



JASON REDMOND/REUTERS

Arts, Briefly

Compiled by Dave Itzkoff

Alicia Keys to Take 'Stick Fly' to Broadway

New York may be a concrete jungle, but the bright lights of Broadway have inspired **Alicia Keys**, above, to produce **Lydia R. Diamond's** play "Stick Fly" in a new staging headed to the Lyceum Theater at the end of the year. Representatives for the show said on Monday that Ms. Keys, the "Empire State of Mind" songstress, would present the play, which she is producing with **Reuben Cannon** and **Nelle Nugent** and which will be directed by **Kenny Leon**, the director of last year's Tony Award-winning revival of "Fences." This incarnation of "Stick Fly," which chronicles the interactions and revelations within a well-to-do black family at its home in Martha's Vineyard, will be the Broadway debut for Ms. Diamond, whose other works include "Voyeurs de Venus," "The Gift Horse" and "The Bluest Eye," an adaptation of the **Toni Morrison** novel. "Stick Fly" received critical praise in previous productions at the McCarter Theater in Princeton, N.J., Arena Stage in Washington and the Huntington Theater Company in Boston. Ms. Keys said in a statement that the play "is so beautifully written and portrays black America in a way that we don't often get to see in entertainment." The Broadway production will begin previews on Nov. 18, and its opening night is scheduled for Dec. 8.

Philip Roth Gives Up Reading Fiction

Whether you're interested in **Philip Roth's** critical exegesis of "A Visit From the Goon Squad," his contrarian take on "Freedom" or just curious to know what he thinks of "The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo," his answer is likely to be the same: He probably hasn't read them because he is no longer reading fiction. In an interview with *The Financial Times*, Mr. Roth, the ornery author of 53 books and more than two dozen novels including "Portnoy's Complaint," "The Human Stain" and "Nemesis," said that other people's literary inventions were no longer part of his diet. "I've stopped reading fiction," he said. "I don't read it at all. I read other things: history, biography. I don't have the same interest in fiction that I once did." Asked why, Mr. Roth said: "I don't know. I wised up." *The Financial Times* said Mr. Roth was not expected to be in London on Tuesday, when he will be celebrated as the winner of the Man Booker International Prize, a literary award honoring his lifetime achievements.

Museum of Fine Arts Has Deal on Painting

The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, said it would pay an unspecified amount to the heir of an art dealer who was killed at Auschwitz and will keep a 17th-century Dutch painting in its collection that was once owned by the dealer and likely seized by Nazis. The Boston Globe reported that after a lengthy investigation into the work, an oil portrait by the Dutch painter Eglon van der Neer, the museum determined that it had belonged to **Walter Westfield**, who had run a German gallery shut down by the Nazis in 1936, and who was sent to Auschwitz in 1943. The museum, which purchased the painting in 1941, posted an image of it online in 2000 amid concerns about its provenance; in 2004 it was contacted by **Fred Westfield**, a nephew of the art dealer. Mr. Westfield is now a retired economics professor in Tennessee and learned about the painting from a Google search. The Globe said that the museum had in recent years returned other works stolen during World War II.

Streisand and Bergmans, Together Once Again

Barbra Streisand has had a long association with **Marilyn** and **Alan Bergman**, the songwriters who worked on some of her biggest hits, including "The Way We Were," "You Don't Bring Me Flowers" and the songs from her 1983 movie "Yentl." For her next album, "What Matters Most," Ms. Streisand will be singing 10 songs by the Bergmans that she has not already recorded, like "Nice 'n' Easy" (sung by Frank Sinatra in 1960) and "The Windmills of Your Mind," from "The Thomas Crown Affair," which Ms. Streisand sang at a charity dinner before the Grammy Awards in February. The album, which Ms. Streisand produced, will be released by Columbia Records on Aug. 23, Ms. Streisand announced on Monday.

BEN SISARIO

Governors Island Show From Cooper-Hewitt

The Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum may be closing its galleries starting Monday for a two-year renovation, but it is hardly going quiet. In addition to a previously announced show to take place at the United Nations this fall, the museum will host an exhibition of contemporary graphic design next summer on Governors Island. "Graphic Design: Now in Production" is organized with the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, where it will run from Oct. 22 to Jan. 22. It is scheduled to open on Governors Island on June 2, 2012. The previously announced show, "Design with the Other 90%: Cities," opens Oct. 15 and is part of a series on how design can address global issues. Both shows will be free.

KATE TAYLOR

ON THE WEB

www.nytimes.com

Critics' Picks Video A. O. Scott looks back at the 1957 film "Sweet Smell of Success": nytimes.com/movies.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY GUILLERMO DELGADO

The Teatro Valle, which is being occupied by theater workers. The protests are also an indictment of Italy's reduced arts financing.

Outrage Over a Storied Roman Theater's Future

By ELISABETTA POVOLEDO

ROME — Real-time drama is taking place at the Teatro Valle, the storied theater here where Pirandello's "Six Characters in Search of an Author" was first performed 90 years ago.

For nearly two weeks the space has been occupied by a changing cast of theater workers — actors, seamstresses, lighting technicians and prop masters — who are protesting the privatization of a stage once graced by some of Europe's greatest thespians, from Sarah Bernhardt to Vittorio Gassman.

The front foyer has been commandeered into an operations-center-cum-mess hall. On a recent afternoon a half-dozen protesters sat hunched over computers, updating Facebook pages, editing blogs and videos and drafting statements calling for a cultural revolution to overturn the decline of the arts in Italy.

