

## Howard Sherman's US theatre round-up: June 19

Howard  
Sherman

### New adaptation of Moby Dick surfaces at Chicago's Lookingglass

Photos: Liz Lauren

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Given its oceanic setting and enormous title character, it's really quite remarkable how often Moby Dick has been adapted for the stage, with Orson Welles' Moby Dick Rehearsed and the musical travesty Moby Dick by Longden and Kaye being but two examples. Another entry joins this roster tomorrow night when Chicago's Lookingglass Theatre Company, in association with the Actors Gymnasium, adds a 10-actor adaptation to the repertory, written and directed by company member David Catlin. The production plays through August 9, and hopefully will not give rise to features and reviews shouting "Thar she blows!".

### On Your Feet gets on its feet in Chicago

Photos: Matthew Murphy

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Chicago will be host to several pre-Broadway shows in the coming year, and the first up is On Your Feet!, the story of Latina pop star Gloria Estefan and her husband and producer Emilio, both multiple Grammy Award-winners, which opened on Wednesday night. Drawing on the Estefan catalogue, including such hits as 1-2-3, Conga, and I Need Your Love, it focuses on the couple's romance and certainly must address Gloria's injury and recovery from a broken vertebra suffered when her tour bus was in an accident in 1990. The show features a book by Alexander Dinelaris, the Academy Award-winning screenwriter of Birdman, and it's directed by Jerry Mitchell (who has Tony Awards as a choreographer for La Cage Aux Folles and Kinky Boots) and choreographed by Sergio Trujillo (who won a choreography Tony for Memphis). To quote one of Estefan's songs, this is clearly a musical that will be exhorting audiences to, "Come on, shake your body baby, do the conga. I know you can't control yourself any longer."

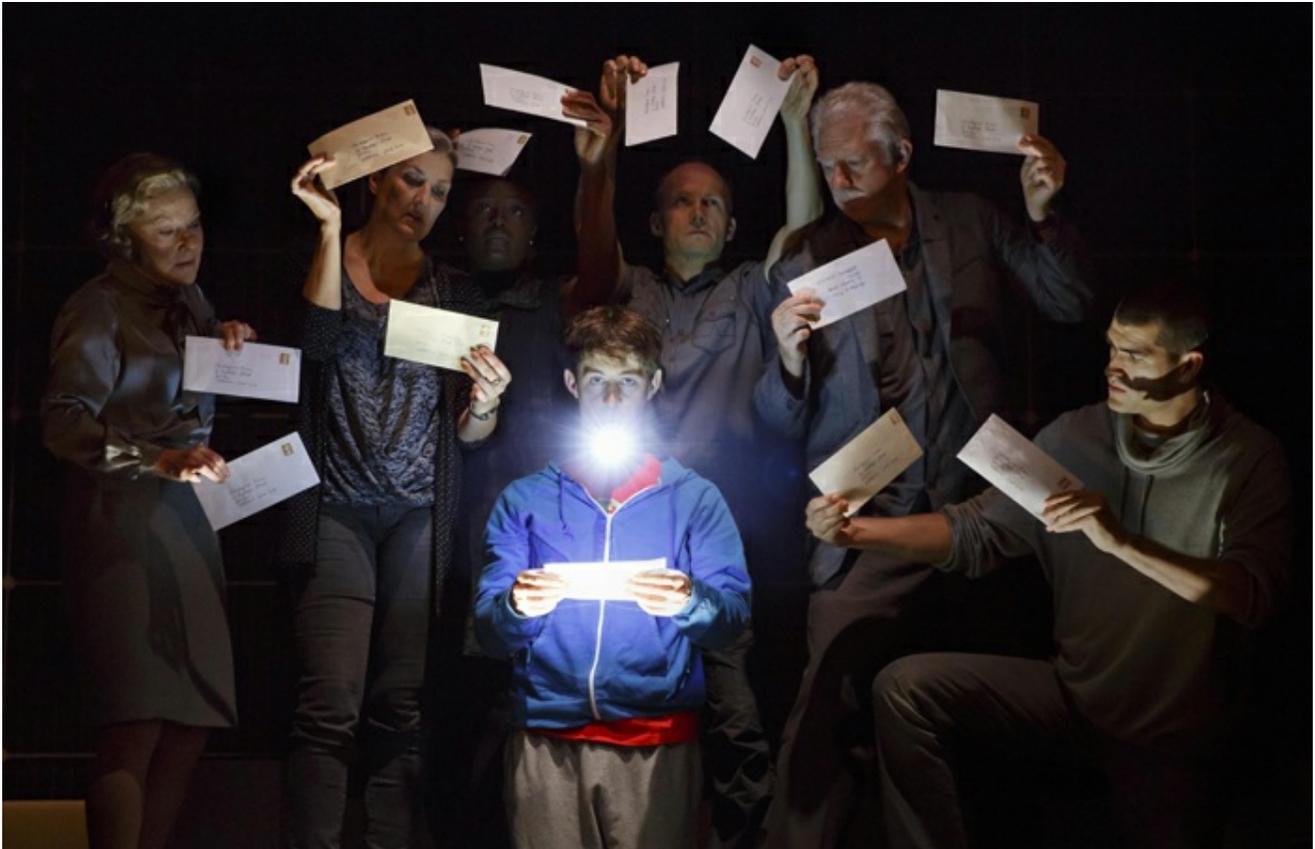
### Finn's Brain gets a rare encore next week in NYC

