

ON STAGE

By Peter Gianopulos



American Idiot

AMERICAN IDIOT: Feb. 7-19: The collected works of the band Green Day provide the foundation for this double Tony-winner about a group of suburban teens journeying in different directions, some to war, some to domesticity and others to rebellion, all set to hits that include “Boulevard of Broken Dreams,” “21 Guns,” and “Holiday.” TICKETS: \$27-\$95. ORIENTAL THEATRE, 24 W. RANDOLPH ST., CHICAGO, 800/775-2000

AMERIVILLE: Jan. 27-Feb. 26: Artistic Director Chay Yew tackles the often contentious issues of immigration, race, class and poverty by setting a 90-minute collage of hip-hop, dance and poetry against the backdrop of Hurricane Katrina touching down in the Gulf with often surprising results. TICKETS: \$20-\$50. VICTORY GARDENS BIOGRAPH THEATRE, 2433 N. LINCOLN AVE., CHICAGO, 773/871-3000

AIDA: Jan. 21-March 25: The word “grand” doesn’t begin to capture the Lyric’s staging of this Verdi classic, which finds an enslaved Ethiopian royal and an Egyptian princess fighting for the attention of the pharaoh Radames. Sondra Radvanovksy and Marcello Giordani take the lead in January and February, with Hui He and Marco Berti taking over in March. TICKETS: \$34-\$254. LYRIC OPERA, 20 N. WACKER DRIVE, CHICAGO, 312/332-2244

PHOTO: ROBERT KUSEL



Aida

BLACK PEARL SINGS!: Jan. 13-Feb. 19: The talents of beloved Northlight favorite E. Faye Butler take center stage as she leads a series of a cappella renditions of American folk songs in a story about the intertwined fates of a songstress stuck in a prison and a collector of music at the Library of Congress. TICKETS: \$25-\$60. NORTHLIGHT THEATRE, 9501 SKOKIE BLVD., SKOKIE, 847/673-6300

COME FLY AWAY: Jan. 10-Jan. 22: The bittersweet story of four couples falling in (and then sometimes falling out of) love takes a backstage to the marquee-worthy pairing of choreography by Twyla Tharp and songs from Frank Sinatra. Some 15 featured dancers will take the stage backed by a live big band belting out the rhythms to classics like “Fly Me to the Moon,” “My Way,” and “New York, New York.” TICKETS: \$32-\$95. BANK OF AMERICA THEATRE, 18 W. MONROE ST., CHICAGO, 800/775-2000

THE FEAST: AN INTIMATE TEMPEST: Jan. 18-March 4: This unorthodox retelling of the Shakespeare classic combines handcrafted

puppets, original music, animation and the talents of three flesh-and-blood actors as the Bard’s famous characters Ariel and Caliban arrive at their captor’s table to request their freedom. The piece was co-created with the Redmoon puppet theater. TICKETS: \$30-\$45. CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE THEATRE, NAVY PIER, CHICAGO, 312/595-5600

HESPERIA: Jan. 24-March 18: A combustible mix of sex, religion and small-town values are at the heart of Randall Colburn’s intricate plot, which sees a former adult-entertainment star finding peace with a minister in her old home town just as an old associate returns to give her pause. Associate Artistic Director Stuart Carden directs. TICKETS: TO BE DETERMINED. WRITERS’ THEATRE, 325 TUDOR COURT, GLENCOE, 847/242-6000

IN THE HEIGHTS: Jan. 10-15: There’s an old-fashioned sweetness to this theatrical tribute to the Manhattan neighborhood of Washington Heights, which spins musical numbers around the many trials and

tribulations of a small cluster of immigrants. Tony awards were handed out left and right to the production in 2008 for best musical, choreography and orchestration. TICKETS: \$25-\$75. ORIENTAL THEATRE, 24 W. RANDOLPH ST., CHICAGO, 800/775-2000

LEGALLY BLONDE: Jan. 18-April 1: The 2001 surprise film hit starring Reese Witherspoon takes the Lincolnshire stage, as the Visa-addicted debutante Elle Woods must keep her man by joining him at Harvard Law School. Expect lots of pink, the occasional chihuahua and snappy tunes written especially for the stage. TICKETS: \$48-\$51. MARRIOTT LINCOLNSHIRE THEATRE, 10 MARRIOTT DRIVE, 847/634-0200

