



Hand to God, coming to the Blue Room.

The show must go on

New year rings in a busy season of theater

What better way to follow up a banner year of local theater than with an overstuffed calendar of promising-looking productions?

by
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There are so many intriguing (*The Almond Orchard*, *The River Bride*), high-caliber (*Our Town*, *Mamma Mia!*,

Summertime) and gloriously ridiculous (*Hand to God*, *Happy Hour*) options hitting the boards that it's going to be a challenge to fit it all in. Here's a preview of as many winter/spring productions as we could cram into this space.

Hand to God, Blue Room Theatre (Jan. 17-Feb. 2). A play that stars a possessed Christian-ministry hand puppet and "explores the startlingly fragile nature of faith, morality, and the ties that bind us."

Hello, Dolly!, California Regional Theatre (Jan. 23-Feb. 3). CUSD Center for the Arts. You'll "feel the room swaying 'cause the band's playing one of your old favorite songs from way back when."

Our Town, Chico State (Jan. 25-26). Harlen Adams Theatre. During his life, Thornton Wilder scorned the advances of Leonard Bernstein and Aaron Copland to adapt his Pulitzer Prize-winning drama, but in 2006, music won out and Chico State's School of the Arts will present the

contemporary operatic version.

Mamma Mia!, Chico Theater Company (Jan. 25-Feb. 24). Come for the ABBA songs, stay for the ABBA songs, try and get the ABBA songs out of your head the rest of the year!

Fresh Ink 2019, Blue Room (Feb. 13-17). Four playwrights, five prompts, and one week to write a one-act!

The Addams Family, Inspire School (Feb. 14-24), CUSD Center for the Arts. Creative kids dive into the dark and silly humor of this musical-comedy update of the famous family of monsters.

Radioland's Return to Paradise, Theatre on the Ridge (Feb. 14-March 3). Local writer/director Jerry Miller's endlessly adaptable musical revue is back. And for the first show at the Paradise theater since the Camp Fire, he's composed a love letter to the town at a time when everyone could use a little tuneful distraction.

GarageFest, various locations (March 8-9). Not too many details yet, but a promising concept choreographed by Slow Theatre is in the works with local theater organizations setting up productions in different garages for a roving theater festival. Stay tuned.

The Almond Orchard, Blue Room (March 14-30). Local actor/director Joyce Henderson's localized adaptation of Anton Chekov's final play, *The Cherry Orchard*.

Nunsense, Chico Theater Company (March 22-April 14). The musical-comedy standard.

Happy Hour, Chico State

(March 30), Laxson Auditorium. Chico Performances presents New York dance duo Monica Bill Barnes and Anna Bass, who bring comedy, slapstick and interpretive dance together for a fun play about a couple of guys trying to make an impression at an office party.

The River Bride, Chico State (April 4-7), Wismer Theatre. A contemporary Amazon folk tale featuring an engaged young woman who doesn't want to get married, a sister who is in love with the groom, and a mysterious man pulled from the river who "offers the sisters an alluring, possibly dangerous future."

The Book Club Play, Theatre on the Ridge (April 4-21). What happens when a book club is invaded by a documentary film crew? Comedy, of course.

Summertime, Butte College (April 26-May 5), Black Box Theatre, ARTS Building. Theater students tackle Charles Mee's dreamy romantic comedy about the pain, beauty and messiness of love.

Beauty and the Beast, Chico State (May 2-5), Laxson Auditorium. The immensely popular musical version of the Disney film gets the full-scale production it deserves in the Department of Music and Theatre's spring show.

The Madam and the Mayor's Wife, Blue Room (May 2-18). Local actor/writer/director Hilary Tellesen says her latest original work is "about the West and the capitalization of desire." □

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