



WINNING TICKET: Meryl Streep with Denzel Washington in "Candidate" and, below, in '03

New York Streep scene

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Meryl Streep just wants to stay home. She's having a bad hair day. "I wore a wig last month while I finished filming 'Lemony Snicket,'" she tells the Daily News in a rare interview.

"They cut off all my hair to go under the wig. And now I look sort of like a chicken laid an egg on top of my head!"

But the busy screen legend has a date she can't break.

Streep gets the New Dramatists Career Achievement Award today. Kevin Kline, Streep's pal since making "Sophie's Choice" with her in 1982, will present the prize.

"It's only fair, since I have presented him with about 17 awards," she laughs.

Bad hair or not, Streep, 54, finished two films this year and has four getting ready to roll.

She's the bad guy in the Jonathan Demme remake of "The Manchurian Candidate," with Denzel Washington. The film is due to be released in July 30 with Streep as an evil and manipulative mother who coerces her own son into treason.

"Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events" is due in December, with Jim Carrey.

"He is my kind of actor," she says. "An idea a minute. No wait. An idea a nano-second! It's very focused and very funny."

The next round of Streep movies includes "Prime" with Sandra Bullock, and "Flora Plum," directed by Jodie Foster. She keeps busy, she says, even though other actresses her age are struggling for roles.

"There are basically two women who run studios who have kept me in work: Sherry Lansing who runs Paramount ("Manchurian Candidate," "The Hours," "Lemony Snicket") and Amy Pascal at Sony ("Adaptation")."

"There was no reason some perfectly fabulous looking 32-year-old couldn't have played any of those parts, but I got hired because of those girls."

These days, Street says, she spends her precious free time glued to the TV set.

"I do absolutely nothing but watch TV," she says. "Lately that's all I do. I am a news

junkie — MSNBC, CSPAN, 'Charlie Rose,' 'The No-Spin Zone.'"

Meryl Streep is a Bill O'Reilly fan?

Not quite: "I like to see what the wrong side is saying. But even he is turning around. Everyone is going to be changing their minds."

Streep, who grew up in Somerset County, N.J., is a New Yorker now. She and her husband, sculptor Don Gummer, have four children, ranging from almost 13 to 25.

They moved to Manhattan from L.A. two days before 9/11.

"If anything, it just made us fierce New Yorkers," she says.

"Of course that event changed everyone. But we love this city. My parents were getting older and I missed them and my brothers are here."

"I have raised my children all over the world and this is a great place for kids. There is so much stimulation and life on every level."

"Of course, they never want to do anything that I like to do. Oh God, no!"

The actress regularly takes the subway and says she enjoys walking through Manhattan.

"I love what they have done to the West Side, where you can walk from Battery Park all the way up to the George Washington Bridge. I find that absolutely thrilling... People are always really nice, and it makes it feel like a small town for me."

Streep has also been helping other young performers in the city. This theater season, she helped

produce Sarah Jones' acclaimed Off-Broadway show, "Bridge and Tunnel" at the Culture Project on Bleecker St.

"It's very satisfying to give a leg up to someone who is so brilliant and deserving of attention," she says.

Streep says she would like to return to the New York stage, too. A Tony winner, she was last on Broadway in 1977 in a short-lived musical, "Happy End."

In 2001, she did a memorable turn as Irina Arkadina in "The Seagull" (with Kline as Trigorin) at Central Park's Delacorte Theatre.

"I'll be at this luncheon basically begging for a job today," she says.

Even with bad hair.

"I'll be going in through the back door."



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