

*** Previews begin Friday, May 11, for Black Ensemble Theater's - world premiere of
Daily Herald (Arlington Heights, IL) - Friday, May 11, 2012**

* Previews begin Friday, May 11, for Black Ensemble Theater's world premiere of "The Marvin Gaye Story (Don't Talk About My Father Because God is My Friend)," an original musical paying tribute to the musical contributions while chronicling the troubled life of the Motown star. Rashawn Thompson stars as Gaye in the show, which opens Sunday, May 20, at the BET Cultural Center, 4450 N. Clark St., Chicago. (773) 769-4451 or blackensembletheater.org.

* Chicago Fusion Theatre showcases its female members during a cabaret performance titled "Women with Standards" at 10 p.m. Friday, May 11, at Luna Central, 3914 N. Clark St., Chicago. Tickets range from \$15 to \$30. See chicagofusiontheatre.org for more information.

* The Neo-Futurists offer students enrolled at Chicago area colleges students a \$5 admission discount to their long-running "Too Much Light Makes the Baby Go Blind: 30 Plays in 60 Minutes" on their school's dedicated weekend. Northwestern University students receive the discount Friday to Sunday, May 11-13. Shows are at 11:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday and 7 p.m. Sunday at 5153 N. Ashland Ave., Chicago. (773) 275-5255 or neofuturists.org.

* Sideshow Theatre Company hosts its annual gala from 6 to 9 p.m. Saturday, May 12, at 1326 N. Cleveland Ave., Chicago. Dubbed "The 200th Annual Buckford-Westington Family Reunion," the event features psychic readings, a mentalist act, food, spirits and auction. See sideshowtheatre.org.

* The side project's three-show spring repertory series begins Sunday, May 13, with "Enola," Al Smith's drama in which the young girl whose father designed the plane that delivered the first atomic bomb, the Enola Gay, recalls that fateful summer. Performances run through June 15 at 1439 W. Jarvis St., Chicago. The series continues on Wednesday, May 16, with the opening of "Joan's Laughter," Jacob Juntunen's play about the last hour of Joan of Arc's life. The series concludes with "The Promise," Aleksei Arbuzov's drama about three Russian teens who find refuge in a bombed-out apartment during World War II. (773) 973-2150 or thesideproject.net.

* Emerald City Theatre admits mothers free with the purchase of a children's ticket to the 1 p.m. Sunday, May 13, performance of "Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible No Good, Very Bad Day," at the Apollo Theatre, 2640 N. Lincoln Ave., Chicago. Use code "no good" when purchasing tickets at emeraldcitytheatre.com.

* Erasing the Distance, an ensemble devoted to shedding light on mental health issues, concludes its inaugural season with "Good Enough," the world premiere drama that tells the true stories of five women living with depression or bipolar disorder. Performances run Monday, May 14, through Tuesday, May 22, at the Hoover-Leppen Theatre at the Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted St., Chicago. See erasingthedistance.org for information.

* Stage Left Theatre presents "Leapfest 9," its ninth annual new play festival, which kicks off 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 15, at Coopers, 1232 W. Belmont Ave., Chicago, with a preview of the featured plays. The mini-fest consists of five new plays centered on sociopolitical themes running in repertory. Featured playwrights include Claudia Barnett, Shayne Kennedy,

Alex Lewin, Barbara Lhota and Penny Penniston. Performances run Thursday, May 17, through June 3, at Theater Wit, 1229 W. Belmont Ave., Chicago. (773) 975-8150 or stagelefttheatre.com.

* A Reasonable Facsimile Theatre Company hosts its next evening of staged sitcoms at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 15, at Mary's Attic, 5400 N. Clark St., Chicago. Next up in the "season of sin" are episodes of "7th Heaven," "Barney Miller" and "Fresh Prince of Bel Air" plus five-minute "Saved by the Bell" and "Family Feud" playlettes. (773) 418-4475 or arftco.com.

* "After Miss Julie," Patrick Marber's ("Closer," "Dealer's Choice") retelling of August Strindberg's tragedy about doomed affair between a nobleman's daughter and a servant, gets its Midwest premiere courtesy of Focal Point Theatre Company. Previews begin Thursday, May 17, at Piccolo Theatre, 600 Main St. Evanston. The show opens Saturday, May 19. See focalpointtheatre.com for more information.

* Previews begin Thursday, May 17, for Rivendell Theatre Ensemble's production of "Crooked" by Catherine Trieschmann. Sandy Shinner directs the play about the sexual awakening of a 14-year-old girl facing the challenges of living with a deformed back and living in a troubled family who uses fiction as a way of gaining acceptance. The show opens Sunday, May 20, at 5779 N. Ridge Ave., Chicago. (773) 334-7728 or rivendelltheatre.org.

* Chicago area newcomer, Lake Como in Rome (which takes its name from Fyodor Dostoyevsky's "Notes from Underground"), makes its debut with "Night Just Before the Forest," a one-man show about urban alienation by French playwright Bernard-Marie Koltes. Previews begin Thursday, May 17, at The Viaduct Theater, 3111 N. Western Ave., Chicago. The show opens Saturday, May 19. (773) 296-6024 or viaducttheatre.com.

* Overpopulation threatens the city of Chicago in the new rock opera "Admiral Earth: a working title," by Matthew Ascianto and Anthony Venturini. The show runs through June 7 at Stage 773, 1225 W. Belmont Ave., Chicago. (773) 327-5252 or stage773.com.

* A Red Orchid Theatre has extended Marisa Wegrzyn's "The Butcher of Baraboo," about a woman who becomes a suspect in her husband's disappearance. Performances run through June 3 at 1531 N. Wells St., Chicago. (312) 943-8722 or aredorchidtheatre.org.

* Raven Theatre has extended James Anthony Zoccoli's autobiographical "Wiggerlover (white boy + black dad = gray areas)," about a white kid in Chicago whose mom marries a black man. Performances continue Fridays through May 25 at 6157 N. Clark St., Chicago. See raventheatre.com.

* The Annoyance Theatre, 4830 N. Broadway, Chicago, has extended its "(Expletive) Comedy Hour," which will run at midnight Fridays through July 6. Additionally, the theater presents a "best of" version at 10 p.m. Saturdays through June 1. (773) 561-4665 or theannoyance.com.

* Citadel Theatre Company offers \$10 tickets to Thursday performances of "Lend Me a Tenor" to company alumni and industry members. Performances continue through June 3 at the West Campus Theater, 300 S. Waukegan Road, Lake Forest. (847) 735-8554 or citadeltheatre.org.

* The Evanston Chamber of Commerce has named Actors Gymnasium co-founders — former circus performer Sylvia Hernandez-DiStasi and Lookingglass Theatre company member Larry DiStasi — as Public Service/Non-Profit Person of the Year. The co-artistic directors founded the company in 1995 to introduce a new kind of physicality to theatrical productions and to teach kids and young adults the theatrical arts of juggling, trapeze, unicycling, aerial dance and tumbling. See actorsgymnasium.com.

* The League of Chicago Theatres has awarded Theatre Seven of Chicago its 2012 Broadway in Chicago Emerging Theater Award established to support and promote emerging Chicago theater. In addition to \$5,000, Theatre Seven will receive advertising support and consulting services from Broadway in Chicago.

— Barbara Vitello

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