

Theater events:



- Performances begin Friday, Feb. 13, for Citadel Theatre's production in Lake Forest of the dramedy "Other Desert Cities."
Courtesy of Citadel
- Citadel Theatre presents Jon Robin Baitz's 2011 dramedy "Other Desert Cities," about a writer who returns to her parents' Palm Springs home and informs them of the telltale memoir she has written about them, an announcement that unearths some family skeletons. Performances begin Friday, Feb. 13, at 300 S. Waukegan Road, Lake Forest. (847) 735-8554 or citadeltheatre.org.
- Gossip about a privileged guy and an ambitious girl the morning after a wild campus party tests loyalty and friendship among a group of undergraduates in "Really Really" by Paul Downs Colaizzo. Interrobang Theatre Project presents the play's Midwest premiere under director James Yost. Previews begin Friday, Feb. 13, at The Athenaeum Theatre, 2936 N. Southport Ave., Chicago. The play opens Feb. 15. (773) 935-6875 or athenaeumtheatre.org or interrobangtheatreproject.org.
- Refuge Theatre Project, a newcomer to the Chicago scene, presents its inaugural production "Next Thing You Know," a 2011 musical by composer Josh Salzman and writer/lyricist Ryan Cunningham about four twentysomethings navigating New York City. Performances run Friday, Feb. 13, to Sunday, March 8, at The Den Theatre, 1333 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago. See refugetheatre.com.
- Previews begin Friday, Feb. 13, for Profiles Theatre's Chicago premiere of "The Other Place" by Sharr White. The play, which premiered off-Broadway in 2011, is about a neurologist whose life is coming apart at the seams. Artistic director Joe Jahraus directs a cast that includes guest artist Lia D. Mortensen. The production opens Feb. 19 at 4139 N. Broadway St., Chicago. (773) 549-1815 or profilestheatre.org.

- The first 25 patrons arriving at the Royal George Theatre, 1641 N. Halsted St., Chicago, for the 7:30 p.m. Friday, Feb. 13, performance of "First Date" receive a cupcake from Swirlz Cupcakes in Chicago. Additionally, a \$159 Valentine's package consisting of admission for two, champagne and chocolates is available for the Friday and Saturday, Feb. 13-14, performances. "First Date" is a musical comedy about a blind date unfolding in real-time during the performance. See firstdatechi.com.
- The Chicago League of Lady Arm Wrestlers hosts its next adults-only match titled CLLAW XXI: My Bloody Valentine at 10:30 p.m. Friday, Feb. 13, at the Logan Square Auditorium, 2539 N. Kedzie Ave., Chicago. The event includes music, a kissing booth, a chance to win a five-minute date with a wrestler and a cash bar. Proceeds from the event benefit Sideshow Theatre Company and 826 CHI, a not-for-profit organization that helps students develop creative and writing skills. See cllaw.org.
- The Actors Gymnasium presents its winter event "Circuscope," beginning Saturday, Feb. 14, at the Noyes Cultural Arts Center, 927 Noyes St., Evanston. Chicago clown Dean Evans and director Vanessa Stalling wrote the "microscopic" spectacle featuring music, mime and acrobatics. Performances run through March 22. (847) 328-2795 or actorsgymnasium.org.
- Gorilla Tango Theatre, 1919 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, presents its adults-only "Game of Thrones" burlesque parody "The Game of Thongs" beginning at 10:30 p.m. Friday, Feb. 13. (773) 598-4549 or gorillatango.com.
- Dream Theatre Company stages "Cold," the first show of its 2015 season, beginning Saturday, Feb. 14, at The Dream Laboratory, 5026 N. Lincoln Ave., Chicago. Jeremy Menekseoglu's play centers on a shut-in named Nate who can't stand other people, and a young woman named Lyric who fears being alone. Menekseoglu and Nicole Roberts star. See dreamtheatrecompany.com.
- Mo Willems' characters come to life in "Elephant and Piggie's We Are in a Play," a vaudeville-style musical about friendship by Willems and Deborah Wicks La Puma in an Emerald City Theatre production. It opens Saturday, Feb. 14, at 2936 N. Southport Ave., Chicago. (773) 529-2690 or emeraldcitytheatre.com.
- The Cupid Players players present a Valentine's Day performance of "Cupid Has a Heart On" and "Cupid in Your Pants" on Saturday, Feb. 14, at Stage 773, 1225 W. Belmont Ave., Chicago. Performances of the adults-only musical-comedy show about love and relationships are at 8 and 10:30 p.m., respectively. (773) 327-5252 or stage773.com.
- Comedy magician Brian Kirshenbaum performs his comedy show "Slightly Funny" at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 14, at Gorilla Tango, 1919 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago. (773) 598-4549 or gorillatango.com.
- Collaboraction launches "Let Hope Rise," a six-month peace series, on Saturday Feb. 14, at Hamilton Park, 513 W. 72nd St., Chicago. Produced in cooperation with the Chicago Park District, the monthly series begins at noon with a community meal followed by a variety show; speakers include former gang member Sammy Ranger, performance poet Jessica Disu, comedian Chris Redd, DJ Shon Roka and others. The free events last 90 minutes. For a complete schedule, see collaboraction.org or call (312) 226-9633.
- Mike and Deb's efforts to impress their friends with a fantastic barbecue are for naught with the end of the world looming in "Barbecue Apocalypse," Matt Lyles' comedy about adult insecurity. The Ruckus presents the play's Midwest premiere opening Sunday, Feb. 15, at the Athenaeum Theatre, 2936 N. Southport Ave., Chicago. (773) 935-6875 or athenaeumtheatre.org or ruckustheater.org.
- International Voices Project 2015, consisting of concert readings of eight international plays, begins at 7 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 15, at Victory Gardens Theater, 2433 N. Lincoln Ave., Chicago, with "The Ramayana." An Indian drama adapted by Gopal Sharman and produced in cooperation with Rasaka Theatre, it's about Prince Rama who's exiled to the forest but returns to rescue his kidnapped wife. That's followed at 7 p.m. Monday, Feb. 16, with "The Best Brothers," Canadian playwright Daniel MacIvor's two-hander about brothers Kyle and Hamilton grieving the loss of their mother, Bunny, and dealing with long-held sibling rivalry. The IVP's first week concludes with "We Are a

