

The New York Times

THE Listings

April 4 - April 10

Selective listings by critics of The New York Times of noteworthy cultural events in the New York metropolitan region this week. * denotes a highly recommended film, concert, show or exhibition.

Theater

Approximate running times are in parentheses. Theaters are in Manhattan unless otherwise noted. Full reviews of current shows, additional listings, showtimes and tickets: nytimes.com/theater

Previews and Openings

ASHLEY BICKERTON This artist's blisteringly vivid new works look as if they were collaboratively hallucinated by Joseph Conrad and Hunter S. Thompson during an all-night psychedelic drug binge.

In colorful digital photographs printed on canvas, partly overpainted and presented within wide, wooden frames elaborately decorated to resemble Indonesian tourist kitsch, Mr. Bickerton stars as a decadent Ugly American living in a South Pacific paradise. (He actually lives in Bali.) His skin is painted Blue Man Group blue, and he is accompanied by voluptuous female islanders whose partly nude bodies are painted in tropical hues. In various scenes he boozes, smokes pot and poses in a sarong in a garish family portrait with a native consort and two children. One especially lively piece, "The Dream," right, has him howling in bed with a bright red demon squatting on his chest, and green snakes writhing about, each with a screaming head that's a small version of Mr. Bickerton's own.



ASHLEY BICKERTON AND LEHMANN MAUPIN GALLERY

of digital images (12x18) will be again heading the wall, this time at Theater, 168 East 115th Street, (212) 353-0933.

THE LITTLE FLOWER OF EAST ORANGE In previews, opens on Sunday. Philip Seymour Hoffman directs Stephen Adly Guirgis's modern ghost story set in Upper Manhattan (2:30). Public Theater, 425 Lafayette Street, at Astor Place, East Village, (212) 367-7573.

THE NEW CENTURY In previews; opens on April 14. Jayne Houdyshell and Linda Lavin star in these four short plays by the screenwriter and playwright Paul Rudnick (2:30). Minsk 5, Newhouse Theater, 159 West 50th Street, Lincoln Center, (212) 238-6200.

'SEWIE BANG IS DEAD' Performances start on Tuesday. This revival of Abbot Finlayson's 1940s-themed classic features the drama's original stars, John Kant and Winston Noblesna (1:30). Brooklyn Academy of Music Harvey Theater, 605 Fulton Street, Fort Greene, (718) 488-4100.

Broadway

'AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY' Tracy Leto's turbocharged tragedy about an Oklahoma clan in a state of near-apocalyptic meltdown is the most exciting new American play Broadway has seen in years. Fiercely funny and bristling sad, it somehow finds fresh sources of insight in that classic staple of the stage, the dinner

'AROUND TOWN AND FOR CHILDREN' listings appear on Page 35.

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granting American family and the cast, from the Steppenwolf Theater Company, is beyond sublime (2:30). Imperial Theater, 249 West 64th Street, (212) 238-6200. (Charles Isherwood)

'CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF' Anita Noli Rose and Terrence Howard deliciously embody those cerebral adversaries, irresistible force and immovable object, as the battling husband and wife in the first act of this otherwise flabby revival of Tennessee Williams's melodrama. Debbie Allen directs, none too certainly, a cast that also includes James Earl Jones and Phylicia Rashad (2:45). Broadhurst Theater, 233 West 44th Street, Manhattan, (212) 239-6200. (Ben Brantley)

'DREAMS OF THE LITTLE MERMAID' The motto for this cheer-free musical handkerchiefers, based on the charming 1849 Disney movie, might be "You can't go looking overestimating the taste of preschoolers." Francesca Zambello directs an overwrought cast (2:30). Lunt-Fontanne Theater, 205 West 46th Street, (212) 307-4747. (Ben Brantley)

'GRASS' A limp revival of a musical set in a high school that feels like a musical put on by a high school. Kathleen Marshall directs and choreographs a charming-free ensemble, whose leads (Max Crumm and Laura Osnes) were cast via reality television. (2:15). Richard Rodgers Theater,

