

TO SEE OR NOT TO SEE

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MEETING OF THE MINDS: Next up for Timeline Theatre is the Chicago premiere of Tom Stoppard's version of Anton Chekov's *The Seagull*. A famous actress, Irina Arkadina, and her lover Trigorin wreak havoc during a summer stay at her family's country home. Meanwhile, her son Konstantin struggles to define himself as a writer and declare his love for Nina, who dreams of the stage and of Trigorin. Royal Shakespeare Company founder Peter Hall commissioned the translation for the 1997 season at London's Old Vic. Stoppard's take on the classic echoes Shakespeare's "Hamlet" more overtly than other English versions of this major work by the Russian playwright. Opens Sunday and continues through June 3 at Baird Hall, Wellington Church of Christ, 615 W. Wellington. Tickets: (312) 409-8463.

PUPPET PREVIEW: The Actors Gymnasium presents a six-week preview production of Michael Montenegro's original puppet drama *Iktu Blas*, an epic about a savage dictator. He is portrayed as another Hitler or Stalin—one of the "hungry despots" whose compulsions shape history. Montenegro and his ensemble use a series of images—dreamy, comic, monstrous, poignant—to tell the story in the best traditions of imagination open to the puppeteer. Previews begin Friday and continue through June 10 at the Noyes Cultural Arts Center, 927 Noyes, Evanston. Tickets: (847) 328-2795. "Iktu Blas" will run June 15-24 as part of Puppetropolis Chicago. Performances will be at Chopin Theater, 1543 W. Division. For more information on Puppetropolis, call (312) 7"-3315.

HAMLET ADAPTED: Once again Chicago Shakespeare Theater brings to town one of the world's great theatrical minds. The Tragedy of Hamlet, adapted and staged by world-renowned director Peter Brook, is an international theater event playing in only three U.S. cities—New York, Chicago and Seattle. The work debuted last December at Brooks' home base, Theatre des Bouffes du Nord in Paris. Nearly 2 1/2 hours in length, it's performed in English with no intermission. Performing on a minimalist set (a blood orange carpet scattered with stools, cushions and a skull) are Adrian Lester as Hamlet, Natasha Parry as Gertrude, Shantala Shivalingappa as Ophelia, Bruce Myers as Polonius, Scott Handy as Horatio and Jeffrey Kissoon as Claudius. Performances begin Thursday and continue through June 2 at Chicago Shakespeare Theater on Navy Pier, 800 E. Grand. Tickets: (312) 595-5600.

OVATION FOR IRVING: The middle entry in this season's trio of musicals for the Auditorium Theatre's "Ovations" series is Irving Berlin's *Call Me Madam*. The 1950 musical, originally written for Ethel Merman, tells the story of society hostess Sally Adams, who has been appointed the U.S. ambassador to the Grand Duchy of Lichtenberg. Jo Anne Worley, Fred Willard and Malcolm Gets star; Gary Griffin directs. Performances are Tuesday through May 13 at the Auditorium Theatre, 50 E. Congress. Tickets: (312) 902-1500.

DANCE DOINGS: Choreographer Ronald K. Brown makes his Chicago debut with his company, Evidence, at 8 tonight and Saturday night at the Dance Center of Columbia College Chicago, 1306 S. Michigan. The troupe will perform "Highlife," a new work. Also included in the program are excerpts from "Upside Down," "Incidents" and "Better Days." Tickets: (312) 3"-8300. . . . Gus Giordano Dance Center presents its annual New Choreography Showcase at 8 tonight and Saturday night and 7 p.m. Sunday in the Giordano Dance Center, 614 Davis, Evanston. Tickets (\$10) will be available at the door. For more information, call (847) 866-9"2.

WOMANFEST: The Aardvark presents Estrogen Fest, a festival dedicated to women that encompasses theater, dance, music and performance. Performances are Tuesdays

beginning May 8 and continuing through May 29. Aardvark also is staging Vincent Bruckert's You Got Engaged?!, a comedy about 21st century nuptials. Ann Filmer directs. Opens Saturday and continues through May 28. Performances for both are at the Performance Loft, Second Unitarian Church, 656 W. Barry. Tickets: (773) 489-0843.

ODDS & ENDS: Theater on the Lake has announced its lineup: "Second City Does Second City" (June 13-17), "Breathing Underwater" by Running with Scissors (June 20-24), Rivendell Theatre's wonderful "Faulkner's Bicycle" (June 27-July 1), "Life Under 30" by Roadworks Productions (July 4-8), Steppenwolf Theatre's "The Water Engine" (July 11-15), "Another Part of the Forest" by Eclipse Theatre Company (July 18-22), the Hypocrites staging of "The Cherry Orchard" (July 25-29), "Into the Woods" by Porchlight Theatre (Aug. 1-5) and Congo Square's revival of August Wilson's "The Piano Lesson" (Aug. 8-12). Tickets: (312) 742-7994. . . . The cabaret-style comedy The Judy Garland Arbor Day Special features J. Scott Ament as the diva. Opens tonight and continues to May 26 at the Theatre Building, 1225 W. Belmont. Tickets: (773) 529-4809, ext. 2. . . . Northwestern University presents Jean Anouilh's Antigone at 8 tonight and Saturday night and 2 p.m. Sunday, Barber Theatre, 1979 S. Campus, Evanston. Tickets: (847) 491-7282. . . . A benefit for Lifeline Theatre is scheduled for 6-10 p.m. Tuesday at the Three Arts Club, 1300 N. Dearborn. Tickets: (773) 761-77. . . . Stories on Stage presents "I Wish I Didn't Love You So," a program that includes readings of stories by Edith Wharton and Elizabeth Bowen. At 7:30 p.m. Tuesday at the Museum of Contemporary Art, 220 E. Chicago. Tickets: (312) 397-4010. . . . A benefit for Roadworks Productions, featuring the music of the Sam Burckhardt Combo and swing dance lessons, takes place 6:30-10 p.m. Monday at the Three Arts Club, 1300 N. Dearborn. Tickets: (312) 492-7150, ext. 14.

Caption: Adrian Lester stars in the title role of "The Tragedy of Hamlet."

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