

## 5 L.A. theater productions you should see this May 2018

By Dany Margolies

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What's on the soundtrack of your life? Do you hear the blues wail when you think of former romances? Do you live and breathe rock? Do you secretly hear songs from *Flower Drum Song* when you walk past your neighborhood Szechwan restaurant? Or is your soundtrack darker? And will our children hear gunfire when they think back on their school days? These five shows evoke their own soundscapes, staged through the work of fine actors and superb theater-makers. We're betting these shows, listed in order of closing date, are worth your theatergoing time and money this month.

### **Blues in the Night** Lovelace Studio Theater at Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, through May 20

Three women show they've got a right to sing the blues. Through music by Harold Arlen, Duke Ellington, Johnny Mercer, Bessie Smith and more, they reveal their involvement with the same "lying, cheating, snake of a man." Conceived and directed by Sheldon Epps, the show stars gorgeously gifted performers Yvette Cason, Bryce Charles, Chester Gregory and Paulette Ivory, who sing, among many others, "Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out," "Am I Blue?" and, of course, "Blues in the Night."

9390 N Santa Monica Blvd, Beverly Hills (310-746-4000). Tue–Fri at 8pm; Sat, Sun 2, 8pm. \$60–\$75.

### **School of Rock** Hollywood Pantages Theatre, May 3–May 27

An unemployed rock musician pretends to be a teacher and snags a substitute job, where he decides to form a band among his fifth-graders. Turns out he is a teacher, after all. So goes the national tour of the musical based on the 2003 film *School of Rock*, written by Mike White, here with added book by Julian Fellowes, lyrics by Glenn Slater and music by Andrew Lloyd Webber, and starring Rob Colletti.

6233 Hollywood Blvd, Hollywood (800-982-2787). Tue–Fri at 8pm; Sat 2, 8pm; Sun 1, 6:30pm. \$35–\$145.

### **Soft Power** Ahmanson Theatre, May 3–June 10

We wonder if the creators of this world premiere production were prescient or just watching world headlines when they came up with the idea for a musical meshing American politics and stereotyping of China and the Chinese. With its book and lyrics by David Henry Hwang, music by Jeanine Tesori and direction by Leigh Silverman, we may hear references to our favorite classic musicals, along with innovations its creators are known for.

135 N Grand Ave (213-972-4400). Tue–Fri at 8pm; Sat at 2, 8pm; Sun at 1, 6:30 pm. \$30–\$130.

### **Forever Bound** Sankalpa Productions at Atwater Village Theatre, May 11–June 16

Where does concern for the comfort and safety of a life leave off and creepiness and criminality begin? What if we start on a path with the worst intentions and wind up trying to do right. Steve Apostolina penned this world premiere, Ann Hearn Tobolowsky directs. But you'll likely leave the theater humming the performances, by Apostolina, Emily Goss, Rob Nagle and French Stewart.

3269 Casitas Ave (323-960-4429). Fri, Sat at 8pm; Sun at 2pm; Mon at 8pm. \$15–\$35.

### **Ripe Frenzy** Greenway Court Theatre, May 17–June 17

Whatever happened to the American life of Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*? Jennifer Barclay's play posits a mass shooting at small-town high school, which sets in motion the various reactions we seem to have, then helps its characters and audiences puzzle through them. Alana Dietze directs this rolling world premiere, which won the 2016 National New Play Network Smith Prize for Political Theatre.

544 N Fairfax Ave (323-673-0544). Fri at 8pm; Sat at 2pm, 8pm; plus Sun at 4pm May 20 and June 17. \$15–\$34.

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