

WHAT'S ON

## READER TRIPS



## Time of your life

■ Special Price 30 West End performances only

## DIRTY DANCING

Phoenix Theatre

December 9, 16, 30:  
£49.75

December 13: £49.75



## Lovecats live

## THE CURE

Wembley Arena

Sat December 3: £84

Includes £50 seat



## Virtuoso violinist

## ANDRE RIEU &amp; The Johann Strauss Orchestra

Wembley Arena

Tues December 20:  
£134

Includes £95 seat  
For tickets, call Reader  
Trips on 01268 270027

■ Sultry star - Leigh-born actress Kierston Wareing and, below, in her latest film, A Hundred Streets



By MARK EDWARDS

mark.edwards@nqe.com

KIERSTON Wareing's latest big screen role is a milestone for the Essex actress in a couple of respects. It will be her first cinematic release in the US - it's also released in the UK this Friday - and for once she's playing a seemingly well-adjusted character in a loving and respectful relationship.

The 38-year-old made her name, and came to the attention of Bafta and Oscar judges, playing damaged women in Ken Loach's *It's a Free World* and Andrea Arnold's *Fish Tank*. She then went on to play more characters on the edge in TV dramas such as *The Take* and *Top Boy*. Even when she played a Biblical character it was the dangerous temptress Delilah.

"I play Cathy, a nurse in east London, who is very normal and in a loving relationship with her husband. It was nice to play a character who's not deranged and who doesn't want to murder someone. I've loved it. But, it's not a change in me. I still want to play my complicated roles" says the Leigh-born Kierston.

*A Hundred Streets* is a promising looking urban drama featuring some of the best in British acting talent. As well as Kierston, it stars Idris Elba, who also produced the film, Gemma Arterton, Charlie-Creed-Miles, who plays Kierston's husband, Ken Stott and Terence Stamp. The film examines the proximity of very different people in a metropolis with housing estates rubbing up against luxury properties and how these separate lives can collide in a moment.

It's something Kierston, who has recently moved to East London, can identify with. "I've met all kinds of people around where I live. I've met people from the streets. I feel like we all live so close to each other, but at the same time so far apart. I can relate to the film."

She's looking forward to hanging out with Idris, who she first worked with on episodes of the TV crime drama *Luther* five years ago, at the film's West End UK premiere.

"He's a really cool guy," she says. "He's very normal and approachable, but just has a lot of talent. When we were in *Luther* together we really bonded over our love of music."

"We used to hang out and just talk music."

*A Hundred Streets* may be a gritty urban drama, a genre Kierston is familiar with, but the way she talks about it it seems her role is quite restrained...and this is an actress who, when it's required, can really let go.

"I'm good at improvisation. I've used method acting if the role entitles me to. I was very method on the *Take* (the TV series based on the novel by Martina Cole, a fellow Essex girl and good friend. "I spoke to her just the other day. I was drinking vodka shots on the set - under the director's advice of course."

It was this improvisational skill that so impressed Ken Loach, who gave Kierston her big break in 2007 in his film *It's a Free World*, playing the ambitious working class girl Angie, a role that won her a Bafta nomination.

It's easy to see what appealed to the socially critical film and TV director. Kierston can at times appear guarded,

WHAT'S ON

# Spontaneous star gets her US break in new film

struggling for articulacy, shy even, but then she will burst out with revelatory detail as if she's known you for years.

Amid this spontaneity she reveals her love of classic British comedies "I have discovered *On the Buses* - I watch it over and over", how she has just seen *Girl On a Train* at the cinema and loved it, even though her friend was "so scared", how "90 per cent of the television I watch is true life crime and serial killer stuff. I love to find out what makes a murderer."

She even confides, despite sharing the screen with some of the best and most lustred after male stars - Michael Fassbender, Idris and Tom Hardy - Jack Nicholson would be her ideal screen co-star. "Think of how much you could learn from him - like how to really play a nutcase."

Loach must have also appreciated Kierston's willingness to learn. She reveals she's trying to teach herself Spanish and is planning on returning to the teacher who taught her method acting at New York's Lee Strasburg Theatre Institute between 1997 and 2000 for more training.

Kierston says she learned a lot on the *It's a Free World* set. "I'm very lucky to have had these experiences", but his methods to achieve realism were a shock to the young actress.

She says: "I didn't know what was going on most of the time. They never gave me a script."