236 West 47th Street, (212) 307-4100. (Brantley)

'Gypsy' As the dangerously obsessed Mamma Mia, Patti Lupone has found her focus. And when Ms. Lupone is truly focused, she's a force she incarnates. Directed by Arthur Laurents, this wallop-packing incarnation of the great musical showbiz fable, also starring the superb Boyd Gaines and Laura Benanti, shines with a soul-revealing transparency (2:30). St. James, 246 West 44th Street, (212) 239-6200. (Brantley)

'THE HOME COMING' A superlative revival of Harold Pinter's masterpiece of family warfare, directed by Daniel Sullivan, with a cast led by Jim Messemey and, in benchmark performance, Eve Best and Raul Esparza. Four decades after its Broadway debut filled and outraged American theaters, this extraordinary drama continues to unsettle (2:10). Cort Theater, 138 West 46th Street, (212) 239-6200. (Brantley)

'IN THE HEIGHTS' Lin-Manuel Miranda, who wrote the bubbly Latin pop score for this musical about burrito life, also gives a captivating performance as the owner of a bodega who dispenses good cheer along with safe con loche. Zooty choreography and a host of lively performers are among its other assets; its fund-raising focus is a vivid record of sentimentality (2:30). Richard Rodgers Theater,

236 West 47th Street, (212) 307-4100. (Isherwood)

'LEGALLY BLOODE' This nonstop sugar rush of a musical about a powder puff who flirts her inner power broker, based on the 2003 film, approximates the experience of eating a jumbo bag of Gumbos Boars in one sitting. Flawing between songs is recommended (2:30). Palace Theater, 164 Broadway, at 6th Street, (212) 307-4100. (Brantley)

'THE NEW WEL BROOKS MUSICAL: YOUNG FRANKENTEN' This intriguing adaptation of Mr. Brooks's 1974 movie, directed by Susan Stroman and starring an amiable but overwheeled Mager Bart, never seems to stop screaming at you. This means that: a) it soon wears out its voice, and b) it leaves you with a monstrous headache (2:45). Hilton Theater, 213 West 42nd Street, (212) 307-4100. (Brantley)

'NOVEMBER' David Mamet's glib, jaunty comedy about a corrupt, unpopular president seeking re-election suggests a "Saturday Night Live" sketch retro-styled as a Sid Caesar comedy sketch. Joe Mantello, in his Neil Simon mode, directs a cast led by Nathan Lane (as the quipping president) and Laurie Metcalf (as his doorman speechwriter) (1:35). Barrymore Theater, 243 West 47th Street, (212) 239-6200. (Brantley)

'PASSING STRANGE' The rock 'n' roll autobiography of Steve, a singer-songwriter who grew up in bourgeois black Los Angeles and trickled to Europe to find himself as an artist. The portrait of an artist in search of himself is an old story; Steve's unique perspective, exuberant music and witty lyrics — and the show's uniformly delightful cast — give it a vivid new sheen (2:10). Belasco Theater, 111 West 44th Street, (212) 238-6200. (Isherwood)

'SUNDAY IN THE PARK WITH GEORGE' A glorious revival of Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine's 1981 musical about art according to Seurat. Making enchanting use of 21st-century technology to convey a 19th-century Pointillist's point of view, this production also shimmers with a new humanity and clarity. Daniel Buntrock directs a revelatory cast, led by Daniel Frosch and Ismael Russel (2:15). Studio 54, 254 West 54th Street, (212) 770-1300. (Brantley)

'WANDU' An improbably entertaining spoof of the majestically awful movie from 1980 about a Greek muse (Oliver Newton-John, roller-skating into oblivion) who inspires a young artist in Venice Beach, Calif., to chase his disco dream. Kerry Butler mimics Newton-John's Aussie accent and sports her signature shaggy-shoulder-wearers look, but also puts her own affectionate stamp

on "The Wounded Man" (1874-54), left, a self-portrait by Gustave Courbet, is featured in an exhibition of his work at the Met. Page 24.

