

2011 Age Recommendations

Angus Bowmer Theatre

***Measure for Measure* by William Shakespeare**

Vienna seethes with corruption and sexual license. Its Duke takes a mysterious leave of absence and leaves his deputy, the sternly incorruptible Angelo, in charge. Angelo immediately revives a disused morality law that says if a couple conceives a child out of wedlock, they are to be thrown in prison and the man executed. Claudio and Juliet, a young engaged couple, are waiting for a dowry so they can set the date for their wedding. But Juliet has become pregnant and they are the first couple arrested under this law. Claudio's devout sister Isabella, a religious novice, is persuaded to plead with Angelo for her brother's life. Isabella's passionate appeal to Angelo enflames him with lust and he offers a trade: her virginity in exchange for her brother's life. Shakespeare's tragicomedy explores restraint and lack of restraint. It is a compelling mix of the things we're *still* obsessed with—morality, religion and politics. It is best suited for mature 14-year-olds and up. Prologue recommended.

***The Imaginary Invalid* by Moliere, adapted by Oded Gross and Tracy Young**

The one thing Argan is certain of is that he is sick in lots of different ways. So sick that the list of his medications and treatments is staggering. So sick that he hasn't left his room in years. So sick that he cannot see the scheming of his greedy new wife. So sick that he feels the need to engage his daughter to the nerdy nephew of one of his doctors in order to receive free health care, even though she, of course, loves someone else. Moliere's classic farce, in a new adaptation from the team behind 2009's *The Servant of Two Masters*, examines what it means to be healthy and the curious fact that we all invent ourselves. *The Imaginary Invalid* will be best enjoyed by playgoers 11 and up who can handle the potty humor and appreciate the satiric nature of the comedy.

***To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, adapted for the stage by Christopher Sergel**

Nine-year-old tomboy Jean Louise Finch (nicknamed Scout) and her older brother Jem are growing up in the racially charged Depression-era South. Over the course of a tumultuous year, the children learn some very adult lessons about ignorance, hatred and bigotry when their father, a country lawyer, defends a black man unjustly accused of raping a white woman. Throughout the trial and its aftermath, Jem and Scout discover both compassionate and harsh realities through small gifts left in a tree and a terrifying walk home in the dark. The stage adaptation of Harper Lee's beloved novel explores how to reconcile our capacity for evil without losing faith in our essential goodness. An offensive racial slur is used several times. Suitable and highly recommended for students 12 and up. Prologue recommended.

***August: Osage County*, by Tracy Letts**

Hailed by *The New York Times* in 2007 as “probably the most exciting new American play Broadway has seen in years,” *August: Osage Country* contains one of the theatre’s most dysfunctional families. Set in modern day Oklahoma, the Weston clan—including a pill-popping matriarch and a leech of a future son-in-law—gather after the mysterious disappearance of 69-year-old Beverly Weston, the patriarch of the family. But instead of comforting each other, the three sisters, their mother, their aunt and the men in their lives manage to make each other miserable. They engage in a psychological form of extreme sport: stripping away lies and pretensions or clinging to them and refusing to accept the truth in front of their eyes. Tracy Letts’ play exposes the pain we inflict on the people we love the most. It is a comic ride of tragic proportions and entertaining as all get-out. The play contains strong profanity and deals with drug use, suicide, incest and an adult’s attempt to take sexual advantage of an underage girl. It is appropriate for mature and prepared students age 16 and up.

***The African Company Presents Richard III* by Carlyle Brown**

There is no room for competition when New York’s premiere uptown theatre stages William Shakespeare’s *Richard III* for its grand reopening starring famed English actor Junius Brutus Booth in his American debut. In a small apartment downtown, a popular, homegrown company of free black actors dares to present *Richard III* at the same time. The white company’s manager wants full houses for Booth, which means shutting down the black production by any means necessary. Something must be done. It’s 1821 and slavery is still legal. Based on actual events, the play explores questions of ownership of great art – who does or does not have the right to interpret Shakespeare and make him their own? It is a fascinating historical drama with racial tension but no overt violence. *The African Company Presents Richard III* is suitable for students 12 and up who are prepared for the historical context of the play and able to handle the occasional use of a negative racial epithet. Prologue recommended.

New Theatre

***The Language Archive* by Julia Cho**

George is a brilliant linguist whose passion in life is to be closed in a room with a tape recorder capturing and preserving languages that are in danger of becoming extinct. Speaking of extinction, George’s marriage is headed in that direction, and he has no words to save it. Speaking of passion, it appears he’s lost it, at least in the opinion of his wife Mary who is leaving him to find her own passion. Emma, George’s assistant, already knows that her passion is George. Julia Cho’s wistful play explores both the importance of language and its ultimate limitations. It is a play about moments when a shared vernacular is vital, moments when language fails, and moments when sadness and happiness are intertwined. The play contains occasional strong profanity and is best suited for students 13 and up who can handle the language.

