

a little taste



Now Playing
Broadway in Chicago

A bounty of Broadway lined up for the season

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN
For Reflejos

Chicago is blessed with a big bouquet of Broadway offerings this holiday season. You can choose from shows that are Broadway classics, shows with stars, new Broadway shows making Chicago debuts and New York-bound shows making world premieres in the Windy City.

Some Enchanted Evenings

One of Broadway's biggest successes of the past two years is also strangely in town for the shortest amount of time. That show is Lincoln Center Theater's seven-time Tony Award-winning revival of Rodgers and Hammerstein's "South Pacific."

This Pulitzer Prize-winning musical only plays eight shows at the Rosemont Theatre from Nov. 24-29. Metropolitan Opera baritone David Pittsinger plays the exiled Frenchman Emile de Becque in Rosemont after performing the role more than 130 times on Broadway. Pittsinger chalks up "South Pacific's" success 60 years after its original Broadway debut largely to its superlative score.

Waltz to it

Most opera houses lay claim to "The Merry Widow" nowadays, but it was Broadway in 1907 that first introduced America to Franz Lehár's 1905 comic operetta blockbuster.

Playing a full year at New York's New Amsterdam Theatre (a record-breaking run in those days), "The Merry Widow" spawned a waltzing dance craze across America. Its hit tunes like "Vilja" and "The Merry Widow Waltz" can still be hummed by generations of fans.

Considering "The Merry Widow's" Broadway pedigree, the Lyric Opera of Chicago opted to feature musical comedy veterans to craft its brand new production which runs for 11 performances between Dec. 5 to Jan. 16.

Chicago Shakespeare Theater associate director Gary Griffin (who directed "The



LUTHER BILLIS (Matthew Saldívar, center) laments how "There is Nothin' Like a Dame" in "South Pacific." The tour of the Tony Award-winning musical plays for one-week only at the Rosemont Theatre.

Color Purple" on Broadway) helms this new production, which also features sets by Tony Award-nominee Daniel Ostling and costumes by Mara Blumenfeld.

New York bound

Local theater audiences who regularly pride themselves on saying "We saw it first in Chicago" should get really excited about two shows making their world premieres in Chicago before heading to New York.

Cirque du Soleil's "Banana Shpeel" hopes to appeal to audiences at the Chicago Theatre from Nov. 19 to Jan. 3, while the Broadway-bound musical "The Addams Family" sets up house from Nov. 13 to Jan. 10 at the Ford Center for the Performing Arts, Oriental Theatre.

Cirque du Soleil is taking a big risk with the vaudeville-inspired "Banana Shpeel."

"It's a very big departure for Cirque du So-



DANILO (Roger Honeywell) pursues the wealthy widow Hanna Glawari (Elizabeth Futral) in the Lyric Opera of Chicago's "The Merry Widow," playing in repertory from Dec. 5 through Jan. 16.



"**IN THE Heights**" brings a taste of New York to the Cadillac Palace Theatre from Dec. 15 to Jan. 3.

leil, and this show will premiere in Chicago, which is something we've never done," said Cirque du Soleil publicist Reggie Lyons.

Cirque du Soleil is best known for its touring outdoor big-top tent extravaganzas ("Kooza," "Varekai") and long-running custom-built Las Vegas spectacles ("O," "Mystère"). But with "Banana Shpeel," Cirque du Soleil is trying a theater show that ties into

Broadway en Chicago

Chicago ha sido bendecida con buenas obras de Broadway esta temporada. Tiene para escoger entre clásicos de Broadway, shows con estrellas, nuevos shows de Broadway que se estrenan en Chicago y algunos estrenos mundiales de Broadway en la Ciudad de los Vientos.

Entre las opciones de entretenimiento para esta temporada tenemos la obra ganadora de siete premios Tony "South Pacific" y la opereta "The Merry Widow" que será presentada por la Lyric Opera of Chicago.

Chicago también será escenario esta temporada de dos estrenos mundiales: "Banana Shpeel" de Cirque du Soleil, en el Chicago Theatre; y "The Addams Family" en el Ford Center for the Performing Arts, Oriental Theatre.

Dos musicales que no querrá perderse por nada en el mundo son "The New Mel Brooks Musical Young Frankenstein" e "In the Heights".

"The New Mel Brooks Musical Young Frankenstein" está basada en la película clásica de Mel Brooks de 1974, y ganó el premio Outer Critics Circle el 2008 como Mejor Musical.

"In the Heights" ganó el premio Tony del 2008 por Mejor Musical y marcó el debut en Broadway del joven y talentoso compositor y actor de origen puertorriqueño Lin-Manuel Miranda.

Ambas obras se presentarán en el Cadillac Palace Theater.

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the Montreal-based company's drive for more indoor-style entertainments.

Broadway in the Loop

Over the holidays Broadway in Chicago hosts two major tours in the Loop. "The New Mel Brooks Musical Young Frankenstein" is the official title for the 2007 stage musical based upon Brooks' 1974 spoof film classic of the same name.

It won a 2008 Best Musical award from the Outer Critics Circle, and tour audiences might be more friendly when it plays the Cadillac Palace Theatre now through Dec. 13.

"In the Heights" was the brand new musical that took the 2008 Tony Award for Best Musical (along with three others for its score, orchestrations and choreography). It also marked the Broadway debut for the talented young composer, lyricist and actor Lin-Manuel Miranda.

"In the Heights" concerns the diverse New York neighborhood of Washington Heights as some denizens face enormous change thanks to a winning group lottery ticket. This contemporary musical brings a taste of New York to the Cadillac Palace Theatre from Dec. 15 to Jan. 3.