

[<Back](#)[Print](#)

The Maximum Insider

February 2009

In This Issue

Addam's Family Continues it's Path to Broadway
 2009 Brings a full range of shows to Broadway!
 God Bless the Producers
 A Fitting Time for Irving Berlin's Soundtrack
 NEWS FLASH: Human Thermometer Discovered- Producers Discredit Find
 A New Import from Chicago?
 "Desire Under The Elms" Blows Away Windy City

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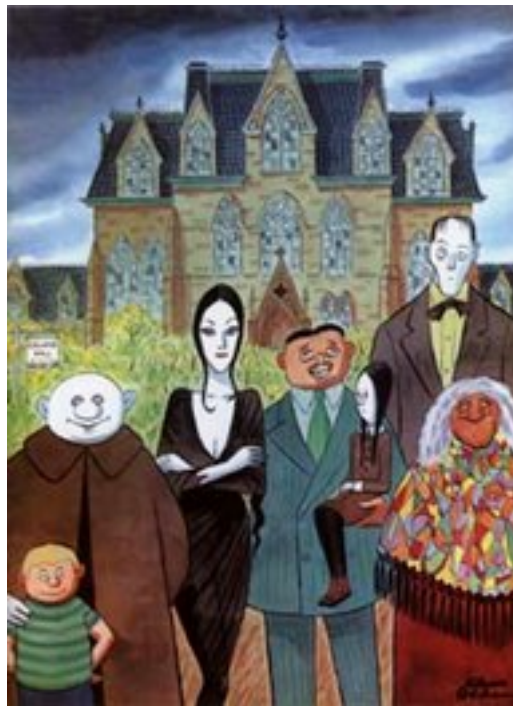
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About Us

Irving Berlin's I Love a Piano
 Dr. Seuss' How The Grinch Stole Christmas
 The Great American Trailer Park Musical
 Maximum Entertainment

Welcome to this edition of *The Maximum Insider!* 2009 has only been around a month but it is already shaping up to be a big year on Broadway. With the struggling economy still rearing its ugly head, productions (and producers) are showing awe- inspiring optimism as more shows, both the new and the revamped, are setting their dates to put their shows in one of the dozen or so dark theatres. After a booming broadway holiday season, we find ourselves immersed in the statistically slowest part of every year for Broadway ticket sales. Will 2009 live up to the hype or is it just an overzealous new years resolution for the Great White Way? It's all inside *The Insider* thanks for checking in with Maximum Entertainment for all your Insider Broadway news! We look forward to sharing more news of the 2009 Broadway season with you.

Addam's Family Continues it's Path to Broadway



The creators of The Addams Family, the new musical inspired by the macabre characters created by illustrator Charles Addams, presented a semi-private Reading of the new show following a two week workshop. And according to know-it-all NY Post gossip columnists...and a few Insiders we know...the show is poised to be the next hilarious hit on Broadway. The cast of this developmental workshop included Nathan Lane as

Gomez, Bebe Neuwirth as Morticia, Kevin Chamberlin as Fester, Zachary James as Lurch, Marylouise Burke as Grandmama, as well as Terrence Mann, Jan Maxwell and others. As previously announced, the musical will make its world

premiere Nov. 13, 2009-Jan. 10, 2010, at the Oriental Theatre in Chicago, prior to a spring 2010 opening on Broadway.

With a book by Marshall Brickman and Rick Elice (librettists of the 2006 Tony Award-winning Best Musical, *Jersey Boys*) and music and lyrics by Drama Desk Award-winning composer-lyricist Andrew Lippa (*The Wild Party*), the musical is wholly original and not based on *Addams Family* material from other media - don't expect the TV series or the films.

Great buzz has come out of the workshop presentation, and though it seems like a daunting task to capitalize and mount a new Broadway blockbuster in this day and age, being true to the essence of the material—both the humor and the heart—is a priority to this creative team. Stuart Oken of Elephant Eye Theatrical stated, "It's an extraordinary privilege as well as a daunting responsibility being entrusted with Charles Addams' most beloved creations, but I'm confident this outstanding creative team is re-imagining the work in a way that would have made Charlie proud."

