

## HooDoo Love



**The Collective Theatre** (see Fringe & storefront). By Katori Hall. Dir. Nelsan Ellis. With Lynn Wactor, LaRoyce Hawkins, Mark Smith, Toni Lynice Fountain. 2hrs 35mins; one intermission.

Playwright Katori Hall made her Broadway debut with last year's *The Mountaintop*, a fictionalized imagining of Martin Luther King Jr.'s last night on Earth. Its relative simplicity (single set, two actors) has helped make Hall one of this season's 11 most-produced playwrights, according to industry org TCG (she's also the only woman on the list). Such restraint isn't on display in Hall's 2007 work. Also set in Memphis, a few decades before *The Mountaintop*, *HooDoo Love* centers on Toulou (Lynn Wactor), a young woman from the Delta with dreams of singing in Beale Street's blues clubs. Toulou loves bluesman Ace of Spades (LaRoyce Hawkins), but she's not his only love. Meanwhile, she's tracked down by her preacher brother, Jib (Mark Smith), who's got devilish designs on his sister. Toulou asks neighbor Candy Lady (Toni Lynice Fountain), a colorful conjure woman, to help her keep Ace and lose Jib, but all doesn't go as planned.

Toulou's troubles might be read as stand-ins for the larger struggles of African-American women defining themselves in relation to men; "bad men stay, good men go away," Candy Lady tells her. Hall's script contains snippets of original blues songs written for Toulou, but director Nelsan Ellis (known to HBO viewers as *True Blood*'s Lafayette) farms them out to another singer, the sultry Opal Demetria Staples, who steps to a downstage mic between every scene. The effect is distancing, seeming to stretch out a production that's already languidly paced. Of the actors, only the sly Fountain appears to fully grasp the play's deeper themes.—*Kris Vire*



**HOODOO YOU**  
Hawkins and Wactor believe in magic.

PHOTO: MICHAEL BRISLOW

## Listings

### If you want to be listed

Submit information by mail, e-mail (theater@timeoutchicago.com) or fax (312-924-9350) to **Oliver Sava**. Include details, dates, times, address of venue with cross streets, nearest El station and bus routes, contact information, box-office phone number and admission price, if any. **Deadline is 9am Monday, ten days before publication date.**

- ▶ Reviewed in this issue
- \* Recommended or notable
- ♫ Musical or song-based play
- ♣ Cheap

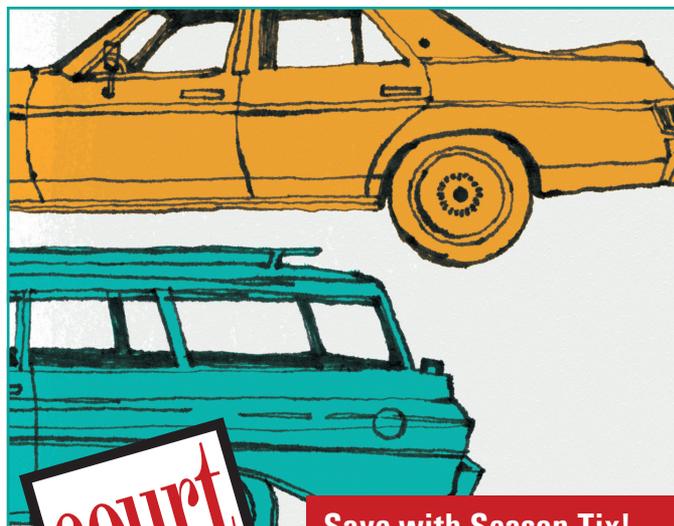
## Touring shows

**OPENING** **Black Watch** *National Theatre of Scotland and Chicago Shakespeare Theater at Broadway Armory Park, 5917 N Broadway (312-595-5600, chicagoshakes.com). Wed–Fri 8pm; Sat 3, 8pm; Sun 3pm. \$38–\$53. Through Nov 21.* Playwright Gregory Burke based this harrowing environmental depiction of a Scottish regiment in Iraq on interviews with soldiers. CST's World's Stage series brings last year's highly acclaimed production back to the Edgewater armory space.

\* **Freud's Last Session** *Mercury Theater, 3745 N Southport Ave (773-325-1700, freudslastsession.com). Wed 2, 7:30pm; Thu 7:30pm; Fri 8pm; Sat 2, 8pm; Sun 1, 5pm. \$45–\$55, students \$22. 1hr 25mins; no intermission. Through Nov 11.* Mark St. Germain's two-hander has an undeniably intriguing hook: an imagined meeting between Sigmund Freud and C.S. Lewis. The natural concern in a setup like this is talkiness, and St. Germain's dialogue can devolve to debating points. But despite the blatant contrivances required to get these men in the same room, the setting is useful; Britain's anticipation of Chamberlain's speech on the morning of September 3, 1939, provides enough dramatic tension to keep the play from feeling like a forensics tournament. Mike Nussbaum and Coburn Goss step into the roles of Freud and Lewis, respectively, for the play's extension.—*Kris Vire*

**I Love Lucy: Live on Stage** *Broadway Playhouse at Water Tower Place, 175 E Chestnut St (312-977-1710, broadwayinchicago.com). Wed 2, 7:30pm; Thu, Fri 7:30pm; Sat 2, 8pm; Sun 2, 6pm. \$23–\$65. 1hr 30mins; no intermission. Through Nov 11.* The conceivers of this shapeless, shameless play for nostalgia points have a lot of 'splainin' to do. The idea is that we're transported back to the 1950s to attend a live taping of two episodes of the iconic CBS sitcom, padded out with business such as authentic jingles for products like Brylcreem and Mr. Clean, a medley of "hits of the day" and plenty of banter from the studio warm-up guy (Ed Kross). Which isn't to say the episode re-enactments are all that exciting. Bill Mendieta's naturalistic mastery of Ricky's voice is impressive, but Sirena Irwin's rendition of Lucy feels like the work of a technician, glassy-eyed and forced. The whole empty exercise is rather like a theme-park attraction.—*KV*

**OPENING** ♫ **Kinky Boots: The Musical** *Bank of America Theatre, 18 W Monroe St (800-775-2000, broadwayinchicago.com). Previews Thu 4–Oct 16. Opens Oct 17 at 7pm. Tue–Fri 7:30pm; Sat 2, 8pm; Sun 2, 7:30pm. \$33–\$100. Through Nov 4.* A struggling shoe factory in England revives its business by creating sexy shoes for drag queens in Cyndi Lauper and Harvey Fierstein's musical adaptation of the 2005 film.



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