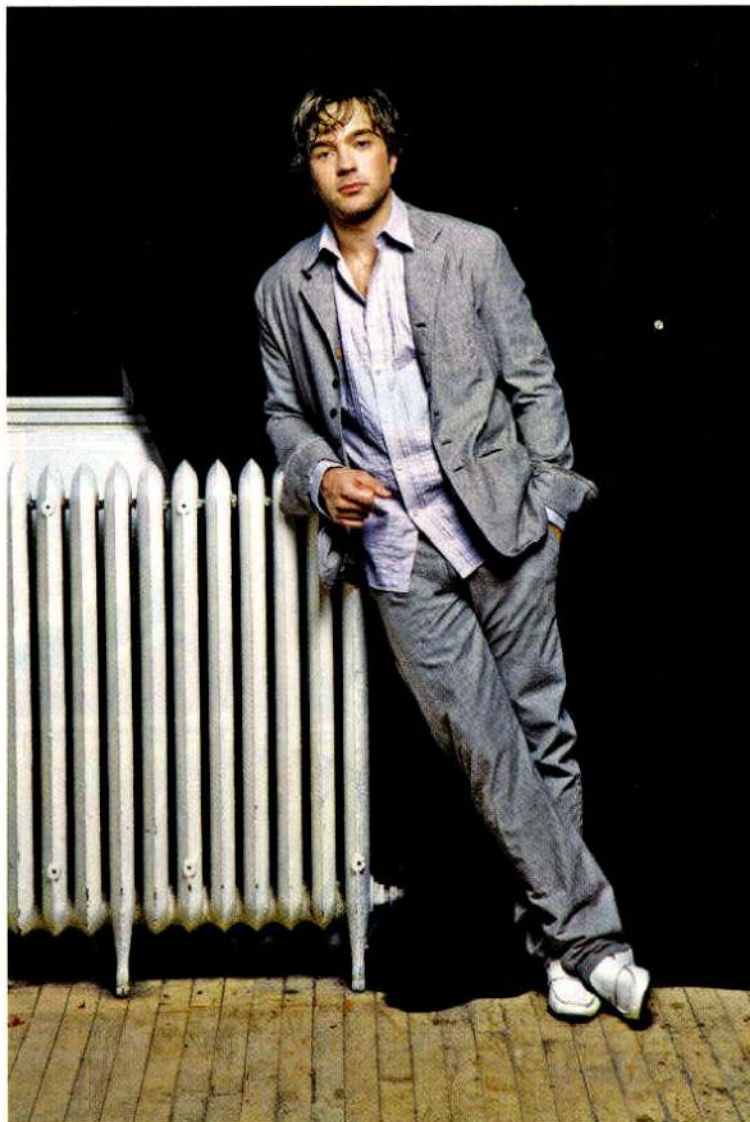


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PIRATE BOOTY

If there were blockbusters in theater, *The Pirate Queen*, beginning previews on Broadway this March, would be better off opening during the July 4th long weekend. A musical epic based on the life of 16th-century Irishwoman pirate Grace O'Malley, the production has been aswirl in hype for months, what with a publicized test run in Chicago last fall and frequent podcasts at the show's website. And that's just the start: *The Pirate Queen* was written by one of Broadway's most successful musical teams, Alain Boublil and Claude-Michel Schönberg of *Les Misérables* and *Miss Saigon* fame; it's being directed by Frank Galati, who made a name for himself with high-profile gigs like *Ragtime* and *The Glass Menagerie*; and, to top it off, the musical stars a dashing handsome and devastatingly charming leading man, Hadley Fraser.

Fraser, 26, was born and raised in Windsor, a town just outside of London. He was plucked from the West End—where he'd starred in shows such as *Les Miz* and *Pirates of Penzance*—to make his Broadway debut playing O'Malley's forbidden love interest, Tiernan. "Tiernan represents someone who in modern literature doesn't really exist anymore—the sort of constant male," Fraser explains. "You normally get the constant female, who pines and loves one man no matter what." In the middle of Act I, O'Malley (played by Stephanie J. Block) is forced to marry another man to save her family, and Fraser is left alone on the stage to sing one of the most talked-about songs in the show, the achingly beautiful ballad of devotion "I'll Be There." But the playful Fraser makes sure to mention that although his character is heartbroken by a strong and independent woman, he's "no boring stick in the mud." With those devilishly good looks, chill-inspiring voice and a cast of 42 on an elaborate pirate ship to back him up, he shouldn't have to worry about being boring anytime soon. ★ Whitney Spaner • Photograph by Eric McNatt • Styling by Johnna Davis (www.stylebait.com) • Grooming by Kristin Gallegos/SeeManagement • Hadley wears a suit by Rogan, shirt and shoes by J. Lindeberg.