

## ***Shows in the Edison Theater: Wikipedia***

### **Oh! Calcutta!**

Oh! Calcutta! is an avant-garde theatrical revue, created by British drama critic Kenneth Tynan. The show, consisting of sketches on sex-related topics, debuted Off-Broadway in 1969 and then in London in 1970. It ran in London for over 3,900 performances, and in New York initially for 1,314. Revivals enjoyed even longer runs, including a Broadway revival that ran for 5,959 performances, making the show the longest-running revue in Broadway history at the time.

As of 2012, its revival was still the seventh longest-running show in Broadway history, the second longest-running revival, after Chicago, and the fourth longest-running American production ever on Broadway, after Chicago, A Chorus Line and The Lion King.

The show sparked considerable controversy at the time, because it featured extended scenes of total nudity, both male and female. The title is taken from a painting by Clovis Trouille, itself a pun on "O quel cul t'as!" French for "What an arse you have!". Chicago Punk band The Lawrence Arms named their fifth album, Oh! Calcutta! in reference to this show.

### **Don't Bother Me, I Can't Cope**

Don't Bother Me, I Can't Cope is a musical revue with music and lyrics by Micki Grant. It was originally produced by Edward Padula.

The all-singing, all-dancing show focuses on the African-American experience with songs on such topics as tenements, slumlords, ghetto life, student protests, black power, and feminism. The music is a mixture of gospel, jazz, funk, soul, calypso, and soft rock.

The show had its first staging at Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C. in 1971, with subsequent stagings at the Locust and Walnut Street Theatres in Philadelphia. The Broadway production, directed by Vinnette Carroll and choreographed by George Faison, opened on April 19, 1972 at the Playhouse Theatre, where it ran for two months before transferring to the Edison. It had a total run of 1065 performances. The cast included Grant, Alex Bradford, Hope Clarke, and Arnold Wilkerson. It was the first Broadway play to be directed by an African-American woman. Time Magazine theatre critic T. E. Kalem praised the show, writing: "This is the kind of show at which you want to blow kisses." The Los Angeles production featured Paula Kelly.

An original cast recording was released on the Polydor label, produced by Jerry Ragovoy.

### **Me and Bessie**

Me and Bessie is a musical revue about the life and career of blues singer Bessie Smith. The basically one-woman show, conceived and written by Will Holt and Linda Hopkins and performed by Hopkins, features songs by Lil Green, Clarence Williams, Henry Creamer, Andy Razaf, and Jimmy Cox, among others.

It originally was presented at Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C. from November 1-17, 1974, [1] then produced by the Center Theatre Group and staged by Robert Greenwald at the Mark Taper Forum from April 4 through May 3, 1975. [2]

The Broadway production was directed by Greenwald, with special dance sequences choreographed by Lester Wilson for two characters, identified only as Man and Woman (Lester Wilson and Gerri Dean). Howlett Smith and Lenny Hambro were co-Musical Directors.[3] Donald Harris was responsible for scenic design.

Following two previews, it opened at the Ambassador Theatre on October 22, 1975. It transferred to the Edison Theatre on December 3, 1975 and remained there until December 5, 1976, running for a total of 453 performances. Between September 24 and its closing, it ran in repertory with *Oh! Calcutta!*

*In and Around Town*, a weekly critical guide for entertainment in New York, included a capsule review for *Me and Bessie* that read, "The raw fervor of Linda Hopkins's blues singing is all that matters here, and it's enough. Unfortunately, the show is also burdened with a silly script by Will Holt, which consists mostly of having Miss Hopkins disavow the fact that she's Bessie Smith with all the fervor of a Kennedy disavowing politics." [4] However, in 2011, *Backstage* magazine remembered Hopkins's performance as Smith: "It's been 36 years since I saw her in it at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles, but she's stayed with me as the definitive Bessie Smith, and of course the cast album plays even more powerfully than Smith's original." [5]

Linda Hopkins was nominated for the Drama Desk Award for Unique Theatrical Experience but lost to *The Norman Conquests*. [6] The production held the record for the longest-running one-woman show in Broadway history until *Golda's Balcony*, starring Tovah Feldshuh, surpassed it by forty performances. [7]

### Sizwe Banzi Is Dead

*Sizwe Banzi Is Dead* (originally produced and published as: *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*) is a play by Athol Fugard, written collaboratively with two South African actors, John Kani and Winston Ntshona, both of whom appeared in the original production. Its world première occurred on 8 October 1972 at the Space Theatre, Cape Town, South Africa. Its subsequent British première won a London Theatre Critics Award for the Best Play of 1974.[citation needed] Its American première occurred at the Edison Theatre, in New York City, on 13 November 1974.[1]

### The Island

*The Island* is a play written Athol Fugard, John Kani, and Winston Ntshona.

The apartheid-era drama, inspired by a true story, is set in an unnamed prison clearly based on South Africa's notorious Robben Island, where Nelson Mandela was held for twenty-seven years. It focuses on two cellmates, one whose successful appeal means that his release draws near and one who must remain in prison for many years to come. They spend their days at futile physical labor and nights rehearsing in their cell for a performance of Sophocles' *Antigone* in front of the other prisoners. One takes the part of Antigone, who defies the laws of the state to bury her brother, and the other takes the part of her uncle Creon, who sentences her to die for her crime of conscience. The play draws parallels between Antigone's situation and the situation of black political prisoners. Tensions arise as the performance approaches, especially when one of the prisoners learns that he has won an early release and the men's deep friendship is tested. *The Island* bears testament to the resiliency of the human heart.

### Love Letters

Love Letters is a play by A. R. Gurney that was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. The play centers on two characters, Melissa Gardner and Andrew Makepeace Ladd III. Using the epistolary form sometimes found in novels, they sit side by side at tables and read the notes, letters and cards – in which over nearly 50 years, they discuss their hopes and ambitions, dreams and disappointments, victories and defeats – that have passed between them throughout their separated lives. While Andrew becomes a U.S. senator, Melissa fails as an artist. In the end Melissa kills herself.[1]

The play is a performance favorite for busy name actors, for it requires little preparation, and lines need not be memorized. It was first performed by the playwright himself with Holland Taylor at the New York Public Library,[2] then opened in 1988 at the Long Wharf Theatre in New Haven, Connecticut with Joanna Gleason and John Rubinstein.