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The Ensemble produces another play by Pearl Cleage.



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A restored sexploitation classic screens at Alamo.



WEDNESDAY
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Harlan Coben dares readers to figure out *The Stranger*.



NIGHT + DAY

WEEK OF MARCH 19 - MARCH 25, 2015 WWW.HOUSTONPRESS.COM/CALENDAR

LITERARY EVENTS

Inprint Margaret Root Brown Reading Series 2014/2015, Monday



Kazuo Ishiguro

Jeff Cottenden

THU

3/19

THEATER

THE POLITICS OF LOVE

Transport yourself back to a time when, in just moments, politician Maynard Jackson will become the first African-American mayor of Atlanta, Georgia. Jackson's historic 1973 mayoral election serves as the backdrop for Pearl Cleage's rich romantic comedy *What I Learned in Paris*.

Ensemble Theatre Artistic Director Eileen J. Morris directs the regional premiere. "This

play deals with the politics of life. The politics of people," said Morris. The play also deals with the politics of love.

Jackson's righthand man, attorney J.P. Madison, is freshly divorced and newly remarried. Madison's new wife is the young, sweet Ann, while his ex-wife is the flamboyant Evie. "Evie is a spiritual and bohemian woman," said Morris. At the start of the play, Evie has just returned to Atlanta from a period of self-discovery in Paris. "She went to Paris and learned to be free," said Morris. In Paris, Evie discovers herself and her feelings for her ex-husband. To complicate matters of the heart even more, Madison's new wife is more interested in Madison's protégé, John, than in Madison.

This is not the first time the Ensemble has produced a Cleage play. "We know this artist. We like the enriched characters she creates," said Morris. "She allows us to...be taken away for [a] moment and wrapped in myriad layers of love and safety...That's the beauty of what Ms. Cleage does."

"This play is very funny [and], even though it's set in 1973, the issues are still current." Morris added, "It has the stuff of a good scandal. Everyone loves scandal."

Returning cast members include Kendrick "KayB" Brown, recently seen in *Fly*; Cynthia Brown Garcia, who was in The Ensemble's premiere of *Christmas with Great Aunt*; Detria Ward, who won a Houston Theater Best Actress award for her performance in Cleage's *The Nacirema Society*; and Mirron Willis, who recently performed in the Ensemble production of *The Meeting*. Yunina Barbour-Payne makes her Ensemble debut. 7:30 p.m. Thursdays; 8 p.m. Fridays; 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. Saturdays; 3 p.m. Sundays. Through April 12. The Ensemble Theatre, 3535 Main. For information, call 713-520-0055 or visit ensemblehouston.com. \$23. KATRICIA LANG



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FRI

3/20

OPERA

BREATHTAKING FIGHT SCENES

Whether you're a fan of French composer Georges Bizet's *Carmen*, at more than three hours in length, or a novice to opera, you're sure to appreciate the upcoming production of *La Tragédie de Carmen* at Opera in the Heights, the final offering of its 2014-15 season.

"In 1983, a British director, Peter Brook, stripped away all of the nonessential elements and made it more succinct," explained Lynda Keith McKnight, OH stage director. "He stripped it down to four main people and left all of the music intact."

This dark tale of love and jealousy, ending in tragedy and death, retains the well-known musical moments from the original opera: femme fatale Carmen's "Seguidilla" and "Habanera," bullfighter Escamillo's "Toreador Song" and naive soldier Don José's "Flower Song." This will be the second OH production for conductor Dr. Eiki Isomura.

"It's a very intense 80 minutes. This will appeal to modern audiences — it's very visceral. It has amazing fight work," McKnight said, prais-



Zack Varela

around the turn of the 20th century as they sought to re-create the indigenous music of Mexico.

"A lot of the folkloric elements are more rhythmic and dance-style, which is imagined because it wasn't written down. These composers wanted to go back to the roots and their ancestors, before Spanish influence and conquest, and bring back to the forefront the music of their ancestors," Detrick said.

A pre-concert lecture by University of Houston professor Dr. Howard Pollack takes place on Sunday, 6 p.m. Sunday; 7:30 p.m. Tuesday. Christ the King Lutheran Church, 2353 Rice Boulevard. For information, call 832-496-9943 or visit apollochamberplayers.org. \$30. ALEXANDRA DOYLE

MON

3/23

▼ LITERARY EVENTS

KNIGHTS, DRAGONS AND WARRIORS

It took ten years for Kazuo Ishiguro, best-selling author of *The Remains of the Day*, to bring to life his latest piece of fiction, *The Buried Giant*. The author will read from his new novel as part of the 2014/2015 Inprint Margaret Root Brown Reading Series on Monday, March 23; his first visit to Houston in 20 years.

"He worked on this book for a long time," said Rich Levy, Inprint's executive director. "He first showed his wife a version of this book ten years ago, and she said, 'Not only [is] it not ready for publication, don't ever show it to anybody.' He simply had to start over."

It was worth the wait, since the finished work, which is set in a mythical time around 1,500 years ago, includes knights, dragons and warriors. "Ishiguro has said that he's fascinated by samurai movies. He also loves westerns," said Levy, who added that the author is attracted to the theme of "trying to right the wrongs."

On the surface, it's a story of an elderly couple who are suffering from memory

loss and seemingly surrounded by this same affliction wherever they go. Through the mist, they remember they have a son and set out to find him, and, along the way, experience adventures and meet key characters who have an impact on their lives.

"It's powerful. It's very much about memory, but also about love and facing death and about how one faces death, eventually," said Levy. "It does work on an allegorical level."

The book weaves in the contrasting themes of hate and tolerance, enmity and allegiance, loyalty and revenge, and war and peace. 7:30 p.m. Monday. Cullen Theater, Wortham Center, 501 Texas. For information, call 713-521-2026 or visit inprinthouston.org. \$5. SUSIE TOMMANEY

TUE

3/24

▼ FILM

RESTORED "SEXPLOITATION" FILM FINDS NEW LIFE

Vinegar Syndrome is a video label that has made a mission out of preserving, restoring and releasing rare exploitation and horror movies from the '60s, '70s and '80s. Alamo Drafthouse Cinema started showing these restored films last December in what it's calling the Vinegar Syndrome series; the March selection is *The Telephone Book*.

It is a "sexploitation" satire that was restored from an archival 35-millimeter print. It stars Sarah Kennedy, Norman Rose and Ultra Violet, a.k.a. Isabelle Collin Dufresne, a protégé of both Andy Warhol and Salvador Dalí. Much like Ultra Violet herself, the film is a product of New York's underground film and arts scene of the early '70s.

The movie tells the story of Alice, a sex-obsessed hippie who falls in love with an obscene phone caller. When she tries to go out and actually find the caller, she encounters a cast of characters, including a filmmaker, a psychiatrist and a lesbian.

Don't expect this to be a tasteful film. It revels in pushing boundaries with over-



Vinegar Syndrome