

Theater events: Marriott ushers in holiday season early with 'Elf'

Barbara Vitello



- Alex Goodrich and Dara Cameron star in Marriott Theatre's "Elf."
Courtesy of Amy Boyle Photography and The Marriott Theatre

'Elf' at Marriott

Marriott Theatre ushers in the holiday season with its regional premiere of "Elf," the musical by composer Matthew Sklar and lyricist Chad Beguelin based on the 2003 film. Alex Goodrich stars as Buddy, the human raised by elves who travels from the North Pole to New York City to find his biological father. Marc Robin directs and choreographs the show, which also features Dara Cameron, Susie McMonagle and Susan Moniz along with Kevin Gudahl as Buddy's father, Walter. Previews begin at 8 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 21, at 10 Marriott Drive, Lincolnshire. The show opens Oct. 28. \$50-\$55. (847) 634-0200 or marriotttheatre.com.

TV vet at Shrine

Actor/comedian/writer Rick Overton, a TV veteran who appears in the Starz series "Blunt Talk" and has guest-starred in Adult Swim's "Childrens Hospital," Comedy Central's "Another Period" and "Seinfeld," headlines adults-only shows this weekend at Aurora's Comedy Shrine. 8 p.m. Friday, Oct. 16, and 8 and 10 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 17, at 4034 Fox Valley Center Drive, Aurora. \$20, plus a two-beverage minimum. (630) 585-0300 or comedyshrine.com.

Hurricane Katrina tale

Libertyville native and Goodman Theatre directing fellow Marti Lyons directs Raven Theatre's production of "The Play About My Dad" by Boo Killebrew. It recounts the true story of Killebrew's father, a physician in Gulfport, Mississippi, who remained in the city during Hurricane Katrina to care for his patients caught in the storm. Joe Mack stars as Larry Killebrew. Previews begin at 8 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 21, at 6157 N. Clark St., Chicago. The show opens Oct. 30. \$18-\$42. (773) 338-2177 or raventheatre.com.

Other theater events

- A young woman sent to Russia to be immersed in her native language and culture finds herself in a land populated by witches, bears, evil stepmothers and other folklore characters in "The Fairytale Lives of Russian Girls" by Meg Miroshnik. Nicole Wiesner directs Trap Door Theatre's production, which opened this week at 1655 W. Cortland Ave., Chicago. (773) 384-0494 or trapdoortheatre.com.
- Previews begin Friday, Oct. 16, for The New Colony's world premiere of "The Terrible," a dark comedy by Morgan McNaught about a performance artist who wakes up dead in a room with several strangers. The show opens Monday, Oct. 19, at The Den Theatre, 1333 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago. See thenewcolony.org.
- A young documentary filmmaker investigates the disappearance of a 5-year-old girl who went missing from a local park five years earlier in "The Beecher Sisters" by Ellie Reed. Awkward Pause Theatre presents the world premiere production beginning Friday, Oct. 16, at The Right Brain Project, 4001 N. Ravenswood Ave., Chicago. See awkwardpausetheatre.com.
- In association with its hit production "Bad Jews," Theater Wit hosts a matzo ball eating contest at 10 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 17, at Royal George Theatre, 1641 N. Halsted St., Chicago. The person who eats the most matzo balls in five minutes wins a \$50 gift certificate to The Bagel Restaurant and two tickets to "Bad Jews," running through Nov. 1 at Royal George Theatre. (312) 988-9000 or badjews-chicago.com.
- Emerald City Theatre continues its season with "Dragons Love Tacos," a play for young children about a party for dragons that gets a bit out of hand when salsa is added to the menu. Performances begin Saturday, Oct. 17, at the Apollo Theater, 2540 N. Lincoln Ave., Chicago. See emeraldcitytheatre.com.
- Filament Theatre's ongoing concert series continues at 7 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 18, with a performance by singer/songwriter Amy Andrews. The theater is at 4041 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago. See filamenttheatre.org/2015concerts.
- Hell in a Handbag Productions hosts its annual benefit The Handbag Sampler from 5 to 10 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 18, at Dank Haus German American Cultural Center, 4740 N. Western Ave., Chicago. Tickets are \$80 in advance, \$90 at the door and include food, beverages and entertainment courtesy of "the campy characters who have graced the Handbag stage over the years." (800) 838-3006 or handbagproductions.org.
- Barrel of Monkeys presents the latest incarnation of "That's Weird, Grandma." "That's Weird, Grandma: Stories That Go Bump in the Night" opens Monday, Oct. 19, at the Neo-Futurist Theater, 5153 N. Ashland Ave., Chicago. The show is made up of Halloween-themed stories by Chicago public school students adapted by company members and directed by Kate Staiger. See barrelofmonkeys.org.
- Previews begin Tuesday, Oct. 20, for Chicago Children's Theatre's Chicago-area premiere of "The Miraculous

Journey of Edward Tulane," based on the children's book by Kate DiCamillo about a toy rabbit who travels the world for 20 years before finding his way back home. The show opens Oct. 23 at the Ruth Page Center for the Arts, 1016 N. Dearborn St., Chicago. (872) 222-9555 or chicagochildrenstheatre.org.