William Finn won Tony Awards in 1992 for best book and best score of a musical for Falsettos, but his next musical, A New Brain, managed only 78 performances at Off-Broadway's Mitzi Newhouse Theatre in the summer of 1998. I remember the original production vividly, for its central performance by Malcolm Gets as Finn's fictional stand-in Gordon Schwinn; for the supporting performance of rising star Kristin Chenoweth; for the glorious vocal arrangements by Jason Robert Brown; for the fluid and joyous direction by Graciela Daniele; and for the enduring appeal of Finn's songs. The show returns to New York next week for a brief, five-performance outing as part of the Encores! Off-Center series, curated by Jeanine Tesori. James Lapine, who directed and collaborated with Finn on Falsettos, directs, and Jonathan Groff plays the leading role of Schwinn, a songwriter facing brain surgery, based on Finn's real-life medical experience. The cast also includes Dan Fogler, who won a Tony for Finn's 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee. My colleague Mark Shenton tells me that A New Brain has not yet been seen in London – someone ought to get on that, and I'm looking at you, Menier Chocolate Factory and Southwark Playhouse.

### Prince of Broadway to debut way, way Off-Broadway

Harold Prince has been developing Prince of Broadway, a musical compilation show drawn from the vast list of productions he has produced or directed over the years, for some time. When it finally reaches the stage, despite its name, it won't be on Broadway, or in New York, or even in the United States. Instead, the show featuring numbers from *Candide*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Cabaret*, *The Pajama Game* and *West Side Story*, to name but a few, will launch in Japan with stops in Tokyo and Osaka between October and December. Prince will co-direct with Susan Stroman, who will also choreograph; Jason Robert Brown is orchestrating and writing an original finale; and the cast includes Ramin Karimaloo and Shuler Hensley. Whether the show will make it beyond Asia remains to be seen, but Prince will be back in New York in 2016 when he stages the new musical *The Band's Visit* for the Atlantic Theatre Company.

## Tallying the Tonys



The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time. Photo: Joan Marcus

With the 2015 Tony Awards in the rearview mirror, it's an opportune moment to see how the awards did – or didn't – affect the fortunes of UK shows on Broadway. For *The Audience*, which garnered two gongs for Helen Mirren and Richard McCabe, the show really had nowhere to go – it has played to capacity for its entire run, grossing more than \$1 million weekly while playing only seven, instead of the usual eight, performances. For *Skylight*, which won best revival, there was also no real room for growth, as it has also been playing to full houses, but as the run has been drawing to a close, the average price per ticket has been climbing, yielding its highest weekly revenues in each of the past two completed weeks.

With five awards, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* has seen its percentage sold move back up to the high 90s, after some weeks when it dipped into the 80 and even 70% range. Its average price per ticket had begun climbing even before the awards, which suggests the show is back on its way to the \$900,000-plus grosses it enjoyed late last year, when it topped the \$1 million mark at the holidays. Unfortunately, with only a single award for costume design, and no significant airtime for any of the plays on the broadcast, there's no appreciable improvement for *Wolf Hall*, which has been playing to 50 to 60% capacity since the nominations were announced in late April. The

show's highest capacity came back during its previews in March, when it topped out at 80%.

Save for Curious Incident, playing an open run, the British colonisation of Broadway will see a significant reduction in the coming weeks, with Skylight closing this Sunday, The Audience ending the conversation a week after that, and Wolf Hall divorcing from New York the Sunday after that. However, Curious Incident will still have The Phantom of the Opera, Les Miserables and Matilda to help it fly the Union Jack here in the colonies.