Keep up with the Addam's Clan

2009 Brings a full range of shows to Broadway!



33 Variations-- The last time Jane Fonda walked the Broadway boards was in 1963, when she played opposite Ben Gazzara in Eugene O'Neill's *Strange Interlude*. Forty-six years, two Oscars and countless exercise videos later, Fonda will take the stage at the O'Neill Theatre in February as a terminally ill musicologist obsessed with Beethoven's series of waltzes known as the *Diabelli Variations*. Moisés Kaufman's new play, already an award winner after runs at the Arena Stage and La Jolla Playhouse, jumps back and forth in time between 1819 (Beethoven himself is a character) and the present, and an onstage pianist performs the *Variations* during the performance. No wonder Fonda was lured back to Broadway in what she calls a "role that I understand so well."

9 to 5-- A movie comedy about three fed-up secretaries who kidnap their chauvinistic boss, *9 to 5* always had a musical heart, thanks to Dolly Parton's evergreen title song and three fantasy sequences (particularly one with Lily Tomlin as Snow White!) that gave their regards to Broadway. Now the wait for a stage version of the 1980 hit is over, and Violet Newstead (Allison Janney), Judy Bernly (Stephanie J. Block) and Doralee Rhodes (Megan Hilty) are getting ready for an April Broadway debut alongside Marc Kudisch as their boss, with Joe Mantello directing. The composer- Dolly!-is already starring in TV ads for her new show. The buzz is good on this Parton girl, trust us. She's going places.

West Side Story-- After reviving *Gypsy* earlier this year, 90-year-old Arthur Laurents is now upgrading his other landmark work, promising that the February Broadway revival will be "radically different than any other production ever done, and contemporary to boot." With a 30-piece orchestra and a cast of 37 (led by Matt Cavenaugh as Tony, Argentine performer Josefina Scaglione as Maria and Karen Olivo as Anita), the revival interweaves Spanish lyrics (translated by Lin-Manuel Miranda) and shows Sharks-Jets conflict as it was originally conceived, since Laurents and co-creators Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Sondheim could only get so grim back in 1957. "Every member of both gangs was always a potential killer, even then," he recently said. "Now they actually will be."

Spider-Man-- A superhero hasn't played on Broadway since 1960's *It's a Bird It's a Plane It's Superman*, but if we're lucky, Peter Parker and his web-slinging alter ego will be flashing jazz hands (and swinging from the rafters) before 2009 is through. Visionary director Julie Taymor, who turned *The Lion King* into a critical and commercial smash, is preparing a big-budget spectacle with music by Broadway first-timers Bono and the Edge of the rock super-group U2. If early reports can be trusted, the production will feature high-tech wire systems and flashy LED-screen displays not unlike those at a U2 concert. So naturally, our response to all of this is YES! Sing out, Spidey!

Nine the Movie-- Hooray for Hollywood! After *Hairspray* and *Mamma Mia!*, Tinseltown continues its musical-a-year average with this star-studded adaptation of Maury Yeston and Arthur Kopit's Tony-winning classic. Directed by Chicago's Rob Marshall, the big-screen *Nine* will star two-time Oscar winner Daniel Day-Lewis as Guido Contini, the Fellini-esque filmmaker who ponders his career and love life as the big 4-0 approaches. And what lovers! Guido's women include Nicole Kidman as Claudia, Penelope Cruz as Carla and *La Vie en Rose* star Marion Cotillard as Luisa, plus Kate Hudson, Fergie, Judi Dench and Sophia Loren as the other ladies in Guido's life. With that kind of lineup, we'll be at the first screening, singing "Only With You" through popcorn.