MAMMA MIA!: Jan. 24-29: What more is there left to say after more than a decade of performances, countless international and touring productions and even a film version starring Meryl Streep, other than the fact that this uplifting tale about a trio of romances sparked on the Greek Isles has become a testament to the lasting power of the band

PHOTO: MICHAEL BROSILOW

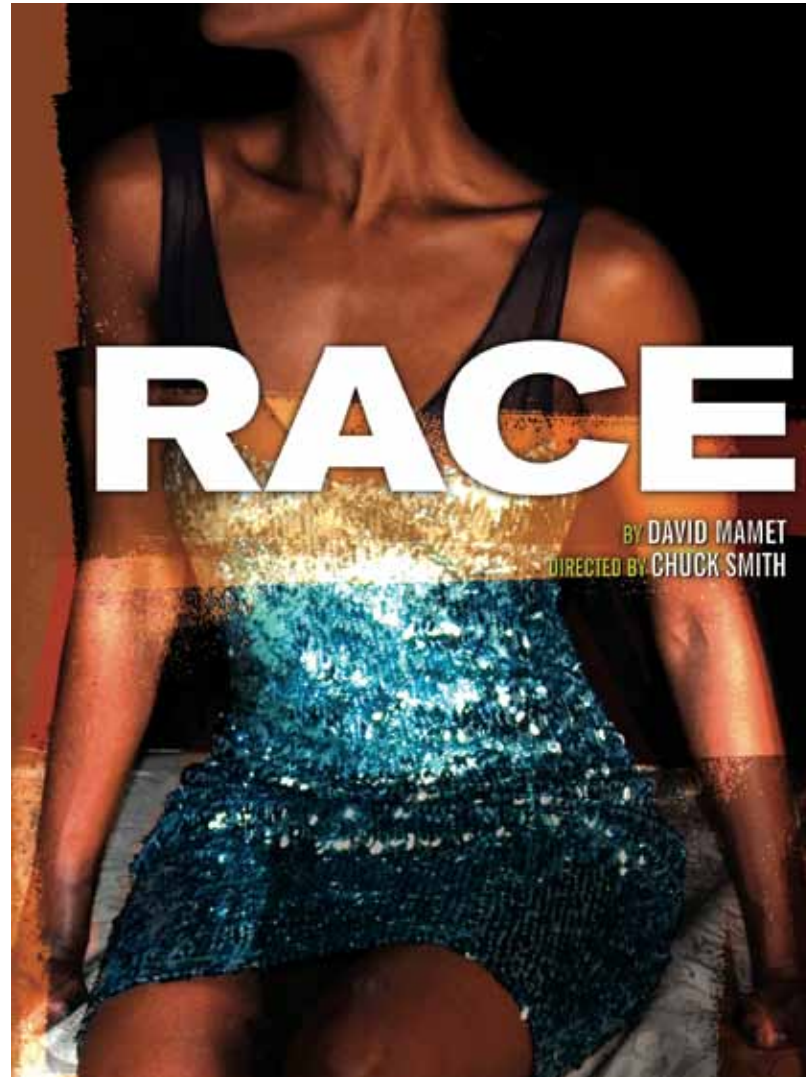


The Feast: An Intimate Tempest

ABBA. Expect romance, the occasional shiny sequin and, of course, hits like “Dancing Queen,” “S.O.S. and “Super Trouper.” PRICES: \$18-\$85. ORIENTAL THEATRE, 24 W. RANDOLPH ST., CHICAGO, 800/775-2000

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM: Feb. 7-April 8: Director Gary Griffin tries to conjure up the same comedic magic he summoned in his recent production of *As You Like It* for one of Shakespeare's most beloved comedy, which finds fairies and sprites having their way with a group of actors and royals who've taken refuge in an enchanted forest. The production offers an intriguing mix of stage and screen stars with a list that includes Ron Orbach and Tim Kazurinsky. TICKETS: \$44-\$75. CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE THEATRE, NAVY PIER, CHICAGO, 312/595-5600

