NEWS

`THREE TALL WOMEN' TRACES ONE LIFE



By CHICAGO TRIBUNE
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His greatest work since "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?," Edward Albee's 1994 Pulitzer Prize winner "Three Tall Women" hauntingly depicts a wealthy 92-year-old woman called simply "A" who examines her life by means of a magical encounter. Albee in turn examines her through three actresses who play this tall woman at different stages of her life.

Produced by Michael Leavitt, FOX Theatricals and Libby Mages, the much-touted off-Broadway play receives its Chicago premiere on Tuesday at the Apollo Theater. Starring in it are three actresses who recently completed a one-month engagement of the production at Houston's Alley Theatre (the first U.S. mounting outside of New York).

Nan Martin plays both the nonagenarian "A" and, in Act II, her 72-year-old

"Three Tall Women" has an open run at Apollo Theater, 2540 N. Lincoln Ave.; 312-902-1500 or 312-935-6100.

Other theater openings of note:

"Fiddler on the Roof," Friday, Pheasant Run Theatre, 4051 E. Main St., St. Charles; 708-584-6342: Anatevka rises again. Diana Martinez directs a revival of the beloved Tony-winning musical about a godly dairyman, his pragmatic wife and his five unmarried daughters, all living precariously in 1905 Russia with a symbolic violinist on the housetop.

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"for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf," Saturday, Steppenwolf Theatre Educational Outreach Program at Steppenwolf Studio Theatre, 1650 N. Halsted St.; 312-335-1650: Leslie Holland and Lisa Baer direct and choreograph an all-female cast of seven and two musicians in Ntozake Shange's Obie Award-winning 1974 choreo-poem, a spirited testimony to life's tribulations and triumphs that explores a young black girl's coming of age.

"Behind the Curtains," Saturday, Hidden Theatre at Greenview Arts Center, 6418 N. Greenview Ave.; 312-922-2300: Set in Iran in the late 19th Century, Ezzat Goushegir's play chronicles the true-life story of revolutionary poet Quarrat ul Ain. An unusually educated woman for the time, her keen intellect and fearless nature made her question the traditions of a male-dominated Islamic society. She also stands as a brave voice today when, according to the theater, "individual convictions are often victims of mass mentality."

According to director Hannah Gale, "Ezzat's language is founded on the traditions of the classical ritual drama of Persia, of stories told on cool nights, within a circle of eager faces." Iranian set designer Ario provides the backdrop of vaulting arches and flowing curtains, and Jennifer Savarirayan's choreography evokes the majesty of the desert world.

"Nomathemba (Hope)," Sunday, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, 1650 N. Halsted St.; 312-335-1650: Premiering at Steppenwolf Theatre Company in 1992, "The Song of Jacob Zulu" was an angry attack on the evils of apartheid. Three years later, a kinder and gentler South Africa seems to deserve this equally compassionate new work. Once again the creators are director Eric Simonson and South African artists from the group Ladysmith Black Mambazo, as well as scriptwriter Ntozake Shange (author of "for colored girls . . .")

"Nomathemba" recounts the title character's search for a better life and the love-driven journey of her fiance, who seeks Nomathemba in city after city. The music, by Joseph Shabalala, is performed by Grammy-winning Ladysmith Black Mambazo.

The work is inspired by the first song Joseph Shabalala wrote, in 1965, a

"Reflections of Mothers So Young," Monday at 7:30 p.m., Stories on Stage at Court Theatre, 5535 S. Ellis Ave.; 312-455-0440: This unusual evening features live dramatic readings of original stories by teenage pregnant women, students at the Arts of Living Chicago Public Alternative High School for Pregnant Teens. Read by professional actors, the stories recapture the events that shaped, and the people who influenced, the authors' lives before they became mothers.