Mary Stuart-- It sounds like a costume drama but plays like a thriller: Mary Stuart portrays the bitter relationship between England's Elizabeth I and her cousin Mary Queen of Scots, a rivalry that resulted in Mary's beheading for treason. A new version of Friedrich Schiller's 1800 play became a must-see event at London's Donmar Warehouse and then on the West End, and its original stars, Janet McTeer and Harriet Walter are ready to bless Broadway audiences by recreating their acclaimed performances at the battling royals. Don't be put off by the starchy title-Mary Stuart, which begins previews on March 30, promises to bring to life the season's most rip-roaring (historical) catfight.

See the Broadway bang of 2009

God Bless the Producers

Broadway's two dozen dark theaters won't stay empty for long. Defying the economic slump, producers are scheduled to present 19 Broadway shows in the next three months. If they all arrive ahead of the June 7 Tony awards, the 2008-09 season will go down as the busiest in two decades, with 40 new productions. Broadway will have the most openings since 1986-87, when there were 43. "It's an embarrassment of riches, which is amazing in this economy," said Robyn Goodman, a producer of *West Side Story*, which opens on March 19. "Producers, God bless them, they are so optimistic," Goodman said. The emphasis is on star-driven plays, which cost a fraction of what it takes to produce a musical. Like *West Side Story* most of the upcoming big musicals are revivals that need no introduction, such as *Guys and Dolls* and *Hair*. The multitude of famous actors onstage could pack the Rialto hangout Bar Centrale. They include Will Ferrell in *You're Welcome America: A Final Night with George W. Bush*; Jeremy Irons as a globe-trotting photojournalist in



"Impressionism," opposite Joan Allen; Jane Fonda, as a Beethoven-obsessed musicologist in Moises Kaufman's *"33 Variations"*. Jeff Daniels, Marcia Gay Harden and James Gandolfini in French playwright Yasmina Reza's social satire, *"God of Carnage"*. Oliver Platt and Lauren Graham in *"Guys and Dolls"* and Angela Lansbury in Noel Coward's *"Blithe Spirit."*

Some shows may thrive amid the traffic jam. In the last three months of 2008, even as equity markets plunged and Lehman Brothers Holdings Inc. declared bankruptcy, a revival of *"All My Sons"* earned back its investors' \$3.25 million and *"The Seagull"* recouped its \$2.55 million. Producers of the \$2.26 million revival of David Mamet's *"Speed the Plow"* said last week that its investors were made whole. The show closes on Feb. 22. There may be additions to the schedule before April 30, when eligibility ends for the Tonys. Producers of *"Next to Normal"* an unlikely pop-rock musical about a family coping with loss and mental illness, are considering a Broadway run, people familiar with the situation said. The John Golden Theatre, one of

Broadway's smallest houses and the current home of "Avenue Q," is a leading candidate for the show if it were to become available, according to people familiar with the producers' plans. Goodman produced "Avenue Q," a 5 1/2-year-old, ribald puppet musical. She worked with the composer of "Next to Normal," Tom Kitt, on 2006's "High Fidelity." "I want Tom Kitt to have his show on Broadway, but not necessarily in my theater," she said with a laugh. "Avenue Q' is doing fine right now. We don't know what's ahead." "Avenue Q" grossed \$247,179 last week, down 15 percent from a year earlier, according to the Broadway League, a trade association. Dolly Parton's "9 to 5," starring Allison Janney and based on the 1980 movie, is the only big new musical confirmed for the spring. Other newcomers are "Rock of Ages," an inspired full-length skit from off-Broadway that mocks and celebrates rock anthems of the 1980s; and "The Story of My Life," a two-character show described in a press release as an "original story about friendship, success and the choices we make at the turning points in our lives."