RACE: Jan. 14-Feb. 19: If the allure of playwright David Mamet tackling the heady topic of race relations weren't enough, director Chuck Smith promises an “in-your-face” production guaranteed to spark debate. The setup is pure Mamet: A pair of high-profile lawyers — one white, one black — set out to defend a white male accused of raping an



Race

African-American woman, all offered up with the usual frankness we've come to expect from the scribe who penned classics like *Glengarry Glen Ross*, *Speed-the-Plow* and *American Buffalo*. TICKETS: \$25-\$79. GOODMAN THEATRE, 170 N. DEARBORN ST., CHICAGO, 312/443-3800

SHOWBOAT: Feb. 12-March 17: This Hammerstein-Kern classic from 1927 traces the lives of a theatrical troupe from its days floating along the Mississippi River in the 1880s to the Roaring '20s in Chicago, this time given a lavish production by the Lyric, with Nathan Gunn, Ashley Brown, Alyson Cambridge, Angela Renee Simpson and Morris Robinson belting out favorites like “Ol' Man River,” “You are Love” and “Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man.” TICKETS: \$34-\$254. LYRIC OPERA, 20 N. WACKER DRIVE, CHICAGO, 312/332-2244

SOUTH PACIFIC: Feb. 14-26: The lure of another trip to South Pacific has always been the opportunity to tap your toes along with timeless Rodgers and Hammerstein numbers like “Some Enchanted Evening,” “Younger than Springtime,”

PHOTO: SANDRO



Time Stands Still

“This Nearly was Mine,” and “I'm Gonna Wash That Man Right Out of My Hair.” The bonus this year? The production, a classic romance of shifting alliances set during World War II, is based on the 2008 Tony Award-winning production from the Lincoln Center. TICKETS: \$18-\$85. CADILLAC PALACE THEATRE, 151 W. RANDOLPH ST., CHICAGO, 800/775-2000

TIME STANDS STILL: Jan. 19-May 13: Steppenwolf's year-long exploration of the effects of war takes a turn toward the contemporary in this tale of a photojournalist who finds the nesting desires of her long-time boyfriend are at odds with her addiction to the adrenaline of covering the war in Iraq. The play is from the keyboard of Pulitzer Prize winner Donald Margulies (*Dinner with Friends*) and the prolific director Austin Pendleton, who recently adapted the hit *A Minister's Wife* at Writers' Theatre in Glencoe. TICKETS: \$20-\$78. 1650 N. HALSTED ST., CHICAGO, 312/335-1650

ALSO PLAYING

PHOTO: LIZ LAUREN



Elizabeth Rex

THE CARETAKER: Through March 25: Harold Pinter's priceless work about a trio of fascinating characters stuck in a flat in West London. TICKETS: \$45-\$65. WRITERS' THEATRE, 664 VERNON AVE., GLENCOE, 847/242-6000

ELIZABETH REX: A fictional but intriguing account of the relationship between Queen Elizabeth and Shakespeare's players. TICKETS: \$44-\$75. CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE THEATRE, NAVY PIER, CHICAGO, 312/595-5600

MAGIC FLUTE: Jan. 4-22: Mozart's lyrical and fanciful trek to a forest of fairies and princes. TICKETS: \$34-\$224. LYRIC OPERA, 20 N. WACKER DRIVE, CHICAGO, 312/332-2244

PENELOPE: Through Feb. 5: Edna Walsh's wry contemporary homage to the domestic drama of *The Odyssey*. TICKETS: \$20-\$78. 1650 N. HALSTED ST., CHICAGO, 312/335-1650

WITCHES, WIZARDS, SPELLS AND ELVES: Jan. 21-22: An hour-long family concert aimed at young audiences, which celebrates the lyricism of Shakespeare's works. TICKETS: \$15-\$18. CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE THEATRE, NAVY PIER, CHICAGO, 312/595-5600

SHORT SHAKESPEARE TAMING OF THE SHREW: Feb. 25-April 7: A condensed reworking of Kate and Petruchio's tumultuous love affair that's appropriate for all ages, including children. TICKETS: \$16-\$20. CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE THEATRE, NAVY PIER, CHICAGO, 312/595-5600