

The Star-Ledger

2014 New Jersey Arts Preview: Theater

By Ronni Reich
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On stages in New Jersey and New York, what's old becomes new again, often through significant transformations. Broadway sees movies such as "The Bridges of Madison County," "Rocky" and "Hedwig and the Angry Inch" turned into stage musicals with high-profile stars and creative teams, with actor Neil Patrick Harris and composer Jason Robert Brown among the artists involved. In the Garden State, classics including August Wilson's "Fences," the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical "South Pacific" and even Virginia Woolf's novel "Orlando" will be revived — with varying degrees of fidelity and innovation.

[FENCES](#)

August Wilson's Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award-winning play provides an emotional meditation on family, responsibility and race in the 1950s. Phylicia Rashad directs the drama, which centers on the fraught relationship between a father and son, at the McCarter Theatre, Jan. 10 through Feb. 9. Tickets are \$20 to \$87.50. Visit mccarter.org.

[THE BRIDGES OF MADISON COUNTY](#)

Jason Robert Brown, gifted composer-lyricist of the recent "Honeymoon in Vegas," provides the songs for Broadway's "The Bridges of Madison County." Kelli O'Hara of "South Pacific" and Steven Pasquale of TV's "Rescue Me" star and Bartlett Sher directs. The show is based on the Robert James Waller novel, which was made into a movie with Meryl Streep and Clint Eastwood. Previews begin Jan. 17, and the show opens in late February. Tickets are \$67 to \$141. Call (212) 239-6200 or visit telecharge.com.

[AS YOU LIKE IT](#)

Shakespeare's charming romantic comedy returns in a Two River Theater Company production directed by Michael Sexton, who gave the Bard's "Henry V" a compelling modern treatment last season. Jacob Fishel, who gave a riveting performance in the 2012 show, is in the cast. Performances

take place Jan. 25 through Feb. 16. Tickets are \$20 to \$65. Call (732) 345-1400 or visit tworivertheater.org.

ROCKY

This classic story of a boxing underdog comes to Broadway as a musical in the fittingly irreverent hands of Alex Timbers, director of “Peter and the Starcatcher” and “Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson.” The show is co-written by Stephen Flaherty and Lynn Ahrens of “Ragtime” and Thomas Meehan of “The Producers.” Andy Karl, hilarious in last season’s “The Mystery of Edwin Drood,” plays the title role. Previews begin Feb. 11 and the show opens March 13. Tickets are \$79 to \$199. Call (212) 239-6200 or visit telecharge.com.

LES MISÉRABLES

On the heels of the popular 2012 movie version, “Les Misérables” returns to Broadway. The Boublil-Schönberg musical, based on Victor Hugo’s 19th-century novel, chronicles romance, bravery and integrity as well as poverty and sacrifice in revolutionary France. Previews begin March 1 and the show opens March 23. Tickets are \$55 to \$249.50. Call (212) 239-6200 or visit telecharge.com.

A RAISIN IN THE SUN

Denzel Washington, a Tony winner for “Fences,” returns to Broadway in Lorraine Hansberry’s touchstone “A Raisin in the Sun” alongside Diahann Carroll, who is on the Main Stem for the first time in 30 years. Kenny Leon directs. Previews begin March 8 and the show opens April 3. Tickets are \$67 to \$149. Call (212) 239-6200 or visit telecharge.com.

HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH

Neil Patrick Harris headlines the Broadway premiere of “Hedwig,” which also was a cult film, about a transgender rocker whose sex-change operation goes horribly wrong. Harris, of TV’s “How I Met Your Mother,” is a regular awards show host and Broadway presence. Previews begin March 29 and the show opens April 22. \$47.00 - \$152.00. Visit telecharge.com.

TROUBLE IN MIND

Alice Childress, a playwright whose work broke ground for African-American women, is represented at Two River Theater with a performance of “Trouble in Mind.” Jade King Carroll directs a backstage story of a Broadway company in 1957 that mines the tense relationship between a black actress and a white director. Performances take place April 5 through 27. Tickets are \$20 to \$65. Call (732) 345-1400 or visit tworivertheater.org.

[SOUTH PACIFIC](#)

Musical theater doesn't get more traditional than this Rodgers and Hammerstein classic, and the Paper Mill Playhouse can be counted on to render the musical in spectacular style. Songs such as "Some Enchanted Evening," "There is Nothing Like a Dame" and "I'm Gonna Wash That Man Right Outa My Hair" can be heard April 9 through May 4. Tickets are \$35 to \$100. Call (973) 376-4343 or visit papermill.org.

[ORLANDO](#)

The innovative Scottish theater company Cryptic makes its U.S. debut with a work that uses digital technology to retell the story of Virginia Woolf's hero spanning 400 years. The Scotsman described the production as "One of the most ravishingly sensual solo shows ever to emerge from Scottish theater." Performances take place April 10 through 13 at Montclair State University as part of the Peak Performances series. Tickets are \$20. Call (973) 655-5112 or visit peakperfs.org.

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