Noel Coward's 1941 farce, "Blithe Spirit," featuring Christine Ebersole, is having its first Broadway run in 22 years. Christopher Hampton's "The Philanthropist," which Frank Rich described in 1983 as "a most enjoyable toy of a play" and stars Matthew Broderick as a philology professor, returns to Broadway after 38 years. Geoffrey Rush originated his role in the revival of Eugene Ionesco's "Exit the King" in Australia. He plays opposite Susan Sarandon, as a king who left his country near ruin. Playwright-screenwriter-director Neil LaBute has his Broadway debut with "reasons to be pretty," an off-Broadway transfer. The Roundabout Theatre Co. stages "Waiting for Godot," with Nathan Lane, John Goodman and Bill Irwin. Irwin appeared in a starry Lincoln Center Theater "Godot" in 1988, with David Hyde Pierce as an understudy. This season, weeks after turning 50, Pierce opens in "Accent on Youth," about a playwright who falls in love with a younger woman. "Fela!," a musical about Nigerian composer, musician and activist Fela Anikulapo Kuti, won't come in this season. It received Broadway buzz and enthusiastic notices during its two-month run, ending in October, at 37 Arts off-Broadway. Since then, producers have wrestled with how to make an enterprise with 12 musicians and 20 performers viable. In addition to Broadway, they considered St. Ann's Warehouse in Brooklyn. "We're trying to figure out what's the best thing to do for the show," producer Stephen Hendel said.

More about Broadway and the Economy

A Fitting Time for Irving Berlin's Soundtrack



"We're just marveling at how relevant this material is," says Ray Roderick, director and co-creator of the revue "Irving Berlin's I Love a Piano." He deems it perfect timing for a Washington run, "particularly with this change in administration" and the incoming "optimism and hopefulness."

Irving Berlin's eldest daughter, Mary Ellin Barrett -- author of the 1995 book "Irving Berlin: A Daughter's Memoir" -- has never seen "I Love a Piano," so she's coming from New York to catch it. She, too, thinks her father's songs are particularly apropos. "I will tell you what happened to me on Inauguration Day, watching everything on television," Barrett says. "I looked at that blue sky above and into my head came a song -- 'Blue Skies' -- my father's song. And I started singing it to myself: 'Blue

skies, smiling at me.' "Then my thought went on: It's not blue skies, now, at all . . . but at that moment, at that inaugural ceremony, our new president was speaking so eloquently about the fact that we have some trouble, but that we're going to get ourselves out of it."

More than 60 Irving Berlin songs are featured in the show, from iconic hits ("God Bless America," "Alexander's Ragtime Band," "White Christmas," "There's No Business Like Show Business") to forgotten tunes and fragments. The touring show, booked here by Arena Stage, will land at the company's Lincoln Theatre venue tomorrow and play through Feb. 15.

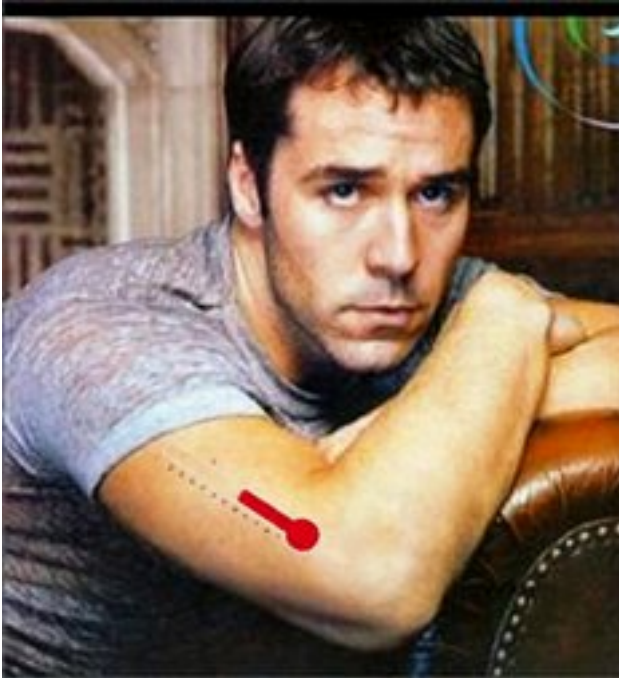
Roderick and co-creator Michael Berkeley conceived of the revue in the early 1990s, as a short entertainment for a fundraiser. Later, they expanded it around a conceit about a 100-year-old piano, which inspires performers to trace Berlin's career. (He wrote about 1,200 songs, 800 of them published.) "It's sort of a chronology of his canon, but letting it tell the story of Americans living through World War I, living through the Roaring Twenties . . . the stock market crash and the Great Depression and World War II, and into the postwar world and his great theater material," Roderick says. Dealing with the period right after World War II, for instance, they found the number "What Are We Going to Do With All the Jeeps?" Berlin, who was 101 when he died in