JAZZ The tenor and soprano saxophonist Jimmy Heath, below, leads a big band this weekend at Iridium. Page 23.

THEATER Below left, Chris Bauer and Emily Mortimer in Jes Butterworth's "Parlour Song," closing on Sunday at the Atlantic Theater. Page 22.

on a seriously silly rock. Blatantly idiosyncratic, practically sublime (1:30). Helen Hayes Theater, 246 West 44th Street, (212) 238-6200. (Isherwood)

These works meditate on a division in Western consciousness. On the one hand, they evoke the fantasy of throwing off conventional moral strictures and escaping to the margins of civilization, where pursuing one's instinctual desires to the fullest leads to artistic and erotic utopia (see: Paul Gauguin). On the other, there's anxiety that unchecked hedonism may be the road to moral insanity (see: Captain Kurtz).

That Mr. Bickerton makes this conflict personal is a big part of the attraction — he's exploring his own Jungian shadow. Yet it feels as if there's a dimension missing. In portraying himself as a crazy, sexist, pleasure-loving creep, he might be covering up something really shameful: the intellectually astute, hard-working professionalism by which he maintains his perennially successful career in the high-end Euro-American art world. (Through May 3, Lehmann Maupin Gallery, 540 West 26th Street, Chelsea, 212-255-2923, lehmannmaupin.com.)

KEN JOHNSON

of digital images (12x18) will be again heading the wall, this time at Theater, 168 East 115th Street, (212) 353-0933.

THE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR The film D. Woodhouse plays the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in Michael Murphy's tatty yet engaging play about Dr. King's wacked-out response to the war in Vietnam. The Keen Company's thoroughly understated production allows the contemporary parallels to emerge without biographical audience (2:00). Curran Theater, 440 West 37th Street, Clinton, (212) 238-6200. (Cory James)

'CRIMES OF THE HEART' The film actress Kathleen Turner makes a confident stage directing debut with this emotionally probing revival of Beth Shattuck's wacked-out 1979 comedy about three Southern sisters having a very bad day. Annie Derris, Daniel Sarah Pashon and Lily Rabe shine in different hues as the hard-bast Magrath women (2:30). Laura Pels Theater, 111 West 46th Street, (212) 739-1000. (Isherwood)

'THE FIFTH COLUMN' A romanticized (and long) saga about love and espionage among the press corps covering the Spanish Civil War. This original version of Hemingway's 1937 play remains more a literary curiosity than the redoubtable of a neglected masterpiece (2:45). Minsk Theater, 211 West 42nd Street, Clinton, (212) 333-0231. (Wolbert Hampton)

'JACKIE MASON: THE ULTIMATE JEW' Jackie Mason's live act is one of the most entertaining live acts around (see this comedian's farewell show (2:15), New World Theater, 349 West 50th Street, Clinton, (212) 239-6200. (Jason Zinoman)

JAMACA, FAREWELL Debra Kilduff's one-woman show drugs at big start but becomes increasingly funny as she tells a loopy story of imagining a million dollars into a dime to accomplish her dream of coming to America (1:35). SoHo Playhouse, 10 York Street, South Village, (212) 493-8555. (James)

'THE SEAGULL' Most of the characters in this hilariously obtuse revival of Chekhov's play about a single dad's disastrous country vacation, directed by Vaschoula Dolagach, appear to be participating in what might be called an act-off, a sort of provocateur "Russian idea" for cheap. Dan, Diane West and Alan Cummings lead the cast (2:00). Classic Stage Company, 136 East 13th Street, East Village, (212) 352-3101. (Brantley)

'SECRETS OF A SOCIETY MAN' Three

ONLINE LISTINGS

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