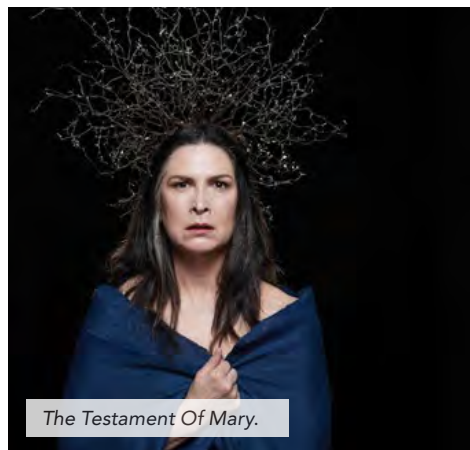


HOUSES ON FIRE!

FROM INNOVATIVE NEW CONCEPTS TO BELOVED REVIVALS, THERE'S SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE. **MATT MYERS** PREVIEWS WHAT'S TO COME IN 2017.



ON BROADWAY

This year the footlights are focused on fresh new productions and some notable comebacks. Glenn Close returns to her Tony Award-winning role as deluded-yet-delicious silent film star Norma Desmond in *Sunset Boulevard*.

Also making a triumphant return is Bette Midler in *Hello Dolly!* In the first 24-hours, ticket sales took in a record-breaking nine million dollars!

In other hotly anticipated revivals, Jake Gyllenhaal stars as post-impressionist painter Georges Seurat in *Sunday In The Park With George*, while the always-plucky Sally Field tackles Tennessee Williams' classic, *The Glass Menagerie*.

The trend of films getting stage musical makeovers continues with an adaptation of 2001's French feel-good film *Amelie*, as well as 1997's animated *Anastasia*, which has added 16 new songs. Look out for Aussie Caroline O'Connor in the cast. It was only a matter of time before *Pretty Woman* was popped on stage. Sadly, the film's creator Garry Marshall died last year but with rocker Bryan Adams co-composing the score and *Kinky Boots* choreographer Jerry Mitchell on board, this promises to be a big hit.

One poignant debut will be the musical *Come From Away*, set in the small town of Gander, Newfoundland, where locals fed and housed the stranded passengers from 38 planes forced to land in the frenzied aftermath of 9/11. *War Paint* is a bound-to-be blockbuster musical about the rivalry between cosmetic giants Helena Rubinstein and Elizabeth Arden, played respectively by Broadway giants Patti LuPone and Christine Ebersole.

THE WEST END

A warm-hearted highlight in London's West End this year will be Gary Barlow and Tim Firth's musical *The Girls* based on the 2003 film *Calendar Girls*. The two have written over 75 songs for the show – not all are used! And believe it or not, Meat Loaf's classic album *Bat Out Of Hell* has been adapted for the stage with new additional music by Jim Steinman. The story is set in a post-apocalyptic Manhattan – "Glowing like the metal on the edge of a knife!"

Also look out for a return of Edward Albee's Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf?* with Imelda Staunton (*Pride*)



and Conleth Hill (*Game Of Thrones*) as the feuding Martha and George – roles made famous by Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton on film. Other headliners in London this year include Harry Potter himself, Daniel Radcliffe in *Rosencrantz And Guildenstern Are Dead*, David Tennant (*Doctor Who*) in *Don Juan In Soho* and Andrew Garfield (*Spiderman*) joins Russell Tovey (*Looking*) in a revival of the AIDS-era epic, *Angels In America*.

AUSTRALIA

While *Kinky Boots*, *Aladdin*, *Matilda*, *My Fair Lady* and *The Book Of Mormon* are set to continue their long runs, get ready for *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*, which premieres in September. *The Bodyguard* musical arrives before that in April starring Kip Gamblin and Paulini; and also hitting our shores is Green Day's *American Idiot* with rock stars Chris Cheney (*The Living End*) and Phil Jameson (*Grinspoon*) in lead roles.

Other highlights will include The Sydney Theatre Company's long-awaited *Muriel's Wedding: The Musical*. Pamela Rabe promises to put a new spin on the story of Jesus Christ in *The Testament Of Mary* at Melbourne's Malthouse Theatre where Mark Leonard Winter (*The Dressmaker*) and Julie Forsyth (*Holding The Man*) will star in *The Real And Imagined History Of The Elephant Man*. The Streisand-inspired *Buyer And Cellar* returns, this time, to Sydney's Ensemble Theatre.

On the GLBT side of the stage, Sydney's Hayes Theatre will feature Hayden Tee in *Only Heaven Knows*, a musical depicting the hardships of gay life in 1950s Australia. Across the country at Perth's Swan Theatre, Brendan Hanson is set to play East German transwoman Charlotte von Mahlsdorf in *I Am My Own Wife*.

Considering the current state of the world, theatre as escapism is more relevant than ever, and adversity has always been good for the arts. Watch the industry boom over the next few years.