Hundred," a play by Swedish writer Jonas Hassen Khemiri, translated by Rachel Wilson-Broyles, about three women -- a revolutionary, a comfortable middle-aged woman and an elder truth seeker -- seeking to define themselves. The showcase continues Feb. 22. (773) 250-7055 or ivpchicago.org.

- Raven Theatre, currently staging Horton Foote's "Dividing the Estate," hosts a free screening of Foote's "The Trip to Bountiful" starring Cicely Tyson at 7 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 15, at 6157 N. Clark St., Chicago. (773) 338-2177 or raventheatre.com.
- The Broadway-bound production of "First Wives Club," the musical adaptation of the 1996 film about three college friends who get even with their philandering husbands, begins performances Tuesday, Feb. 17, at the Oriental Theatre, 24 W. Randolph St., Chicago. The musical features a score by Motown greats Holland-Dozier-Holland and a book by TV writer Linda Bloodworth Thomason. (800) 775-2000 or broadwayinchicago.com.
- "Big Strong Man," a sketch comedy show satirizing masculinity, opens Tuesday, Feb. 17, at The Annoyance Theatre, 851 W. Belmont Ave., Chicago. (773) 697-9693 or theannoyance.com.
- The New Colony's Side Stage series of free play readings continues at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 18, at The Den Theatre, 1333 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, with "THUMBZ UP." Conceived by Stephanie Shum and written by Matt Beard, it's a drama about a group of oddball employees who get quarantined during a business meeting while the rest of the city succumbs to an unknown disease. See thenewcolony.org.
- Previews begin Thursday, Feb. 19, for Idle Muse Theatre Company's production of "The Talking Cure" by Christopher Hampton. Helmed by artistic director Evan Jackson, "The Talking Cure" pits psychoanalyst Carl Jung against his mentor Sigmund Freud over the treatment of Sabina Spielrein, Jung's patient-turned-lover. The show opens Feb. 21 at Rivendell Theatre, 5779 N. Ridge Ave., Chicago. (773) 340-9438 or idlemuse.org.
- The Neo-Futurists examine journalism in the digital and social network age in their new show, "Redletter: The News Done Medium Well," beginning previews Thursday, Feb. 19, at 5153 N. Ashland Ave., Chicago. The show opens Feb. 23. (773) 275-5255 or neofuturists.org.
- Saint Sebastian Players present "Emperor of the Moon," a comedy by 17th-century female playwright Aphra Behn. It's about two mischievous cousins who convince amateur astronomer Doctor Baliardo that their respective lovers are visitors from the moon. Performances begin Thursday, Feb. 19, at St. Bonaventure, 1625 W. Diversey Ave., Chicago. (773) 404-7922 or saintsebastianplayers.org.
- "Trigger Happy," the long-form improv show created by Annoyance Theatre artistic director Mick Napier, has been extended to March 20. The show, which runs at 8 p.m. Fridays at 851 W. Belmont Ave., Chicago, adds Wednesday performances March 4 through April 22. (773) 697-9693 or theannoyance.com.
- The Hypocrites' managing director Megan Wildebour has stepped down after six years, the company announced recently. Kelli Strickland, former executive director of Raven Theater, has taken over as the new executive director. "I look forward to collaborating with (returning artistic director Sean Graney) on a plan that will expand audiences for The Hypocrites' inventive and engaging work," said Strickland in a prepared statement.
- Adventure Stage Chicago recently announced the addition of Columbia College Chicago graduate Michael Scott to its artistic ensemble.
- American Blues Theater announced its 30th anniversary season -- titled "Seeing is Believing" -- late last month. The main stage season begins Aug. 28 with N. Richard Nash's "The Rainmaker" about a drifter named Starbuck (Steve Key) who promises to bring rain to a draught-plagued Texas town. That's followed on Nov. 20 by ABT's 14th annual production of "It's a Wonderful Life: Live in Chicago," a 1940s-style radio broadcast of Frank Capra's classic film directed by Marty Higginbotham with music direction by Michael Mahler. The world premiere of artistic affiliate James Still's "Looking Over the President's Shoulder," running Jan. 29 to March 6, 2016, is about the grandson of a freed