- Steppenwolf for Young Adults opens its 2015-2016 season with Andrew White's revised version of his 2004 Joseph Jefferson Award-winning adaptation of George Orwell's "1984," beginning Wednesday, Oct. 21, at 1650 N. Halsted St., Chicago. Hallie Gordan directs the play set in the future in a totalitarian state where dissent is not permitted and citizens are under constant surveillance by Big Brother. Public performances are at 7:30 p.m. Friday, 3 and 7:30 p.m. Saturday and 3 p.m. Sunday through Nov. 15. (312) 335-1650 or steppenwolf.org.
- Pride Films & Plays presents a revival of "Design for Living," Noel Coward's menage a trois comedy in which interior designer Gilda, playwright Leo and artist Otto are all in love with each other. Derek Bertelsen directs the show, which begins previews Thursday, Oct. 22, at Rivendell Theatre, 5779 N. Ridge Ave., Chicago. It opens Oct. 24. (800) 737-0984 or pridefilmsandplays.com.
- The 16th Street Theater, 6420 16th St., Berwyn, commemorates Dia de los Muertos -- Day of the Dead -- with "Mariposa Nocturna: A Puppet Triptych." Conceived and created by Stephanie Diaz, the production incorporates tabletop and shadow puppets to tell the story of a child's wish that her dying grandmother have a happy sleep. Performances begin Thursday, Oct. 22, and run through Nov. 1. (708) 795-6704 or 16thstreettheater.org.
- The Side Project opened its season earlier this month with the world premiere of "Twin Set," MT Cozzola's dark comedy about single, thirtysomething sisters in 1976, who begin to question their life choices when a former schoolmate asks for a favor. Performances continue through Oct. 18 at 1439 W. Jarvis Ave., Chicago. (773) 340-0140 or thesideproject.net.
- "Mana and her Underground Family," a psychodrama/romantic comedy about a woman living in a bomb shelter with a family no one has seen, continues at 8 p.m. Wednesdays in October at Gorilla Tango Theater, 1919 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago. (773) 598-4549 or gorillatango.com.
- The Annoyance Theatre's new sketch revue, "Mind Games," continues at 8 p.m. Saturdays through Nov. 14 at 851 W. Belmont Ave., Chicago. The Annoyance also revived its female variety show "Boss Ladies Night," which runs at 8 p.m. Tuesdays through Nov. 10. (773) 697-9693 or theannoyance.com.
- The Goodman Theatre announced four women will comprise its 2015/2016 Playwrights Unit, making it the first all-female unit in the six-year history of the program initiated with Chicago Dramatists. The new members are: poet/playwright/actor Kristiana Rae Colon, who opened her solo show "Cry Wolf" at Teatro Luna three years ago; Chicago actor/singer/writer/producer Sandra Delgado who appeared in Goodman's "The Upstairs Concierge," "Pedro Paramo" and "The (expletive) with the Hat;" writer/improviser Jenni Lamb, who's worked with the Gift, Route 66, Stage Left and American Theatre Company theaters; and Calamity West, whose new play, "Rolling," premieres in February at Jackalope Theatre.
- Silk Road Rising's 2015-2016 season titled Crescent and Star: A Radiant Season of Arab and Middle Eastern Journeys begins Nov. 19 with "My American Cousin," a one-woman show written and performed by Jameelah Shelo offering insight into the life of a Middle Eastern Muslim woman from Chicago's South Side. That's followed by writer/performer Ronnie Malley's "Ziryab, The Songbird of Andalusia" (Feb. 18-28, 2016), about the ninth century former slave who gained fame as a poet and musician. Jamil Khoury's "Mosque Alert," which tells the story of three Naperville families whose lives are upended by a proposed Islamic Center, runs March 24-May 1, 2016. The season concludes with comedian Azhar Usman's "Un-American: A Patriot Acts" (Sept. 6-25, 2016), a one-man show examining the tension and challenges a Muslim American faces in an increasingly polarized society. The season also includes panel discussions and an animated short film. Performances and events take place at Pierce Hall at The Historic Chicago Temple Building, 77 W. Washington St., Chicago. (312) 857-1234, ext. 201, or silkroadrising.org.
- The Actors Gymnasium announced its 2015-2016 season begins Nov. 14 with "Secrets, Lies and Super Spies: Fall

Youth Circus," in which friends discover they are all leading double lives. That's followed on Feb. 13, 2016, with the premiere of "The Long-Awaited Debut of Marnie & Phil: A Circus Love Letter," a time-spanning, multigenerational tale about two people who meet as circus students, become friends, go their separate ways and reunite. Written and directed by Chris Mathews of The House Theatre of Chicago, it features songs by Lindsey Noel Whiting and Kevin O'Donnell. The season also includes a Spring Youth Circus (May 14-22, 2016), a Professional Circus Training Program showcase (May 28-29, 2016) and a Summer Circus Intensive Showcase (July 23-24, 2016). Performances take place at the Noyes Cultural Arts Center, 927 Noyes St., Evanston. (847) 328-2795 or actorsgymnasium.org.

- Actor Allen Gilmore, a Congo Square Theatre Company ensemble member, and actress/comedian/writer Fawzia Mirza, who has performed with Silk Road Rising, About Face Theatre and the Goodman Theatre are among 10 Chicago artists who received \$25,000 3Arts awards honoring female artists, artists of color and artists with disabilities working and teaching in the visual arts. Each award winner receives an unrestricted \$25,000 grant. See 3arts.org.