

15 Summer Theater Festivals (and More)

By [STEVEN McELROY](#) MAY 18, 2017



"Guys and Dolls" will be part of the Stratford Festival this year. Cylia von Tiedemann

Ah, sizzling burgers and a tasty side of the arts. We've picked the top festivals in [theater](#), [dance](#), [pop](#) and [classical](#) that we think you should see this spring and summer around the country.

The Berkshires

VARIOUS SITES AND DATES Another summer means favorite performers will head to bucolic settings, like the [Williamstown Theater Festival](#), where Cristin Milioti, Thomas Sadoski, Jayne Atkinson and others will take up residence for a time. The playwrights aren't slouches either: Halley Feiffer's "Moscow Moscow Moscow Moscow Moscow Moscow," adapted from Chekhov's "Three Sisters," is one of several world premieres planned at Williamstown. But you'll need more than a weekend to get your fill of theater in Western Massachusetts, where [Berkshire Theater Group](#), [Shakespeare & Company](#), [Barrington Stage Company](#) and others will offer a

range of works from William Shakespeare to Lynn Nottage.

wtfestival.org; berkshiretheatregroup.org; barringtonstageco.org;
shakespeare.org; chestertheatre.org

Broadway Bound Theater Festival

MANHATTAN, JULY 30-AUG. 20 Into the crowded calendar that includes the [New York Musical Festival](http://nymf.org) (nymf.org) and the [Midtown International Theater Festival](http://midtownfestival.org) (midtownfestival.org) — the annual [New York International Fringe Festival](http://nycfringe.org) is taking a year off — comes this new event with a focus on playwrights. Writers chosen to participate will see their new plays performed at least three times and will receive support from festival organizers, from promotion to critiques by a panel of playwrights and other theater professionals, as well as networking opportunities.

broadwayboundfestival.com

Colorado Shakespeare Festival

BOULDER, COLO., JUNE 11-AUG. 13. As in most summers, there are many productions of “Hamlet” planned around the country, but in Colorado they’ll shake things up by casting a woman, [Lenne Klingaman](http://lenneklingaman.com), in the title role. In the same season, Ms. Klingaman will play Hamlet in Tom Stoppard’s “Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead.” Those shows will be staged indoors, while “The Taming of the Shrew,” “Julius Caesar” and “Henry VI, Part 3” will take place under the stars at the Mary Rippon Outdoor Theater. Worth noting: The [Idaho Shakespeare Festival](http://idahoshakespeare.org) is also taking an unusual approach to “Hamlet” (June 2-25), with a male and a female actor alternating performances in the title role.

coloradoshakes.org; idahoshakespeare.org.

Contemporary American Theater Festival

SHEPHERDSTOWN, W.VA., JULY 7-30 Don't head to West Virginia for summer chestnuts; you'll find only substantial new plays at this festival, which touts the designation "thinktheater 2017." Thought-provoking works exploring liberalism ("The Niceties," by Eleanor Burgess); the rise of Hitler ("We Will Not Be Silent," by David Meyers); and the challenges facing the suffering Bronx of 1977 ("Welcome to Fear City," by Kara Lee Corthron) are among the shows planned.

catf.org

Edinburgh International Festival and Edinburgh Festival Fringe

EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND, AUG. 4-28 Productions that have premieres at these two festivals often get to New York — Daniel Kitson's "[Mouse](#)" at St. Ann's Warehouse and "[A Gambler's Guide to Dying](#)" at [59e59 Theaters](#) are two recent examples. Both fests celebrate 70 years this summer, and they have a lot in store. On the theater front, Alan Ayckbourn's dystopian tale "The Divide," "Flight" (based on Caroline Brothers's novel about young Afghan refugees) and several works by the Scottish playwright Zinnie Harris are planned at the International, and while many Fringe shows are not yet publicized, assume there will be hundreds, with special events to mark seven decades of pushing theater hard.