"I remember we flew to Ukraine as the story starts there and Ken wanted to film everything in sequence, in the order it happens in the film."

"You were given the script just for that day. You had to guess what was going to happen to your character tomorrow."

"What petrified me the most was that there was a scene when I had to ride a motorbike. I was so bad at it. I couldn't believe it. I was thinking after 10 years of struggling to be an actor and when I finally get a break I'm going to lose it because of a bike."

She remembers being told



Playing normal - Kierston Wareing in *A Hundred Streets*, above and inset below, playing Cathy, a nurse, looking to start a family with her husband



on the *It's a Free World* set: "Don't expect to work like this again."

However, just two years later, she was filming *Fish Tank* with Andrea Arnold, another garlanded director who advocates realism and script-shy improvisation.

Once again, Kierston excelled, earning a British Independent Film nomination for best supporting actress. Co-star Michael Fassbender was so taken by her presence and performance he compared her to Brigitte Bardot.

It was a comparison that still thrills Kierston. Bardot, and that other blonde screen siren Marilyn

Monroe, have long been heroines of hers.

"She says: "I was over the moon when he said that. It was such a wonderful compliment and for it to come from someone like Michael was incredible."

It's true Kierston shares a bruised beauty with the French actress and model and plays up the similarities on her Instagram feed, which are full of sultry Bardot-like shots. "Bardot is a fashion icon. You could still wear her stuff today."

"Monroe is beautiful. Her look hasn't dated at all. I find the story of Norma Jean fascinating. The real person fascinates."

Like Monroe, there seems to have been plenty of sadness and shadow in Kierston's life, though you wouldn't know it when I was talking to her. She seemed to be battling nothing more serious than a nasty cough, which often broke up her responses.

Revelations of the shocking bullying she was subjected to as a teen in have been documented before, and, although she won't say it herself, it's tempting to see such trauma as material to draw on for the "complicated roles" she loves to play.

She says: "I was very studious. I would go to Mass at lunchtimes at St Bernards Convent School, in Westcliff, and do my homework. I

"I hate to think what bullying is like now. It must be so bad for youngsters now."

The details are shocking and one must imagine the effects run deep, but Kierston reveals a surprising legacy to the torment.

"I was very well spoken when I was a young teenager," she says. "I had elocution lessons. It was one of the things the bullies used to pick on me for. After the bullying, I changed the way I spoke. I reverted to my strong Essex vowels."

"I've got a dialect coach now and I've got an ear for accents, but I can't do posh. The coach says I can, but the reason I won't try stems back to that time."

Still, Kierston seems happy now to be Essex in voice and heritage. She can look back fondly on her teenage years. "When I was at my second school I had the best years of my life," she says. "I'm still in touch with the friends I made there."

"Everything that happens in your life is meant to be. I love Southend and love to go back. "My dad still lives in Leigh and I go back all the time. It's such a pretty place."

One thing from her south Essex upbringing Kierston is happy to put behind her is her stint running a beauty salon in Southend, even though the penchant for decorating your private parts is very public now thanks to the Towie influence and she could have made a small fortune.

"I could have done extremely well," she says. "I called it Pinkie's Salon. Everything was pink. I got the idea from the US, Hollywood Brazilians."

"We would do diamantes, initials - it was completely specialised and way ahead of its time. I didn't know it was going to take off."

But there are no regrets. "I definitely prefer the acting."

And with *A Hundred Streets* bringing her name to the US for the first time, and big screen releases such as drugs trade thriller *Cardboard Gangsters* and Italian drama *Habit of Beauty* as well as a role in TV pilot *Ghetto Heaven* looming she seems to have made the right decision.

■ *A Hundred Streets* is showing at selected cinemas from Friday.

I'd love to star alongside Jack Nicholson. Think how much you could learn from him - like how to really play a nutcase

went around with the intelligent, geeky crew - not that I was. I was just very quiet.

"Then I stared getting bullied. They were girls a year older than me. I was always into theatre and performing."

"I did a solo talent show at school. They threw eggs and booed me and started shouting things out."

"It got physical. They would push me up against the lockers. One of them broke my nose and tried to push me in front of a car in Southend High Street. "The teachers didn't do anything. I started to rebel and got expelled from school. My parents took me away and I went to a school for uncontrollable kids in Canvey. That calmed me down."