

Autumn in New York



Katrina Lenk and Tony Shalhoub make their own Mideast peace as *'The Band's Visit'* makes the leap from off-Broadway.

From SpongeBob to 'Swan Lake,' it's shaping up to be an eclectic stage season

By BARBARA HOFFMAN

EVEN in a season when The Boss comes to town — **"Springsteen on Broadway"** (previews Oct. 3, Walter Kerr) — it's always nice when beloved old shows come alive again. Look no further than Bette Midler's *"Hello, Dolly!"* to see what happens when the famous meets the familiar: blockbuster!

In a fall full of starry revivals, one of the most hotly anticipated is **"M. Butterfly"** (Oct. 7, Cort). This Tony-winning thriller about a French diplomat and the Chinese opera star who seduces him opened in 1988 and ran 777 performances. Clive Owen plays the deluded Frenchman while Julie Taymor, the *"Lion King"* lioness, returns to Broadway for the first time since the *"Spider-Man: Turn off the Dark"* debacle as director.

Those who've seen *"M. Butterfly"* will never forget its shocking reveal. But David Henry Hwang says his ripped-from-real-life tale is more than its sensational twist. Maybe now, he tells *The Post*, we're able to examine "the intimacy and passion of this love story" better than we did the first time around.

Back again, too, is **"Time and the Conways"** (through Nov. 26, American Airlines), which last played here in 1938. J.B. Priestley's drama about well-to-do Brits now stars Elizabeth McGovern, who should feel right at home after her years on *"Downton Abbey."* Joining her are *"True Blood"* star Anna Camp and Anna Baryshnikov, the daughter of you-know-who.

In 1990, **"Once on This Island"** (Nov. 9, Circle in the Square) posed the musical question, "Can a poor island girl find true love with a rich young man?" It asks it again, this time with a cast that

includes *"Porgy and Bess"* powerhouse Phillip Boykin and Lea Salonga, the original heroine of *"Miss Saigon."*

More cheering casting news: **"The Band's Visit"** (Oct. 7, Barrymore), David Yazbek's wistful gem of a musical, arrives with its off-Broadway cast intact. Tony Shalhoub returns as the leader of an Egyptian police orchestra stranded in a tiny Israeli town; Katrina Lenk (*"Once," "Indecent"*), is the sultry cafe owner who befriends him. When all is said and sung, "food, music, love and the basic need for human connection to be understood crosses all barriers," says book author Itamar Moses.

Harvey Fierstein has made that "basic need for human connection" the heart of every project, beginning with 1982's *"Torch Song Trilogy."* Now that semi-autobiographical Tony winner is coming back, in slightly abridged form, as **"Torch Song"** (Second Stage, Sept. 25), with Michael Urie as the drag queen who longs to start a family, and Mercedes Ruehl as the mom from hell (or, at least, Florida).

New this season is Steve Martin's **"Meteor Shower"**

(Nov. 1, Booth), starring that ingenue Amy Schumer and Laura Benanti as two halves of California couples in crisis. Another crisis, of the financial variety, is the subject of Ayad Akhtar's **"Junk"** (Oct. 5, Vivian Beaumont), while *"House of Cards"* creator Beau Willimon gives us **"The Parisian Woman"** (Nov. 7, Hudson), with Uma Thurman as a desperate Washington socialite.

Then again, maybe you come to Broadway to escape. If so, sink into the cartoon world of **"SpongeBob SquarePants"** (Nov. 6, Palace). With music by Cyndi Lauper, John Legend and David Bowie, it may well give us something to sing about.

