

Hollywood Exclusive: Colin Hanks thanks 'Mad Men' for new career chapter, Shame on 'Bachelor' humiliati

by Marilyn_Beck_ & Stacy_Jenel_Smi

It's a landmark month for Colin Hanks, what with the official opening of "33 Variations" — the play in which he makes his Broadway debut starring with Jane Fonda and Samantha Mathis — coming up March 9. And with the release of his and John Malkovich's "The Great Buck Howard" on the 20th.

The 31-year-old son of Tom Hanks feels he has "Mad Men" to thank. Specifically, Colin credits show creator Matt Weiner, who cast him as Father Gill, the progressive priest in the Emmy-winning drama, for "starting this whole new chapter for me. He hit the nail on the head when he called Father Gill my first adult role. I'd been salivating to play that for a while, and I was really ready."

Colin tells us that previews for "33 Variations" at the Eugene O'Neill Theater have been going well. "There have been some nights we've made pretty radical changes, and it makes you remember what it's like when you're doing three performances of your middle school play, and it's the scariest thing in the world. — but pretty damn satisfying," he says.

On the big screen side, Colin says he became a fan of Sean McGinly's "The Great Buck Howard" script back in '03. "Then it was a long process of trying to get the movie made — We were all very lucky when John came aboard," he says of Malkovich, who plays a mentalist nearing the end of his career. Colin plays his road manager in the flick that became a big crowd pleaser on the festival circuit. "John really took this character and made it his own."

Meanwhile, Colin's in two upcoming off-the-wall indie comedies — "Barry Monday" and "High School" — and last year appeared in live musical revues in Los Angeles and Las Vegas with some of his fellow "Mad Men" performers. Will he be back as Father Gill? "I hope so," he says. "He's an amazing character."

DISGUSTING: "The Bachelor" crossed the line between juicy reality TV exploitation and just downright uncalled for humiliation this week, and we say shame on everyone involved.

After single dad Jason Mesnick stole the hearts of viewers and of 25-year-old Dallas native Melissa Rycroft — and after he proposed, and she said yes, and the two jumped into a pool in celebration — came Mesnick's confession that six weeks later, he knew he'd made a mistake. He was really in love with runner-up Molly Malaney. Molly, who clearly must have forgotten that this man just dumped her a few weeks earlier for someone else, practically jumped in his lap as soon as he broke the news. They wasted no time kissing and making up on air while Melissa rode away devastated.

What we want to know is why? Not why did he dump Melissa, because it is no secret that many

relationships, especially on "The Bachelor," don't work out, but why did he feel the need to do it in front of millions of people? He already knew he was about to break her heart, but was it really necessary to pour a gallon of salt on the wound as well? Of course it's about ratings â€” hence the hype-athon of ads promoting the "shocking" and "stunning" drama. But at what cost? We can expect that kind of behavior from low-class cable shows like "A Shot At Love" or "I Love New York," but not "The Bachelor"! It was expected to set the standard.

NEW STEPS: "Dancing With the Stars" judge Carrie Ann Inaba reports she had a blast stepping out of her comfort zone to indulge in a little broad comedy of the "Hannah Montana" kind on this Sunday's (3/8) segment of the Miley Cyrus Disney Channel series. "Oh, my gosh. I want to be that dumb all the time," laughs Carrie Ann, who'll be seen as Hannah's hapless choreographer â€” who winds up in a full body cast before the episode is through. "

It was so much fun. We laughed so hard. They have a wonderful group of people working on that show."

She's also trying something new next month â€” when she'll be a guest on the panel at the 2009 amateur ballroom championships to be conducted April 3-5 in Baltimore, Md., by USA Dance. "Ballroom is not the world I grew up dancing in, and to be welcomed into this event is such an honor and very exciting for me," says Carrie Ann, whose credits range from dancing as part of Madonna's "Girlie Show Tour" to TV choreography. "They're actually working on opening up and changing some of the ways it's been judged in the past, so it will be interesting."

ON A PERSONAL NOTE: Jeff Conaway tells us he's had his friend and former co-star John Travolta on his mind since the passing of Travolta's son, Jett. "We've been friends a very long time. It really depressed me when this happened. I felt like I lost a member of my family. It was so heartbreaking, and I know how much John loved Jett," he says. "I think of him every day, and I send a prayer his way. When we get a chance, we'll get together and give each other a hug."

With reports by Emily Feimster.

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