



16-17 plays to look forward to in the 2016-17 season



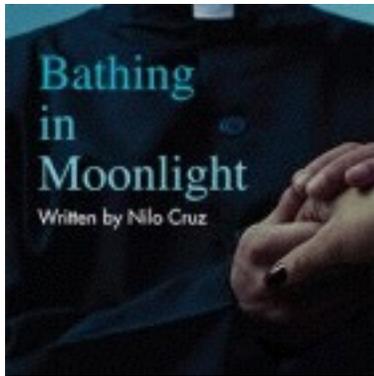
Deborah Cox will star in “The Bodyguard” at the Paper Mill Playhouse in Millburn, from Nov. 21 to Jan. 1.

By: **JAY LUSTIG** |

When is New Jersey’s theater season? The short answer is from September of one year to May of the next, though it’s really not that simple. Some of New Jersey’s leading theaters do it differently, starting at different times of the year.

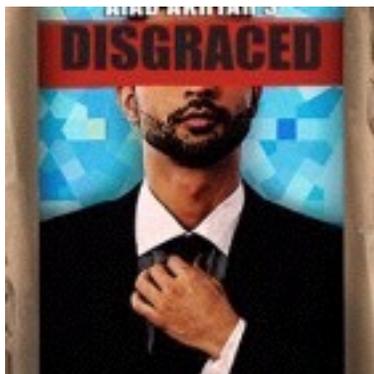
Still, now that it is September, the state’s theatrical calendar is starting to fill up, and many theaters’ complete seasons are stretching out, tantalizingly, before us. Here are 16 or 17 of the plays that sound most interesting (the number varies if you count “Saint Joan” and “Hamlet,” which will be in rotating repertory at the McCarter Theatre Center in Princeton, as one or two entries).

They plays are arranged in chronological order, by starting date.



Sept. 9-Oct. 9: “Bathing in Moonlight” at Berlind Theatre at McCarter Theatre Center, Princeton.

Nilo Cruz, who won a Pulitzer Prize for “Anna in the Tropics,” premieres this new work, about a Cuban-American family and a priest who befriends them. The McCarter’s artistic director, Emily Mann — who directed “Anna in the Tropics” at the McCarter and on Broadway — will direct.



Sept. 14-Oct. 14: “Disgraced” at Cape May Stage.

Oct. 11-30: “Disgraced” at the Matthews Theatre at McCarter Theatre Center, Princeton. (see video below)

Ayad Akhtar’s Pulitzer-winning, Tony-nominated play — which takes place at a New York dinner party at which one of the attendees is an America-raised Muslim lawyer — couldn’t be more timely, given that it addresses the subject of Islamophobia. It is receiving two separate productions in New Jersey this year.



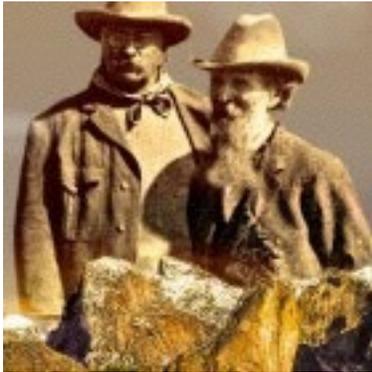
Sept. 28-Oct. 23: "The Producers" at Paper Mill Playhouse, Millburn.

Mel Brooks' hilarious musical, which may have generated more laughs per minute than any Broadway work of the last 20 years, comes to Millburn with veteran actors Michael Kostroff and Davis Josefsberg at scheming impresarios Max Bialystock and Leo Bloom.



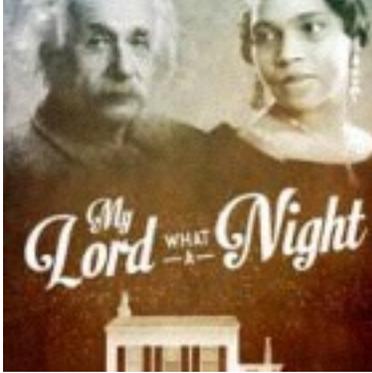
Oct. 5-Nov. 6: "Richard III" at Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey at Drew University, Madison.

The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey's production of one of The Bard's most powerful histories is timed to coincide with the Oct. 6-30 display of an original copy of Shakespeare's First Folio — the first known published collection of his works — at Drew University.



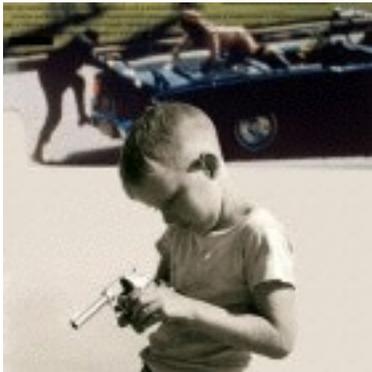
Oct. 6-30: "Kings of the Mountain" at Luna Stage, West Orange.

Commissioned, with support of the Dramatists Guild Foundation, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the creation of the National Park Service, this Ben Clawson-written play follows President Theodore Roosevelt and naturalist John Muir on a camping trip to the Yosemite Valley in 1903. Many historians believe that this trip inspired Roosevelt to take steps to protect and preserve the country's wilderness areas, and that this led to the creation of the National Park Service in 1916, under President Woodrow Wilson.



