

Booye

big-screen TV classic



Pictures: WIREIMAGE

Anthea Evlro

at Sunday's New York will be running a lot. I particularly a singer. So you'll be hearing to time.'

the British actress, her struggles, here in idered for parts on

en has an enviable screen stars of the Michael Fassbender's and the actor received

an Oscar nomination for his performance in *12 Years A Slave* (the film also garnered a best supporting actress Oscar statuette for Lupita Nyong'o).

Producer Iain Canning (who won a best picture Academy Award himself, for *The King's Speech*, and is McQueen's main producing partner along with Film 4) welcomed Erivo's signing.

He said *Widows* would provide an incredible showcase for her talents, and those of Viola Davis — a powerhouse leading lady who will be up for awards this season for her role in Denzel Washington's film version of August Wilson's *Fences*.

Post-presidential election, Canning observed that it's an 'interesting time to be going over and making a film in the U.S.'

HE ADDED that *Widows* 'takes stock of where we are, how we all interact and what our future might hold'.

The original TV series starred Ann Mitchell as Dolly Rawlins — a formidable woman who leads the gang of widows. Ms Davis will play that part in the movie, although the name of her character is still being considered.

Though it's set in Chicago rather than London, the new *Widows* script — by McQueen and *Gone Girl* author Gillian Flynn — is very respectful of La Plante's version, although obviously certain things have been compressed, because it won't be six hours long!

Other parts for the diverse ensemble are still being cast.

as The Entertainer

the *Standard Drama Awards*, which are being handed out at the Old Vic on Sunday, for the role. Greta Scacchi, Gawn Grainger, Sophie McShera and Jonah Hauer-King are all on top form in the play as members of Rice's family.

The season has included *The Winter's Tale* (with Judi Dench), *Harlequinade*, *Red Velvet*, *Romeo And Juliet* and *The Painkiller*. Branagh told me he intends to return in a couple of years, with a line-up of brand new plays.

WATCH OUT FOR...

EMILIA FOX, who will star in the UK premiere of Laura Eason's 2011 play *Sex With Strangers*, directed by Peter DuBois, which will run at the Hampstead Theatre from January 27. The play is set in a bed and breakfast at a writers' retreat in Michigan. Fox (below left) plays a not-so-successful published author who is sheltering from a snowstorm. A bed-hopping younger man arrives ... and the two of them have to keep warm, don't they? The drama marks a return to the stage for Fox, who has spent several years appearing in TV shows such as *Silent Witness*, *The Casual Vacancy*, *The Tunnel* and the forthcoming four-part Sky drama, *Delicious*, in which she stars with Dawn French, Iain Glen and Sheila Hancock.

RITA SIMONS, best known for playing Roxy Mitchell in *EastEnders*, who will be hitting the road next year to play Paulette, the manicurist looking for love in the musical *Legally Blonde*. (Jennifer Coolidge played Paulette in the 2001 film version that starred Reese Witherspoon.) It's a musical theatre debut for Simons



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(above right). *EastEnders* fans know that she is playing her endgame on the popular BBC1 soap, which is why she has been able to sign on to appear in *Legally Blonde* for seven months. It will be opening at the Churchill Theatre in Bromley in September 2017, and then going on tour to theatres in High Wycombe, Bristol and Woking among the major venues.

ACTRESS-SINGER Carolyn Allen and pianist Paul Smith, who will be performing their cabaret *Tinsel Time With The Totties* at The Pheasantry in Chelsea, West London, on December 19 and 20. Some very naughty friends of mine told the pair that I can sing! Smith sat at the piano and asked me what key I wanted to sing in. Luckily, I was able to warble along with other guests, so no one could hear how bloody awful I am. The pair will be mixing favourites — *Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas*, *Santa Baby*, *I Took My Harp To A Party* — with their own special parodies of *The Great British Bake Off*. 'And don't forget *Nobody Loves A Fairy When She's Forty!*' Carolyn added.