The open forums, held here every afternoon, have drawn hundreds of participants — including famous Italian actors and directors — and many more have been packing impromptu nightly concerts and recitals.

"We had to resort to an extreme form of protest to signal the emergency," said Ilenia Caleo, a Roman actress and performer, who has made the thea-



The front foyer of the Teatro Valle has been turned into an operations center. The banner reads, in part, "How sad caution is!"

ter her primary residence since it was first occupied on June 14.

The occupation was inspired by rumors that the Valle — founded in 1727 and affiliated with a state organization to promote Italian theater that was shut down last year — would be privatized, putting at risk its identity as a renowned platform for theatrical innovation.

The Culture Ministry this month entrusted the Valle to the Teatro di Roma, the city's municipal theater company, which will be responsible for the 2011-12 season while an international com-

petition begins to find private management.

But the temporary reprieve has not quelled the protests, which have ballooned into a broader indictment of government cultural policies that have reduced financing for the arts, even as lawmakers praise Italy's rich cultural patrimony as central to the nation's economic growth. (Private investment in the arts remains limited.)

Over the weekend, another group of protesters occupied the Macro, Rome's recently restored contemporary-art space, which is

also struggling financially.

At a conference in Rome last week, Culture Minister Giancarlo Galan painted a bleak picture of the state of Italy's arts. In 2001 his ministry received 2.2 billion euros (\$3.1 billion) a year; in 2009 the budget had shrunk to 1.7 billion euros.

"It's true that the ministry receives fewer funds, but let's face it, a lot of money was spent badly in the past," Francesco Maria Giro, the deputy culture minister, said in a telephone interview. The government, he said, would not shrink from its support of the performing arts. But in a moment of economic crisis, theaters as well as other cultural institutions "must start looking for alternative forms of funding" and develop other strategies, he said.

Rome city officials have pledged 1.3 million euros for the coming season at the Valle and say they are willing to let the protesters have a voice in its future.

"It's unthinkable that we would distort the theater's legacy," said Dino Gasparini, Rome's cultural chief. "It will remain an important site of experimentation and repertoire."

But such promises miss the larger point, said Benedetta Cappon, a protester. "In Italy we pass from emergency to emergency, without trying to reform the system," she said.

A Rapper Wraps His Mind Around Darwin

If Terrence Malick's majestic depiction of Darwinian natural selection in "The Tree of Life" was a little too solemn and symphonic for your taste, you might consider the more loquacious hip-hop alternative of "The Rap Guide to Evolution," at the SoHo Playhouse.

An award winner at the 2009 Edinburgh Festival Fringe, this ever-evolving show is written and performed by **Baba Brinkman**, an affable white rapper from Canada with a master's in medieval and Renaissance English literature.

A 90-minute interactive musical lecture with amusing visual aids — courtesy of the projection designer **Wendall K. Harrington** — the show was developed at the invitation of **Mark Pallen**, a professor of microbial genomics at the University of Birmingham, England, after he saw Mr. Brinkman's "Rap Canterbury Tales."

Clearly Mr. Brinkman is not intimidated by challenging material. Nor is this simply a smarty-pants vehicle in which an erudite hipster flaunts his mad skills by molding his scholarly insights into "The Origin of the Species" to unorthodox beats (provided onstage by **Jamie Simmonds**, the DJ and music producer). Unlike more sophomoric hybridists of highbrow content and popular form, Mr. Brinkman brings genuine passion, curiosity and analytical skills to his subject.

Creationists may sneer, but Mr. Brinkman mounts an argument against intelligent design that is both brainy and entertaining. "It's time to elevate your mind-state/And celebrate your kinship with the primates," he raps.

Let this sound purely science-geeky, the show also uses theories of natural selection and evolutionary psychology to chart developments in hip-hop: "You could thrive like Timberlake on a Timbaland beat/Or go extinct like Vanilla Ice and 'N Sync." O.K., so the meters won't give

"The Rap Guide to Evolution" continues in an open-ended run at the SoHo Playhouse, 15 Van Dam Street, South Village; (212) 352-3101, rapguidetotheevolution.com.



AUDRA MELTON

The Rap Guide to Evolution *Baba Brinkman at the SoHo Playhouse.*

Stephen Sondheim sleepless nights (though pairing "huge manatee" with "humanity" has undeniable charm), but the rhythms are punchy.

Mr. Brinkman draws parallels between animal kingdom behavior and rap as a survivalist expression of power, pride, menace and sexual magnetism. And as he wryly points out, what is the ostentatious plumage of the male peacock but nature's bling?

Tightly directed by **Dodd Loomis**, the production closes with a Q&A period in which audience input feeds some free-style addenda. While this stretches the performance somewhat, it also shows that Mr. Brinkman is more than an obsessively overstimulated Darwin fanboy with a talent for recitation.

His "them = us" thread about nurturing the group above the individual gives the show an overarching message. "All this hippy-dippy, love-thy-neighbor bio-socialism isn't just me editorializing as a Canadian," he says with disarming self-mockery, going on to explain how society might be reconfigured to eliminate hostility and fear.

Sure, it's a rose-colored vision, but by the time Mr. Brinkman shares his "Lysistrata"-inspired anthem of sexual selection, "Don't Sleep With Mean People," you might start singing along.

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