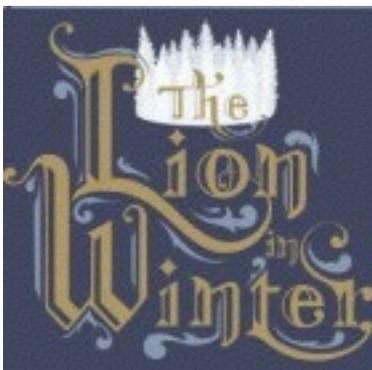
Oct. 13-16: "My Lord, What a Night" at The 1882 Carriage House at Liberty Hall Museum, Union. (Premiere Stages series.)

Created as part of the Liberty Live program, which produces new plays about New Jersey, this new play, written by Deborah Brevoort, is based on the true story of singer Marian Anderson spending a night at the home of Albert Einstein in Princeton.



Oct. 18-Nov. 6: "Mama's Boy" at George Street Playhouse, New Brunswick.

The "Boy" in Rob Urbinati's play is Lee Harvey Oswald. And his relationship with his domineering mother, in the months leading up to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, is the subject of this play, which will be making its New York area premiere.



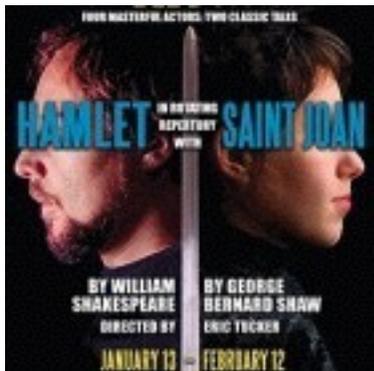
Nov. 12-Dec. 4: "The Lion in Winter" at Two River Theater, Red Bank.

Broadway and New Jersey theater veteran Michael Cumpsty plays Henry II in this classic play, known to many via its Academy Award-winning 1968 film version, which co-starred Peter O'Toole and Katharine Hepburn.



Nov. 21-Jan. 1: "The Bodyguard" at Paper Mill Playhouse, Millburn.

Former Whitney Houston duet partner Deborah Cox ("Same Script, Different Cast") takes on the role of a star singer in need of protection in this musical, based on the 1992 film that co-starred Houston and Kevin Costner and generated one of the most popular soundtrack albums of all time (including the Houston hits "I Will Always Love You," "I'm Every Woman," "I Have Nothing" and "Run to You").



Jan. 13-Feb. 12: "Bedlam: Saint Joan" at Berlind Theatre at McCarter Theatre Center, Princeton

Jan. 14-Feb. 12: "Bedlam: Hamlet" at Berlind Theatre at McCarter Theatre Center, Princeton.

The New York-based Bedlam theater company presents four-actor productions of George Bernard Shaw's "Saint Joan" and Shakespeare's "Hamlet" in rotating repertory, with some days featuring a matinee of one and a nighttime performance of the other.



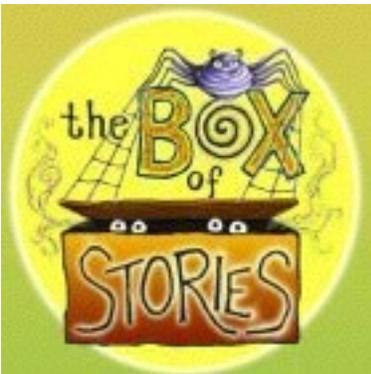
Jan. 14-Feb. 12: "Hurricane Diane" at Two River Theater, Red Bank.

The Two River Theater commissioned this Red Bank-set comedy about climate change from Pulitzer Prize-nominated playwright Madeleine George after the success of her play "Seven Homeless Mammoths Wander New England" in its 2011-12 season.



Feb. 2-March 5: "Indian Head" at Luna Stage, West Orange.

Acclaimed playwright Nikkole Salter ("Carnaval," "Lines in the Dust," "In the Continuum," "Repairing a Nation") takes on the issue of sports teams that use offensive images of Native Americans for their mascots in this new play, commissioned by the New Jersey Performing Arts Center's Stage Exchange program.



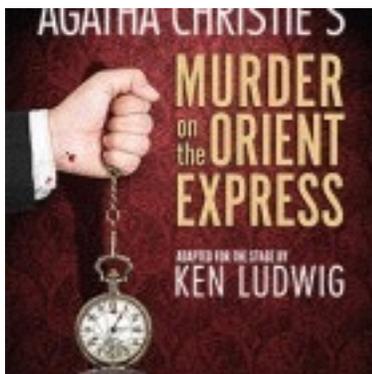
Feb. 10-19: "The Box of Stories" at Growing Stage, Netcong.

The world premiere of a new family-oriented play by J.S. Puller, drawing from Native American, Norse, African, Greek, Indian, Vietnamese, Celtic and Middle Eastern mythology.



March 9-19: "Sarah Sings a Love Song" at Crossroads Theatre, New Brunswick.

This new musical, by Stephanie Berry, is based on the career of New Jersey's greatest jazz singer, Newark native Sarah Vaughan (1924-1990), known as "The Divine One."



March 14-April 2: "Murder on the Orient Express" at McCarter Theatre Center, Princeton.

One of Agatha Christie's most popular mysteries, which was made into a popular movie in 1974, has been adapted for the stage by Ken Ludwig, whose past successes include "Lend Me a Tenor" and "Crazy for You," and whose "Baskerville: A Sherlock Holmes Mystery" was one of the highlights of the last McCarter season.



June 3-25: "The Ballad of Little Jo" at Two River Theater, Red Bank.

A musical adaptation of the 1993 movie, based on a true story about a woman who lives as a man in an Idaho mining town in the late 1800s. Mike Reid, a Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame member who has written hits for Bonnie Raitt, Ronnie Milsap, Collin Raye and others, did the music.