1989, is famous for his patriotic songs and such shows as "This Is the Army" (also a 1943 film). Roderick, however, says: "I never think of him as a flag-waver, really. I think of him as a patriot who tells the simple truths. . . . Irving Berlin wrote from the point of view of the soldier: 'Oh, How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning.' It doesn't mean he hates his country. He just doesn't want to get up."

Roderick and Barrett cite Berlin's lesser-known "Two Cheers Instead of Three," written for (but cut from) the Depression-era show "Face the Music." The lyrics include: "It's smart to be thrifty when times are so bad/Let's be patriotic, but let's not go mad/We must cheer the colors we prize/So here's what I strongly advise:/We'll just have two cheers instead of three/For the land of the brave and the free." Says Barrett of Berlin: "He felt very deeply, but his patriotism was indeed one of hope. He believed in the country. He always believed things can get better."

Piano Hits Washington

NEWS FLASH: Human Thermometer Discovered-Producers Discredit Find



Actor Jeremy Piven, who departed the current revival of *Speed-the-Plow* citing high levels of mercury in his bloodstream, has responded to a recent grievance that was filed by the producers of the Mamet revival with Actors' Equity Association. As previously reported, the grievance concerned Piven's abrupt departure from the show, which continues to play the Barrymore Theatre. A date for the Equity proceedings has yet to be determined.

A statement released by Piven's publicist Jan. 16 says, "The claims made by the producers of *Speed-the-Plow* are absurd and outrageous. Mr. Piven's serious medical condition has been well documented by multiple physicians. He withdrew from the play due to medical necessity on the advice of his doctors, after he was hospitalized and warned by his physicians that enforced rest was necessary in order to avoid serious medical problems, including a heart attack. His symptoms included extreme fatigue, spacial problems, difficulty remembering his lines, difficulty maintaining his balance, and an alarmingly

low resting heart rate. Mr. Piven followed his doctors' advice, although his forced withdrawal from the show was an enormous personal disappointment since it was a life-long dream to perform on Broadway.

"Although the producers had an opportunity to have Mr. Piven examined by their own physician, they never did so. The results of such an examination would have undoubtedly corroborated the conclusions of Mr. Piven's treating physicians and would have confirmed the medical necessity of his departure from the show. "It is ironic that the producers have filed a grievance against Mr. Piven, since if anyone has legal claims relating to this matter, it is Mr. Piven. Among other things, the production failed to pay his required compensation and he has been defamed in the media by their false accusations." Tony Award winner Norbert Leo Butz succeeded Piven and played the part of Bobby Gould through Jan. 11. Academy Award nominee William H. Macy is now playing the role. Raul Esparza and Elisabeth Moss co-star. Producers of *Speed-the-Plow* are Jeffrey Richards, Jerry Frankel, Steve Traxler, JK Productions, Ronald Frankel, Ostar Productions, Peggy Hill, Bat-Barry Productions, Ken Davenport, Scott Delman, Ergo Entertainment, Dede Harris, Alan D. Marks, Patty Ann McKinnon, Nicholas Quinn Rosenkranz, Adam Sansiveri, Jamie deRoy and Carl Moellenberg.