eif.co.uk; edfringe.com

Finger Lakes Musical Theater Festival

AUBURN, N.Y., JUNE 7-OCT. 11 The Finger Lakes region of New York is known largely for its wineries (and breweries and distilleries), but it's also home to the Merry-Go-Round Playhouse, which has held this summer festival since 2012. "Guys and Dolls," "Parade," "The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas," "Ghost: The Musical" and "Always ... Patsy Cline" are all in the works. A few miles away, at Theater Mack, a former carriage house on the grounds of

the Cayuga Museum, creative teams will present musicals in development in “The Pitch,” and audience members can give feedback. Leave some time for [those wineries](#), too.

fingerlakesmtf.com



“Julius Caesar,” directed by Shana Cooper, will be at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Jenny Graham

Oregon Shakespeare Festival

ASHLAND, ORE., THROUGH OCT. 29 Seeing some of Shakespeare’s most overtly political plays in the context of 2017 American politics, and reaffirming just how timely these works are, will be a significant aspect of this summer season nationwide. Ashland productions of “Julius Caesar” and both parts of “Henry IV” provide a case in point, though it will also do “The Merry Wives of Windsor” for some needed comedy. The festival is also staging “Shakespeare in Love,” “Off the Rails” — an adaptation of “Measure for

Measure” set in the late-19th-century American West — and several non-Shakespearean works.

osfashland.org



From left, Michael Gabriel Goodfriend, Michele Mais and G. Valmont Thomas in “Henry IV, Part 1” at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Jenny Graham

Peacebook

VARIOUS DATES IN SEVERAL CHICAGO LOCATIONS With a steady flow of often frothy musicals getting attention — and expensive Broadway productions — we sometimes forget that a fundamental goal of theater for thousands of years has been to inspire action. [Collaboraction](#) knows this and will soon present its second festival devoted to works about peace in Chicago, where gun violence has risen drastically in recent years. Nearly two-dozen short pieces — theater, dance and spoken word — will be folded into one marathon performance at the [Goodman Theater](#) on Aug. 26 before breaking

into three groupings to tour Chicago locations in the fall. Peacebook also includes discussions, workshops, and other events that aim to inspire communication and action.

collaboraction.org

PennsylvaniaShakespeare Festival

CENTER VALLEY, PA., JUNE 2-AUG. 6 One of the many joys of summer theater is the chance to see big stars on smaller than usual stages, and in quieter environments. To wit: The acclaimed opera star Paulo Szot, a 2008 [Tony award](#) winner for his performance in “[South Pacific](#),” heads to Center Valley this summer to play Juan Perón in “Evita,” with Dee Roscioli (“Wicked”) in the title role of Eva Perón and Dan Domenech (“Rock of Ages”) as Che. The packed season also includes Shakespeare’s “As You Like It” and “Troilus and Cressida,” among others.

pashakespeare.org

Powerhouse

POUGHKEEPSIE, N.Y., JUNE 23-JULY 30 This partnership between Vassar and New York Stage and Film draws vital theatrical voices to Vassar’s campus. The list of past successes that had early developmental work at Powerhouse includes, from last summer, Sarah DeLappe’s “[The Wolves](#)” and Taylor Mac’s “[A 24-Decade History of Popular Music](#).” Possible future success stories summering in Poughkeepsie this year include productions of “Sacred Valley,” by Josh Radnor (“How I Met Your Mother”) and “Good Men Wanted,” by Kevin Armento (“[Please Excuse My Dear Aunt Sally](#)”), about women who disguised themselves as men to fight in the Civil War. “The Secret Life of Bees,” with a book by Lynn Nottage, music by Duncan Sheik and lyrics by Susan Birkenhead — based on the novel by Sue Monk Kidd — is one of the musical workshop presentations planned; Stephen Trask, Lisa Kron and Hamish Linklater will also present new work at this fertile

incubator.

powerhouse.vassar.edu

San Francisco International Arts Festival

MAY 25-JUNE 4 This vibrant, multifaceted arts festival is unabashedly reacting to our national elections of 2016 (“San Francisco Sanctuary City” is prominent on the festival home page) with a program intended to embrace diversity and globalism. On the theater front, Brian Copeland will perform “Not a Genuine Black Man,” his solo show about growing up as an outsider in an all-white San Francisco suburb, and the Meyerhold Theater Center of Moscow will present “One Day We Will All Be Happy,” an English-language adaptation of a Russian play by Yekaterina Vasilieva about a provincial girl facing discrimination in contemporary Russia. Many more performances are planned, alongside events like “Act Now, Fight Back, Fight Trump!,” a panel discussion on the impact of the Trump administration on L.G.B.T issues.

sfiaf.org.