slave who worked for 21 years at the White House under Presidents Herbert Hoover, Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower. The season concludes with the Howard Ashman-Alan Menken musical "Little Shop of Horrors" starring ensemble member Michael Mahler as the shy florist Seymour who befriends a man-eating plant. Performances take place at the Greenhouse Theater Center, 2257 N. Lincoln Ave., Chicago. Flex passes and season subscriptions are available at (312) 725-4228 or americanbluestheater.com.

- Light Opera Works opens its 2015 season with "The Fantasticks" (June 6-14), the chamber musical by writer/lyricist Tom Jones and composer Harvey Schmidt about two fathers who plot to get their son and daughter together by attempting to keep them apart. Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein's Pulitzer Prize-winning "South Pacific" runs Aug. 15-30. That's followed by the musical revue "Hollywood's Greatest Song Hits" (Oct. 2-11 at Nichols Concert Hall, 1490 Chicago Ave., Evanston) featuring tunes from Hollywood's Golden Age. The season concludes with the Damon Runyon-inspired "Guys and Dolls" (Dec. 26-Jan. 3, 2016) by composer/lyricist Frank Loesser and writers Jo Swerling and Abe Burrows. Except for the revue, performances take place at LOW's home venue of Cahn Auditorium, 600 Emerson St., Evanston. Tickets available at (847) 920-5360 or lightoperaworks.com.

- Silent Theatre, a unique Chicago ensemble known for its noirish, typically dialogue-free productions, announced its 10th season. It begins in May 2016 with an original, rhymed work titled "The Seven Secret Plays of Madam Caprice." That's followed in August 2016 by the vaudeville-inspired "The Dueling Gentlemen." Silent Theatre's 10th season concludes in December 2016 with a remount of the company's signature piece about a seductress titled "LULU: a black and white silent play." For more information, see silenttheatre.com.

- Porchlight Music Theatre's 2015-2016 season begins Sept. 11 with Bill Russell and Henry Krieger's musical "Side Show" about the lives of conjoined twins Daisy and Violet Hilton. Director/choreographer and Lincolnshire native Brenda Didier and music director Austin Cook remounts Porchlight's 2014 Joseph Jefferson Award-winning Fats Waller revue "Ain't Misbehavin'" (Nov. 14-Dec. 20). The company begins 2016 with the Chicago premiere of "Far From Heaven" (Feb. 5-March 13, 2016), a new musical by writer Richard Greenberg, composer Scott Frankel and lyricist Michael Korie based on the 2002 film about a 1957 wife and mother whose life seems picture-perfect even though her world is unraveling. The season concludes with a revival of "Dreamgirls" (April 8-May 15, 2016), a musical inspired by the story of The Supremes. Productions take place at Stage 773, 1225 W. Belmont Ave., Chicago. Season subscriptions are available beginning April 13 at (773) 777-9884 or porchlightmusictheatre.org. Single tickets are available June 1 at (773) 327-5252 or porchlightmusictheatre.org.

- Oracle Productions announced additional programming this year. That includes a remount of "The Jungle," adapted from Upton Sinclair's novel by Matt Foss and produced through a gift from Theatre Seven. Performances begin March 26. The world premiere production of "This House Believes the American Dream is at the Expense of the American Negro" begins Aug. 21. An immersive drama underscoring the country's continuing racial crisis, it's adapted by director Zachary Baker-Salmon from the 1965 debate between civil rights activist James Baldwin and National Review founder William F. Buckley Jr. The season concludes with "R & J: The Vineyard" (Oct. 24-Nov. 22), a collaboration between Oracle and Red Theater incorporating American Sign Language, that sets Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet" in 1890s Martha's Vineyard. Performances take place at 3809 N. Broadway St., Chicago. Admission is free, but donations are accepted. See publicaccesstheatre.org.

-- Barbara Vitello