

Theater, dance and art exhibits flower in May

By: Anne Spiselman April 30, 2001



Artistic antlers: This stag made of fabric, steel and leather is part of Art Chicago 2001 at Navy Pier. Photo: Laura Ford

From May Day to Memorial Day, the merriest month offers a multitude of openings and events.

Theater: Chicago Shakespeare Theater (312/595-5600) kicks off its new initiative, "The World's Stage," May 10 to June 2 with "The Tragedy of Hamlet," adapted and directed by Brit Peter Brook. The avant-garde production, featuring an ensemble of eight headed by Adrian Lester as the unhappy Dane, originated in Paris and is on a world tour that includes only three U.S. cities.

Lookingglass Theatre Company (773/477-8088) teams with Evanston's Actors Gymnasium for the gravity-defying May 5-June 3 premiere of Charles Dickens' "Hard Times," the story of a family transformed by a circus performer, adapted and directed by ensemble member Heidi Stillman and presented at the Ruth Page Center for the Arts. Renowned actress Julie Harris returns to Victory Gardens Theater May 21 to June 17 to star with Ann Whitney in Claudia Allen's "Fossils," about two retired teachers who meet on vacation. Upstairs, Irish Repertory of Chicago continues its second season May 31 to June 24 with Marina Carr's "By the Bog of Cats," Euripides' "Medea" transplanted to the modern Irish midlands (773/871-3000 for both). By the way, the celeb playwrights for Victory Gardens' 11th annual Chicago Stories benefit (773/549-5788) May 4 are Bob Greene, Richard Kind and Scott R. Lassar.

The much-awaited musical "Mamma Mia!" based on the songs of Abba, arrives at the Cadillac Palace Theatre (312/902-1400) May 18 to July 8. The Auditorium Theatre's "Ovations!" series (312/922-2110) picks up May 9 to 13 with Irving Berlin's "Call Me Madam" headlined by JoAnne Worley. Northlight Theatre in Skokie (847/673-6300) concludes its season May 23 to June 24 with the world premiere of Jason Robert Brown's "The Last Five Years," a musical based on his own marriage.

Comedy: The fourth annual Chicago Improv Festival (312/905-1500, 773/395-8440) May 1 to 6 at the Athenaeum Theatre and other locations promises lots of top performers and groups, an all-night marathon, films and fun.

Dance: The Dance Center of Columbia College Chicago (312/344-8300) presents the local debut of Ronald K. Brown and his company, Evidence, with the new "High Life" and excerpts from other works May 3 to 5, followed May 10 to 12 by Seattle's 33 Fainting Spells with the evening-length "September September." Performing Arts Chicago's (773/PAC-LINE) "CineDance Festival: From Martha to Martha" May 5 and 6 and 11 to 13 at the School of the Art Institute screens films about the work of Martha Graham, Merce Cunningham, Meredith Monk and Martha Clarke.

Other School-related events are the annual student fashion show May 3 and 4 (312/899-5231), the Graduate Exhibition May 5 to 18 (312/563-5167) and the grand opening of the Gene Siskel Film Center on State Street May 31 (312/899-7445).

Music: Highlights at Symphony Center (312/294-3000) include pianist Richard Goode playing works by Bach, Chopin and Beethoven on May 13 and Yo-Yo Ma performing selected Bach cello suites on May 21. Leonard Bernstein's "Songfest" is on the bill when soprano Jonita Lattimore joins Chicago Sinfonietta (312/236-3681) at Symphony Center May 7 and when Chicago Choral Artists (773/549-7751) celebrate its 25th anniversary May 5 and 6 at two churches with his "Missa Brevis" and the world premiere of Artistic Director Bart Bradford's "Testament." Music of the Baroque (312/551-1415) rounds out the season May 20 to 23 with "A Classical Feast: Mozart, Haydn and Myslivecek."

Old Town School (773/728-6000) debuts a free weekly Wednesday series, "Voices of a New Black Millennium," May 9 with "Funk & Soul Night." "Emerging: Asian American Sounds" are on tap May 3 at the Chicago Cultural Center's "thursdaysomething" (312/744-6630). Davenport's (773/278-1830) hosts local Karen Mason May 13, while Jackie Allen and Judy Roberts close the Three Arts Club's (312/944-6250) Landmark Jazz Series May 23.

Art: Art Chicago 2001 (312/587-3300) at Navy Pier May 11 to 14, with the May 10 Vernissage benefiting the MCA, shows works from 225 dealers and galleries representing 2,500 artists from around the world. New this year is the International Invitational spotlighting 21 contemporary galleries, many making their first U.S. appearances. While there, check out Pier Walk 2001, lined with large-scale sculptures. MCA (312/280-2660) has "A Passion for Art: The Di-saronno Originale Photography Collection" May 12 to June 17.

Architecture: The 27th annual Wright Plus Housewalk (708/848-9518) of nine Prairie School homes and two public landmarks in Oak Park is May 19. Chicago Architecture Foundation's (312/922-3432, ext. 240) "Bungalows by Bus" tours starting May 20 explore this distinctive style in several neighborhoods.

Finally: For a really merry (and silly) way to welcome summer, don't miss the "Sing-A-Long Sound of Music" at the Music Box Theatre May 11 to 24 (312/902-1500). And remember to come in costume!

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