

# STYLE

## Theater

Trapdoors, catwalks and scaffolds make an intriguing package for the Grove Shakespeare Festival staging of "The Tempest." /B-2

## Dance

Critic Sasha Anawalt credits Black Dance Retrospective with bringing zest and enthusiasm to the Dance Park festival. /B-5



## She's the woman with one used cello

*Lori Singer plays on a movie stage now*

By Hunter Drohojowska

**H**e's an artist. He doesn't even know how to drive a car!" Lori Singer, cast as a CIA *femme fatale*, is trying to protect an innocent, bumbling violinist from her corrupt colleague willing to kill him to further his rise in the agency ranks.

The innocent in this case is Tom Hanks, starring in "The Man With One Red Shoe," a remake of the hilarious French farce "The Tall Blond Man With One Black Shoe." What fuels Singer's cry is her character's conviction that this artist needs protection. It is a conviction born of her own experience as a Juilliard-trained classical cellist, from a family of professional musicians.

For Singer, however, the cello did not lead to the concert hall but to the TV series "Fame," in which she played... a cellist. Her obvious talent landed her a choice role opposite Kevin Bacon in "Footloose," then a small part as Timothy Hutton's girlfriend in "The Falcon and the Snowman." Now she is finishing a new Alan Rudolph film, "Trouble in Mind," with Keith Carradine.

Singer's view of herself as an artist is apparent in the way she dresses for an interview in her room at the elegant Hotel Dufy in West Hollywood. She is not decked out in the vampy costumes worn by her character in "The Man With One Red Shoe." Instead, she is without makeup, in torn gray sweats and thick dance socks, yet still startlingly beautiful. Her cello stands at attention in the corner, like a reminder of a previous, far more private, life.

Singer, 24, who lives in Manhattan, insists we go up to the roof garden to talk, explaining that too much of her time is spent

**A** Juilliard-trained classical cellist from a family of professional musicians, actress Lori Singer admits that she felt left out in high school. But, she quickly adds, "Now, I think that's a strength. I don't think you have to be exactly like everyone else."

Singer/B-6, Col. 1

# Lori Singer's a musician, actress

Singer/Continued from B-1

on darkened sound stages. "Making a movie, your schedule gets so crazy. It's hard to be consistent with your outside life. The movie becomes your whole reality."

Other actors might be thrilled by this attention, but Singer remembers having a larger life. The daughter of the late conductor Jacques Singer and a concert pianist mother, Leslie Singer, with older brothers Marc, an actor ("Beastmaster"), Claude, a writer, and her twin brother, Gregory, a concert violinist, Singer has relied on her home life as a source of inspiration and creative protection. "Aaron Copland tucked me and my brother Gregory into bed one night. Yehudi Menuhin (the violinist), who was like a godfather, gave us our first crib," she recalls. "Our house was just electric, there were always political discussions, big Thanksgiving dinners." Singer's father, a Polish immigrant, often invited artists and musicians home, so the young girl grew up on conversations with Isaac Stern, Daniel Barenboim and Jacqueline Du Pre.

That was back in Portland, Ore., where her father was conducting. Since the age of 5, she had studied the piano, shifting to the cello at age 9. It was a pastoral existence of living room recitals and suburban security until she turned 12, when the family moved to Manhattan, where her father worked as a guest conductor. While her twin brother was gregarious, Singer had always been shy, and the sharp rupture with the past fueled all her insecurities. "New York was much tougher, the competition was higher, there were more people in the classes; even going to school by subway, everything was new, hard, fast and furious."

Singer immersed herself in practicing the cello. "I had music to turn to. It was a real outlet and voice for me. At the same time, it helped me to cover up and protect myself," she confesses.

In the company of other musicians she felt less alienated, and she enrolled at Performing Arts High

School. "I was a maniac for music," she says. "I practiced 10 hours a day, I was completely focused."

By 18, Singer had been on tour to Venezuela, where she had performed with the national orchestra in Caracas and other cities, winning standing ovations for her solos. And at the peak of her career in music, her confidence buoyed by success, a dormant interest in drama surfaced like a memory. "Even when I was little, my brother and I would put on plays with costumes my father brought home," she recalls. Initially, however, Singer wasn't sure she could handle acting as a career. "It was such an overwhelming idea, with so many people involved. I was just in awe of my brother Marc as an actor."

But her newly won security, and popularity, induced the metamorphosis. "I started to find it hard to be locked away for eight hours practicing. I'd done that for so many years. I began to miss interaction with people — all sorts of people, not just musicians. I began to have a life outside music, and that life took over."

While still the first cellist in the concert orchestra at Juilliard School of Music, studying with the famed Leonard Rose, she began taking lessons in acting and dance. Since the school does not approve of such extracurricular activity, Singer took the lessons in her spare time. Her gangling height finally paid off: She financed the independent classes by modeling for Johnny Casablancas, earning more than \$1,000 a day for layouts in Vogue and other top magazines. Singer is still uncomfortable with reference to such "frivolous" activity.

Then came the real life scene that could compete with the plot of any movie for its element of Cinderella fantasy. An actress friend told Singer that they were casting for the TV series "Fame," coincidentally based on the Performing Arts High School where she studied. When Singer dropped by, she saw that 2,000 teen-agers had turned out for the audition. "I didn't feel it was life or death to

me," she remembers. "I waited until 3:30 and I was going to be late for a class at Juilliard. I started to walk out, and the casting director said, 'You stay. I got the role.'

Singer often mentions her father as the driving force behind her career in music, but he never got to witness her success as an actress. He died of an illness in 1981. "I'm still tortured by it," she confides. "He was the greatest influence in my life." Just as she escaped the turmoil of adolescence through music, Singer confides, "I lost myself in my (film) work because I couldn't deal with my father's death. I thought I'd never live through it. But it shows you that, somehow, life goes on."

Her first film turned out to be "Footloose," which she feels paralleled her own experiences during adolescence. She plays Ariel, the venturesome daughter of a conservative minister, rebelling against the confines and mores of a small rural town in Utah. Ultimately, she sides against her father and with Kevin Bacon, who plays Ren, in breaking the town's law against dancing. "I identified with Ariel because she had the searching quality," the actress explains.

Singer's serious strain, the legacy of her father, pushes her to aim as high in film as she did in music. "What I've found to be most fulfilling is having standards and striving to meet those."

"I always thought it would be fun to go to a big college, but I wanted to get on with life. I thought it was going to be a big struggle out there and I wanted to be ready."

Ready she has turned out to be, desiring to commit art in the commercial realm of movies. "As artists, I think the people who endure are those who carry the mark of their time, have something to comment on and have a strong feeling about," Singer says.

Then she excuses herself. It is time to practice the cello.

Hunter Drohojowska frequently contributes to the Herald.

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