"Hello, Dolly!," Wednesday, Marriott's Lincolnshire Theatre, 10 Marriott Drive, Lincolnshire; 708-634-0200: Tackling the glorious role of Dolly Levi, matchmaker to Yonkers and the world, Chicago favorite Alene Robertson again promises to never go away again. Reviving Jerry Herman's beloved musical version of Thornton Wilder's comedy, Dyanne Earley directs Joel Hatch as flinty Horace Vandergelder, Todd Peterson and Jeff Dumas as ambitious Cornelius and Barnaby, Susan Moniz as knowing Irene Malloy and Debbie Laumand as the merry milliner Minnie Fay.

"Buckets O' Beckett," Thursday, Splinter Group at Theatre Building, 1225 W. Belmont Ave.; 312-327-5252: It's spring, so of course we think of Samuel Beckett. In turn he reminds us of Splinter Group's fourth annual festival of Beckett works. This year's expanded version features seven Beckett plays, including the favorite "Waiting for Godot," performed in three different productions, all directed by Matt O'Brien and performed by a cast of five.

"With and Without," Thursday at 8 p.m., Chicago Theatres on the Air, DoubleTree Guest Suites, 198 E. Delaware Pl.; 312-871-3000: Guests stars Lindsay Crouse, Michael Tucker and Jill Eickenberry (of "L.A. Law") join in a staged recording for a WFMT-FM (98.7) broadcast on May 26 of Victory Gardens Theater's "With and Without." Jeffrey Sweet's dramatic comedy features two couples who meet for what ought to be a week of wine, wit and relaxation; instead, old passions bubble up to test the couples' limits of friendship and marriage.

"The Hot L Baltimore," Thursday, Raven Theatre, 6931 N. Clark St.; 312-338-2177: Scott Shallenbarger directs a cast of 13 in this revival of Lanford Wilson's popular play. Set in a dilapidated section of Baltimore, in a once-elegant hotel now marked for demolition, it examines a seedy

"Judgement," Thursday, Paradox Productions at Cafe Voltaire, 3231 N. Clark St.; 312-929-9685: In this Midwest premiere staged by Gary Zabinski, Chicago comic actor Larry Neumann Jr. performs Barry Collins' one-man tour-de-force. It's the haunting tale of Andrei Vukov, the seemingly sane survivor of a group of seven Russian officers. Imprisoned and abandoned, left naked in a cell for two months, Vukov alone remains to tell the controversial story of the soldiers' struggle for life. The audience serves as his judge.

"WomanSong," Thursday, Northlight Theatre at Theatre Building, Chicago folk legend Jenny Armstrong, recently seen in Northlight's "Quilters," performs her one-woman musical biography. Inspired by "Quilters," a pioneer musical, it employs music and monologue to tell the story of Armstrong's life as a musician, singer and member of Chicago's "first family of folk." It pays homage to both her family and the friends who fathered her along the way, including world mythologist Joseph Campbell, Irish fiddler Michael Gorman and poet David Whyte.

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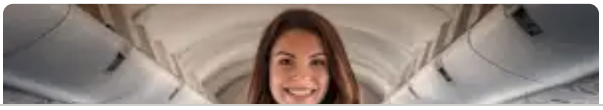
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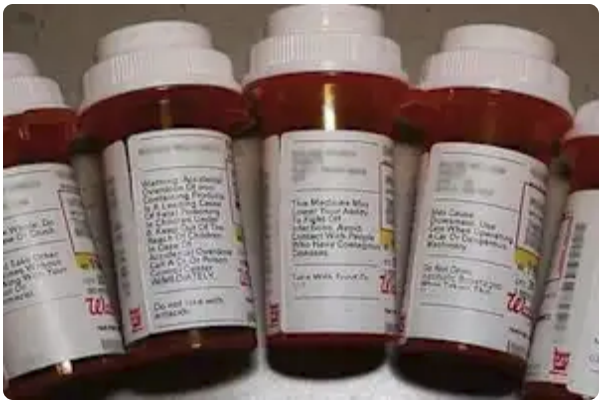


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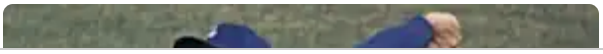
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