

Top theater events this summer

By Anne Spiselman



“SENSE AND SENSIBILITY”

April 29-June 14

A world premiere musical adaptation of Jane Austen's novel with a book, music and lyrics by Tony Award-nominated Paul Gordon. Barbara Gaines directs an ensemble headed by Sharon Rietkerk as Elinor Dashwood and Megan McGinnis as her wildly romantic sister. With scenic design by Kevin Depinet and lush period costumes by Susan E. Mickey (“The Madness of King George III”).

\$48-\$88 | [Chicago Shakespeare Theater](#) | Navy Pier | 312-595-5600

“SIDE MAN”

April 30-May 24

Warren Leight's Tony Award-winning 1998 play weaves the dissolution of a family and of the journeyman jazz player's way of life into a moving memory play narrated by Clifford (Michael Mahler), the only son of Gene (Michael Ehlers), a jazz trumpeter, and Terry (Kae Buddeke), his alcoholic wife. Jonathan Berry directs the ensemble, which includes Joe Foust, Ed Kross and John Gawlik.

\$29-\$39 | [American Blues Theater](#), [Greenhouse Theater Center](#) | 2257 N. Lincoln Ave. | 773-404-7336

“INANA”

May 14-July 26

Director Kimberly Senior puts her unique stamp on TimeLine's Chicago premiere of this timely quasi-mystery-thriller about an Iraqi museum curator's desperate plan to save his country's irreplaceable antiquities, especially the only remaining statue of the ancient mother goddess of the title. Set in a London hotel room where he has fled with his arranged bride on the eve of the 2003 U.S. invasion, the play also concerns the plight of women in his homeland.

\$39-\$52 | [TimeLine Theatre Company](#) | 615 W. Wellington Ave. | 773-281-8463

“SHINING LIVES: A MUSICAL”

May 15-June 14

Melanie Marnich's luminous "These Shining Lives" was a hit for Rivendell Theatre in 2008. Now Northlight has turned the based-on-fact drama about the women sickened by their jobs painting watch faces for Chicago's Radium Dial Co. in the 1920s into "Shining Lives: A Musical" with a book and lyrics by Jessica Thebus, who also directs, and music by Andre Pluess and Amanda Dehnert. Johanna McKenzie Miller plays Catherine, the narrator, who leads the women's efforts to fight back with a lawsuit.

\$25-\$78 | [Northlight Theatre](#), North Shore Center for the Performing Arts | 9501 Skokie Blvd., Skokie | 847-673-6300

"MOBY DICK"

June 21-Aug. 9

Of all the reasons to catch the world premiere of "Moby Dick," adapted from Herman Melville's novel and directed by ensemble member David Catlin ("Lookingglass Alice"), two stand out. It's produced in association with the Actors Gymnasium, guaranteeing lots of acrobatic pyrotechnics, and the incomparable Christopher Donahue is making a rare Chicago appearance as Capt. Ahab.

\$40-\$80 | [Lookingglass Theatre Company](#), Water Tower Water Works | 821 N. Michigan Ave. | 312-337-0665

"ALL OUR TRAGIC"

June 28-Aug. 9

If you missed artistic director Sean Graney's epic four-part mashup of all 32 surviving Greek tragedies last year, be sure to see the reprise this summer with the original cast. Designed to be a contemporary Dionysian festival, the weekend performances of "All Our Tragic" last 12 hours, but there are frequent breaks, and food is included in the ticket price. Last time around, Part 1 featuring Walter Briggs as an oh-so-human Herakles on a quest to become a hero was especially enjoyable.

\$125 | [The Hypocrites](#), Den Theatre | 1329 N. Milwaukee Ave. | 773-525-5991

"VANYA AND SONIA AND MASHA AND SPIKE"

June 29-July 26/

You don't have to be a Chekhov aficionado to appreciate the Chicago premiere of this 2013 Tony Award-winning play. Playwright Christopher Durang puts characters, scenes and themes from the Russian master in a "blender" (his word) and whips up a contemporary confection about gloomy half-siblings, the self-absorbed movie-star sister who threatens to sell their home, her boy toy and, yes, a cherry orchard.

\$25-\$86 | [Goodman Theatre](#) | 170 N. Dearborn St. | 312-443-3800

"BEACHES"

July 2-Aug. 16

Iris Rainer Dart wrote the lyrics for this musical, which is based on her novel. It traces the three-decade oil-and-water friendship between vivacious Cee Cee and privileged Bertie. David Austin composed the music, and Broadway vet Eric Schaeffer ("Million Dollar Quartet") directs.

\$45-\$60 | [Drury Lane Oakbrook](#) | 10 Drury Lane, Oakbrook Terrace | 630-530-0111

"SHAKESPEARE'S GREATEST HITS"

July 19-Aug. 16

The 75-minute family-friendly show, freshened by adapter/director Geoff Button, includes the balcony scene from "Romeo and Juliet," the witches' spell-casting from "Macbeth" and a medley of encounters from works as diverse as "Much Ado About Nothing" and "The Merchant of Venice," all set to contemporary pop music.

Free | [Chicago Shakespeare Theater](#) | Various locations | 312-595-5600

"KURIOS—CABINET OF CURIOSITIES"

Aug. 6-30

Cirque du Soleil is back with its 35th creation, the first touring production written and directed by Michel Laprise, who directed Madonna in the 2012 Super Bowl halftime show. Expect awesome aerialists, acrobats and contortionists in

the steampunk extravaganza inspired by 19th-century “cabinets of curiosities,” eccentric collections of artifacts, relics and souvenirs. Critics have called it one of Cirque's best in a long time.

\$35-\$145 | [Cirque du Soleil](#), [United Center](#) | [1901 W. Madison St.](#) | [877-924-7783](#)

Anne Spiselman is a freelance writer who has been covering theater and the arts since 1978. She writes a weekly theater review for the Hyde Park Herald and served on the Joseph Jefferson Awards Committee for more than a decade. She attends a theater event an average of three times a week.

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