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MICHAEL LE POER TRENCH/BOB MARSHAK



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MARTHA SWOPE

■ Among his awards for design, Napier earned a Tony in 1982 for *Cats* (3), and in 1987 for *Les Misérables* (2). His diverse career includes theatre, opera, film, and television, including the 1986 3-D video for Disney, *Captain EO* (1).

● *Parmi les prix qu'il a remportés pour ses décors, John Napier a gagné un Tony en 1982 pour Cats (3), et en 1987 pour Les Misérables (2). Tout au long de sa carrière très diversifiée, il a travaillé pour le théâtre, l'opéra, le cinéma et aussi une vidéo en relief de Disney en 1986, Captain EO (1).*

▼ Napier erhielt verschiedene Auszeichnungen für Design, darunter den Tony im Jahr 1982 für *Cats* (3) und 1987 für *Les Misérables* (2). Seine vielfältige Karriere umfasst Theater, Oper, Film und Fernsehen, darunter 1986 das 3-D Video für Disney, *Captain EO* (1).

of the show — the evacuation of the American Embassy, for instance. I had to find a theatrical way of staging it, yet still retain its nightmarish essence.”

Napier spent fifteen months working on *Miss Saigon*. He sees it as a love story in the great tradition of romantic literature about two people who completely misunderstand each other. “What’s interesting to me about *Miss Saigon* is the way that it takes the idea of *Madame Butterfly* as its lead — though with several structural changes along the way — and builds an entirely believable and realistic story around it. That makes the piece all the more effective and disturbing.

“*Miss Saigon* was actually inspired by a photograph the composers saw of a mother in Saigon desperately trying to give her baby to one of the departing Americans, with anguish on her face and tears in her eyes. She just wanted her child to survive, and probably subscribed to the

romantic illusions of the West and America common among her people.”

During a short hiatus in preparation for *Miss Saigon*, Napier had the chance to design a revival of the Joe Stein/Stephen Schwartz musical, *The Baker's Wife*, which opens at the Phoenix Theatre on 17 November, reuniting him with director Trevor Nunn. “*The Baker's Wife* certainly has been more relaxing to work on than *Miss Saigon*. It’s not a mega-musical, just an intimate piece, and Trevor came up with some brilliant ideas for it — a gentle, humble style of design.

“After *Baker's Wife*, I’ll be doing another absolutely gigantic show in Las Vegas — the new Siegfried & Roy Show, which will premiere in January 1990. I’ve been working on it for over three years, and I’ll be using all the major mechanics to play with space and create illusions. By designing this, I’ll finally be able to get everything out of my system.”