Mercury Overload

A New Import from Chicago? "Desire Under The Elms" Blows Away Windy City



If you want believe everything the New York Times has to say, then you might want to believe that the next great drama coming to New York is a Eugene O'Neill revival called *Desire Under the Elms*. See tidbits from the NYT Charles Isherwood Review below:

A long, heated gaze between stepmother and stepson kindles a fatal conflagration in the major new revival of Eugene O'Neill's "Desire Under the



Elms" at the Goodman Theater here. In the eyes of Eben Cabot, the young farmhand squirming under the thumb of his brutish father, there is little more than seething hate. The piercing look of Abbie Putnam, his father's new bride, is hard too. But there are excitement, curiosity and a fierce hope of salvation in it as well. Time freezes; fate descends in all its awful majesty on a squalid kitchen in 19th-century New England; and a significant but mostly unloved drama by a great American playwright bursts into gripping, immediate life. This shivery moment, this seemingly endless look of doom, comes courtesy of two of today's foremost young stage actors, Carla Gugino and Pablo Schreiber, whose performances

here transcend by some measure even the excellent work they have done in New York (Ms. Gugino in "Suddenly Last Summer" and "After the Fall," Mr. Schreiber in "Awake and Sing!" and the Christopher Shinn play "Dying City").

Playing lovers fated by the hard facts of their lives and their burning souls to enact a drama that scrambles to reach the heights of tragedy - and some would argue doesn't quite make it - they are utterly riveting, from first long look to turbulent, animalistic embraces to grim march toward retribution. The heat they generate as Abbie's desperate need for Eben transforms his passionate hatred into passionate love could melt a hunk of granite. The image comes naturally to hand. The singular feature of Walt Spangler's grandly scaled set for the production, directed by Robert Falls and also starring Brian Dennehy as the third point in a love triangle, is a massive pile of stones that turns the Goodman stage into a giant quarry. The Cabot farm, where Eben and his brothers, Peter (Boris McGiver) and Simeon (Daniel Stewart Sherman), have long slaved under the miserly stewardship of their father, Ephraim (Mr. Dennehy), is a dry, barren place where it seems nothing green could ever grow. And there are no elms in sight, a choice that has already inflamed the sensitivities of some O'Neill specialists. O'Neill, who did not always let a symbol go unexplained, waxed at length about the trees bending portentously over the Cabot house in his notes for the play. "They appear to protect and at the same time subdue," he wrote. "There is a sinister maternity in their aspect, a crushing, jealous absorption."

But "Desire Under the Elms" is not a play that really needs a strong emphasis on its maternal symbolism, now is it? Written in 1924 and a succès de scandale in its initial run on Broadway, the play turns on a scene in which Abbie and Eben, whose adoration of his dead mother and hunger to avenge her suffering are his most urgent drives, consummate their love. Drawing the entranced Eben into his mother's beloved parlor, Abbie covers him in gentle, motherly kisses that quickly turn hot and hungry. "Can't ye see it hain't enuf - lovin' ye like a Maw," she pants.

Things are not looking good for "Hedda Gabbler" (Poor woman never has things going her way) as reviews continue to come out less than stellar. Perhaps if Mary Louise Parker mixed a little of her "Weeds" character in there, she could help the critics relax.

A Show you might just get shot at! A "Bonnie and Clyde" musical could be heading to Broadway. A reading has been scheduled by Roundabout Theatre Company. Not to be confused with another musical by the same name previously performed at the NYMTF. I guess the criminal couple is a hot commodity!

Rent is available on DVD. Rent is coming to cable "On Demand". Rent is going to be on Pay Per View. What's next? I vote we project a broadcast of it on the sunny side of the Moon.

WHAT? HUH? WHO? NOT SHREK! It looks as though the economy is about the crush the Green Ogre. How long until the "for lease" sign goes up on the Broadway Theatre? UPDATE: According to statements by one of the show's Producers, their weekly gross increased last week and the advance is looking promising. Didn't we hear a similar spin this time last year with Young Frankenstein?

...speaking of...SPOTTED: The "Young Frankenstein" marquee being pulled off the Hilton Theatre Building. Good Luck on Tour!

Thats all for this edition of Maximum Insider! We hope that you are as excited about the new year as we are!

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