Shakespeare in the Park(s)

VARIOUS DATES AND LOCATIONS, NEW YORK One great joy of sultry urban summers is the proliferation of outdoor drama in city parks. The Public Theater at the Delacorte is the big fish in the New York pond and will stage “Julius Caesar” (May 23-June 18), with the outside-the-box casting choice of Elizabeth Marvel as Mark Antony, and “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” (July 11-Aug. 13). At Bryant Park Presents Shakespeare, the Drilling Company, the company in residence, will present “The Merry Wives of Windsor” (May 19-June 3), “Twelfth Night” (July 28-30) and “The Tempest” (Aug. 25-Sept. 9). The company is known for Shakespeare in the Parking Lot on the Lower East Side and will continue there simultaneously, with “All’s Well That Ends Well” (July 6-22) and “Henry VI, Part 3” (July 27-Aug. 12) in the lot behind the Clemente Soto Velez Cultural Center (114 Norfolk Street).

Remember to check out [New York Classical Theater](#), [Inwood Shakespeare Festival](#) and [Hip to Hip Theater](#), too.

[publictheater.org](#); [newyorkclassical.org](#); [moosehallisf.org](#);
[shakespeareintheparkinglot.com](#); [hiptohip.org](#).



"Me and My Girl" will strut at the Shaw Festival. David Cooper

Shaw and Stratford Festivals

NIAGARA-ON-THE LAKE, ONTARIO, THROUGH OCT. 15;
STRATFORD, ONTARIO, THROUGH OCT. 29 Tim Carroll, a 2014 Tony nominee for his direction of "[Twelfth Night](#)," is the new artistic director at the Shaw and will make his directing debut there with "Saint Joan," by George Bernard Shaw. The Shaw season also includes "The Madness of George III," "Dancing at Lughnasa" and more. At the other Canadian mainstay, the Stratford Festival, the artistic director Antoni Cimolino's season is inspired by the 150th anniversary of Canada's birth as a nation, and

includes several plays by Canadian playwrights. Naturally, there will be Shakespeare plays — “Romeo and Juliet,” “Timon of Athens” and others.

stratfordfestival.ca; shawfest.com

This Is Not Normal

BROOKLYN, JUNE 6-JULY 8 At the Brick Theater, known for its outré festivals, things are taking a political turn this summer. In “Motherland,” the writer-performer Cecilia Corrigan ponders the failure of Hillary Clinton’s campaign, and other works, including “Molting” and “In the Pines,” will explore violence in our culture. In all, there are more than two dozen shows and other events planned in “This is Not Normal.” As it did last year, the Brick will also present a Trans Theater Festival (July 17-29), devoted to the stories and experiences of transgender artists.

bricktheater.com

Yale Summer Cabaret

NEW HAVEN, JUNE 2-AUG. 13 Meryl Streep, Liev Schreiber, Tarell Alvin McCraney and Lupita Nyong’o are among the Yale Drama School students who once worked in a 75-seat basement space presenting provocative theater. The 2017 season takes a look at some classics, starting with “Antony + Cleopatra,” an all-male adaptation of the Shakespeare play. Euripides’ “The Trojan Women,” with an all-female cast, follows, then comes Yaël Farber’s “[Mies Julie](#),” adapted from Strindberg (and seen at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and [St. Ann’s Warehouse](#)). Closing the season is Young Jean Lee’s riff on “King Lear” that will involve “Sesame Street.”
Interest piqued?

summercabaret.org