.m. were in the Empire Suite at the Carlyle on Madison Avenue. The party was held by the public relations group O&M Co. in honor of Mr. Grey, who — among other accomplishments — co-directed "The Normal Heart," which had just won the Tony for best revival

of a play. **BONO** had just left, we were told, but everyone else seemed to be just arriving.

"This suite is the great equalizer," a young woman told us. Rich and not-so-rich — it blew everyone away. The duplex rooms looked out over the city; one chamber had a bed with a flat-screen television that levitated electronically from a hidden nook in the footboard. Waiters wandered around with shot glasses of pea soup.

At a bar, **REEVE CARNEY**, star of the much-lampooned "Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark," was diplomatic about his show's controversy. He refused to say which

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ANDREW H. WALKER/GETTY IMAGES

Joel Grey onstage during the awards show. "The Normal Heart," which he co-directed, won for best revival of a play.

director he liked better, the ousted Julie Taymor or her replacement, Philip William McKinley. "I come from a family of divorce," he said, "and you don't love one of your parents more."

We asked Mr. Grey for a word, and he directed us to the carpeted spiral staircase and plopped across the stairs, compelling *Nocturnalists* to follow suit. Needless to say, it was hard to digest any of Mr. Grey's passionate words about the power of his play, a charged look at the AIDS virus — it was 3 a.m. and the man had us lying on the floor while an entire party looked on from below.

In a parlor, **MATTHEW BRODERICK** shared an armchair with two other people. He told us he was very disappointed about not winning a fancy watch in the gifting suite. Mr. Jackman and **CHRISTIE BRINKLEY** did, he said, unfair since they were already so genetically gifted. We reminded him that he used to yell at our childhood friends when they played hooky and sat on his stoop on Charlton Street. He denied it. "I'm very understanding of youngsters, that's not true — I think," Mr. Broderick said. "I would never yell at youngsters," he said. "I would say, 'Would you like a sandwich?'"