

Jeremy Irons

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This classically trained, gaunt actor with Byronic looks and a rich, haunting voice began his career on the London stage. Irons has specialized in playing upper-class types, frequently in period roles, and has achieved star status without compromising his reputation as a serious actor. He first gained notice for his performance as Franz Liszt in the British miniseries "Notorious Woman" (PBS, 1975) and achieved stardom with his performance as the observant narrator Charles Ryder in the TV adaptation of Evelyn Waugh's "Brideshead Revisited" (PBS, 1981). He won a Tony Award for his 1980 Broadway debut in the Mike Nichols-directed "The Real Thing", which co-starred Glenn Close.

After making a less than stellar debut as Mikhail Fokine in Herbert Ross' biopic "Nijinsky" (1980), Irons rose to screen stardom as Meryl Streep's leading man in Karel Reisz's "The French Lieutenant's Woman" (1981). He went on to more eclectic roles, including the caddish lover in David Jones' film version of Harold Pinter's "Betrayal" (1983), but seemed miscast as Proust's hero in "Swann in Love" (1984) and as a Jesuit priest in Roland Joffe's "The Mission" (1986). He gave a bravura performance as the deranged twin brother protagonists of David Cronenberg's "Dead Ringers" (1988) and won an Oscar as haughty international playboy and murder suspect Claus von Bulow in Barbet Schroeder's "Reversal of Fortune" (1990), which reunited him with Glenn Close.

Irons continued to display his versatility as a paranoid insurance clerk in Steven Soderbergh's psychological thriller, "Kafka" (1991), a history teacher haunted by memories of childhood in "Waterland" and a conservative English politician undone by an obsessive affair with his son's girlfriend in "Damage" (both 1992). Although he tried gamely, his reunion with Cronenberg for "M. Butterfly" (1993) failed to impress critics or audiences. His second film with both Streep and Close, "The House of the Spirits" (also 1993), found them all miscast as South American aristocrats. Irons fared better providing the sinuous voice of the subtly villainous Scar in the animated Disney's mega-hit "The Lion King" (1994). His attempt to cross-over to more mainstream fare as the dyed-blond antagonist to Bruce Willis in "Die Hard With a Vengeance" (1995) met with mixed results.

Irons' next two roles were schematically linked: in Bernardo Bertolucci's "Stealing Beauty" (1996), he was an ailing writer who is reinvigorated when confronted with the voluptuous teenaged Liv Tyler, while in Adrian Lyne's remake of "Lolita" (1997), he was a well-chosen Humbert Humbert, enamored of the pubescent title character. In director Wayne Wang's "Chinese Box" (1997) he played a leukemia-ridden Hong Kong-based British financial reporter who has long held a torch for bar owner Vivian (Gong Li), a former "hostess" from mainland China, who eventually begins to reciprocate his affections. After making for an iconic Father Aramis in the 1998 film adaptation of the classic Alexander Dumas adventure "The Man In the Iron Mask" starring Leonardo DiCaprio in the title role, Irons' talents were squandered in a pair of villainous roles in two lackluster wannabe blockbusters, "Dungeons and Dragons" (2000) and "The Time Machine" (2002).

Family

- Father: Paul Dugan Irons.
- Mother: Barbara Anne Irons.
- Son: Maximilian Paul Diarmuid Irons. born c. 1985; mother, Sinead Cusack
- Son: Samuel James Brefni Irons. born c. 1978; mother, Sinead Cusack

Significant Others

- Wife: Julie Hallam. married in 1969; divorced

Education

- Sherbourne School, Dorset, England, c. 1962-1966

Milestones

- 1971 Made stage debut in "Hay Fever" with Bristol Old Vic company; company member for three years
- 1973 London stage debut as John the Baptist in "Godspell," Round House Theatre (later at Wyndham's Theatre for two years)
- 1975 TV debut as Franz Liszt in BBC miniseries "Notorious Woman" (shown on PBS's "Masterpiece Theatre" November-December of same year)
- 1979 Breakthrough TV role, Charles Ryder in "Brideshead Revisited"
- 1980 Film debut as Mikhail Fokine in "Nijinsky"

- 1981 Cast opposite Meryl Streep in "The French Lieutenant's Woman"
- 1983 Co-starred with Ben Kingsley and Patricia Hodge in "Betrayal"
- 1984 Broadway debut in "The Real Thing"
- 1984 Starred in "Swann in Love", adapted from Proust's "A la recherche du temps perdu"
- 1985 Directed video for Carly Simon's song "Tired of Being Blonde"
- 1986 Teamed opposite Robert De Niro in "The Mission"
- 1988 Breakthrough screen role, played twins in David Cronenberg's "Dead Ringers"
- 1990 Earned acclaim and a Best Actor Oscar for his portrayal of Claus von Bulow in "Reversal of Fortune"
- 1991 Cast in title role of Stephen Soderbergh's "Kafka"
- 1993 Acted the role of a French diplomat who falls in love with a Chinese performer who harbors a secret in "M Butterfly"; second film with Cronenberg
- 1993 Played a cheating spouse in "Damage"
- 1994 Voiced the villainous Scar in Disney's "The Lion King"
- 1995 Played the villain in "Die Hard With a Vengeance"
- 1996 Cast as a dying writer in Bernardo Bertolucci's "Stealing Beauty"
- 1997 Portrayed Humbert Humbert in Adrian Lyne's remake of "Lolita"; released in the USA in 1998
- 1998 Offered a fine turn as the swashbuckling Aramis, one of the original Musketeers, in "The Man in the Iron Mask"
- 2000 Co-starred in the British TV drama "Longitude", written and directed by Charles Sturridge
- 2000 Offered over-the-top villainous turn in "Dungeons and Dragons"
- 2001 Cast opposite Forest Whitaker in "The Fourth Angel"
- 2002 Co-starred with Fanny Ardant in "Callas Forever"
- 2003 Joined co-star Patricia Kaas for the feature "And Now Ladies and Gentlemen"
- 2004 Cast in "Being Julia" which centers around stage actors and their experiences with love and revenge in 1930's London
- 2004 Cast opposite Al Pacino and Joseph Fiennes in "The Merchant of Venice" a Shakespearian adaptation, set in 16th century Venice
- 2005 Co-starred as in Lasse Hallström's "Casanova," opposite Heath Ledger
- 2005 Starred in Ridley Scott's "Kingdom of Heaven" about the 12th-century Crusades
- 2006 Cast as Brom, a former Dragon Rider in "Eragon" a fantasy/adventure movie based on the novel of the same name
- 2006 Offered an award winning performance opposite Helen Mirren in "Elizabeth I" a joint HBO/Channel 4 production