

Top 10 (or More) Picks in Theater

2007 offers festivals, new facilities and fascinating titles.

By Brad Hathaway

January 3, 2007

The wonderful thing about the incredibly active theater community we enjoy in our town is that it is practically impossible to compile a list of the top 10 most anticipated productions for the New Year—there's just so much that looks fascinating on the horizon.

Here's my attempt to pick at least a cross section of highlights from the announced plans for 2007 at our theaters:

1. This will obviously be remembered as the year Signature Theatre moved into its new two-theater facility above the library in Shirlington. Starting with the Open House with free events and performances the weekend of January 13 – 14, through the gala opening of the first musical in the house, "Into The Woods" (Jan. 12 – Feb. 25) the new western end of South 28th Street will be a frequent destination for theater lovers. The rest of the year holds the US premiere of the musical "The Witches of Eastwick" (June 5 – July 15) which was artistic director Eric Schaeffer's London premiere, the world premiere of a musical, "Saving Aimee" (April 10 – May 13) with lyrics by Kathie Lee Gifford, and a play, "Nest" (April 24 – June 24) based on the true story of a Mennonite accused of infanticide in 1809 who became the first woman to be executed by the State of Pennsylvania.

2. A city-wide festival, "Shakespeare in Washington" will give Virginia theater buffs plenty of reason to travel across the river, but it may well draw some Washingtonians and Marylanders across the bridges in this direction as well. Events in Virginia include: "King Lear," "Edward III" and "Macbeth" (February through July) at the Washington Shakespeare Company at the Clark Street Playhouse, "Twelfth Night" by Firebelly Productions at Theater on the Run (Feb. 14 – March 3), "Hamlet" performed in Hebrew by the Cameri Theatre of Israel in Signature's new space in Shirlington (March 6 – 11), "Macbeth in a new near-wordless adaptation for Synetic Theater, at the Spectrum in Rosslyn" (Jan. 12 – Feb. 25).

3. Many theater companies have announced intriguing seasons in local venues, but one seems to have more variety than any other: The American Century Theater, which performs in Theatre Two of the Gunston Arts Center. They have scheduled shows big, small and in between. Big: "Hellzapoppin" (July 13 – Aug. 18), the 1936 crazy collection of sketch comedy and show music which the team of Ole Olsen and Chic Johnson hit it big with on Broadway — it became the longest running musical in the history of Broadway at the time, running more than three years. Small: An evening of one-act plays from Rachel Crothers, Gertrude Stein and Dorothy Parker under the title "Drama Under The Influence" (Feb. 23 – March 24). In between: a revival of 1973's Tony Award winner for Best Play, Jason Miller's drama of the reunion of four teammates with their old high school basketball coach, "That Championship Season" (March 30 – April 28).

Get Information

Learn more about the 2007 theatre season by contacting the theatres directly:

Charter Theatre - 202-333-7009

Dominion Stage - 703-683-0502

Firebelly Productions - 703-698-5454

Keegan Theatre - 703-892-0202

MetroStage - 703-548-9044

Port City Playhouse - 703-838-2880

Signature Theatre - 703-820-9771

Synetic Theater - 703-824-8060

Teatro de la Luna – 703-548-3092

The American Century Theater - 703-553-8782

The Arlington Players - 703-549-1063

The Little Theatre of Alexandria - 703-683-5778

Washington

Shakespeare Theatre - 703-418-4808

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4. Charter Theatre specializes in new plays. They will offer "Sleeping and Waking," Chris Stezin's play that examines issues raised by emerging scientific technologies through a look at the first human head transplant in the year 2060 (May 4 – June 2).

5. "Terra Nova," the story of Captain Robert Scott's failed attempt to be the first to reach the South Pole, will be produced by Port City Playhouse at the Nannie J. Lee Center (April 13 – 28).

6. With "Scotland Road," The Little Theatre of Alexandria introduces us to James Hatcher's short play that is said to have been inspired by a tabloid headline that read: "Titanic Survivor Found on Iceberg." The title refers to the central passageway on the Titanic which seemed long enough for a person to walk to Scotland (April 21 – May 12).

7. As with "A Fine and Private Place," Dominion Stage seems to do its best work with intimate shows. They've found a gem in a touching musical that tells two love stories involving the living and the dead in a mystical graveyard (May 18 – 27).

8. "Krapp's Last Tape"/"Not I"/"Footfalls" are three short pieces by Samuel Beckett that will be at Arlington's Theatre on the Run as part of Keegan's New Island Theatre Project (April 3 – 23).

9. In "La Casa de Todos (The House of All)," Jacqueline Briceño of Venezuela directs the world premiere of her political play for Teatro de la Luna at Gunston Arts Center Theatre Two (May 4 – June 2).

10. In "A Man for All Seasons," Christopher Dykton directs the famous play about Henry VIII and Sir Thomas Moore's battle of wits and conscience for The Arlington Players at The Thomas Jefferson Theatre (Feb. 2 – 17).

And, just to prove that it is all but impossible to limit the list to just 10 – here's:

11. "Animal Farm." Synetic premieres George Orwell's cautionary tale in an adaptation by Nathan Weinberger and Paata Tsikurishvili in the Rosslyn Spectrum (April 26 – May 20).

Brad Hathaway reviews theater in Virginia, Washington and Maryland as well as Broadway, and edits Potomac Stages, a website covering theater in the region (www.PotomacStages.com). He can be reached at Brad@PotomacStages.com.