***Julius Caesar* by William Shakespeare**

Caesar's return to Rome is triumphal—and troubling. Will he accept a king's crown from the adoring commoners or share his power with the aristocracy? Several Senators believe that something must be done to preserve the Republic and stop Caesar. One such Senator, Cassius, hopes to convince the honorable and even-tempered Brutus who is beloved and respected throughout Rome to join the conspiracy. Clandestine discussions, unnatural events and celestial omens all lead to the same conclusion: Caesar must die if the Republic is to live. *Julius Caesar* is both a political thriller and a sober meditation on democracy, ethics and civic order. The play contains several suicides, and its centerpiece is the mass stabbing to death of Caesar, which may or may not be portrayed in a graphically realistic manner in the intimate confines of the New Theatre. Please check back closer to the play's opening for updated information. The production will feature a woman playing the role of Caesar. The play is best suited for well prepared viewers 12 and up. Prologue recommended.

***Ghost Light* by Tony Taccone, conceived and developed by Jonathan Moscone and Tony Taccone**

In 1978 San Francisco mayor George Moscone and city councilman Harvey Milk are gunned down in their offices by another councilman, Dan White. A city mourns and a 14-year-old boy is left fatherless. Mayor Moscone's son, Jonathan, grows up to be a successful theatre artist struggling to direct a production of *Hamlet*. He finds himself stuck, unable to get beyond the scene where Hamlet's beloved and idolized father appears to him as a ghost to give him instructions for revenge. Jonathan confronts long-suppressed memories and feelings about his father and the events and aftermath of 1978. Part autobiography and part fiction, this world premiere, the second production of OSF's history cycle, *American Revolutions*, explores a child's loss and a man's search for his identity. *Ghost Light* contains strong profanity and graphic sexual language as well as homophobic slurs. It is recommended for mature students 16 and up.

The Elizabethan Stage

***Henry IV, Part Two* by William Shakespeare**

Henry IV, Part Two picks up immediately where part one left off, although it is not necessary to have seen part one to enjoy and understand part two. King Henry and his younger son John of Lancaster must pursue and finish off the rebel forces opposed to them, while his oldest son Prince Hal returns to the Boar's Head Tavern for one final fling with drinking buddy Sir John Falstaff. But King Henry is increasingly ill, and Hal knows that the moment is fast approaching when he must cast aside the follies of his youth and become the strong ruler England needs him to be. The play contains bawdy scenes in a brothel, as well as challenging political and moral themes. It is best suited for students 13 and up who have some knowledge of the historical context. Prologue recommended.

***The Pirates of Penzance* by W.S. Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan**

Gilbert and Sullivan's classic musical satire of honor and duty lands on the Elizabethan stage. Young Frederic has spent his life apprenticed to the most inept and bloodless pirates to ever sail the seven seas...or at least around the southern tip of England. These pirates are so kindhearted that they will not attack or rob anyone who professes to be an orphan – a fact which is becoming increasingly well-known around the English Channel. Now that Frederic is 21 and a free man, his sense of duty tells him that he must seek out and exterminate his old partners-in-crime. But then an ingenious (and completely ridiculous) paradox forces him to become one of their band again! And just when he's fallen in love with the lovely Mabel, daughter of a local Major-General! Never fear, love prevails in Gilbert and Sullivan's rollicking operetta. Shot full of wit as sharp as a buccaneer's cutlass with an absolutely absurd resolution, *The Pirates of Penzance* is suitable for all playgoers 6 and up.

***Loves Labor's Lost* by William Shakespeare**

The King of Navarre has decided to dedicate three whole years to scholarly study and contemplation and three friends and Lords of his court vow to undergo this scholarly retreat with him. The men sign an oath to abstain from wine, women and song for the entire three years. They are even forbidden to be in the presence of a lady. No sooner is their monastic pact in place when the Princess of France arrives with three ladies-in-waiting. The King and the Princess have had a thing for each other in the past, and of course each of the Lords is similarly smitten with one of the ladies. When the King commands the ladies to camp in tents outside rather than be admitted to the court, the ground is laid for comic revenge on the part of the ladies. *Loves Labor's Lost* is a comedy of wit and manners, and of the complete inability to sublimate sexual attraction. The play is suitable for playgoers 13 and up who can handle the intricacies of the language and the sensual nature of the comedy. Prologue recommended.