

## Wisdom Of Lunatics, Wildness of Age



David Ogrodnik in "11 Minutes," by Jerzy Skolimowski, at the Venice International Film Festival.

VENICE — There is a character in "Sangue del Mio Sangue" — the Italian director Marco Bellocchio's strange and wonderful new film — known as Il Pazzo, which translates as the Madman. He's an unshaven, excitable fellow who wears a mismatched plaid suit, guzzles the aperitif Aperol and spouts barely comprehensible conspiracy theories. If you believe a possibly tongue-in-cheek interpretation Mr. Bellocchio offered at a news conference on Tuesday, he may be the only sane person in the movie. The lunatic-as-truth-teller is a venerable literary conceit (found in "King Lear" and, more locally, in the harlequins and zanni of commedia dell'arte) and also a notion that has a particular relevance to this festival.

Not only because unshaven, Aperol-swilling characters in eye-catching garb are a familiar sight along the Lido here. The best movies at the 72nd Venice International Film Festival — the truest, the wisest, the boldest — have been the crazy ones. "Sangue del Mio Sangue" ("Blood of My Blood") is certainly among them. It can serve an emblem of this festival, which concludes on Saturday with the awarding of the Gold-  
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## Ex-Teenage Idol, Now Smoldering

Nick Jonas came onstage Wednesday night at Terminal 5 in a conspiratorial crouch, not to look smaller, as if he wanted to hide himself, but to move more slowly, emphasizing the creeping movements of his muscles, as if he were about to pounce.

For years, he could do nothing of the sort. As a teenager, he was the musical conscience of the Jonas Brothers, the Disney family band that, somewhat improbably and very secretly, was one of the better American rock bands of the late 2000s. Nick, the youngest, was the sensitive one; Joe, the heartthrob; Kevin, the eldest, the comic relief.

Which makes Nick's shift in the last year to purvey- or of confectionary pop-soul an unlikely twist, and very possibly just that: a twist, brief and striking.

"Jealous," a single from Mr. Jonas's self-titled 2014 album, has become his biggest solo hit: It's a slo-mo soul smolderer, thick with agitated emotions and agitated singing, effective enough that it occasioned a remix with the R&B sensualist Tinashe. Mr. Jonas also sings the somewhat hilarious chorus of "Good Times," the Sage the Gemini hit — "We're both getting emotional/The same time, getting so sexual" — like an off-brand Justin Timberlake.

Nick Jonas at Terminal 5 on Wednesday.

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## Say So Long To Those Super Troupers

SORRY, Chiquitita, but after 14 years, it's "thank you for the music," and let's move on. "Mamma Mia!" is closing. Now where can you go with Mom or the girls to dance in the aisles? Erik Piepenburg looks back on this megahit on Page 12.

Judy McLane as Donna in "Mamma Mia!"

JOAN MARCUS/BONEAU, BONEAU-BROWN, VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS

## Second-Guessing Tennessee Williams

"Desire" makes for a generic if apt title for a collection of short plays adapted from stories by Tennessee Williams, the playwright who has anatomized that emotion — its pleasures, tortures, dangers — more thoroughly and with more lyric eloquence than any other. This production from the Acting Company, which opened on Thursday at the 59E59 Theaters, directed by Michael Wilson, features works from six notable playwrights, based on tales mostly written by Williams in the 1940s.

CHARLES  
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The playwrights take varied approaches to dramatizing Williams's stories, which often breathe with the same fervent romanticism that marks his plays. Some are more successful than others in giving fleshed-out form to these often minor tales. The larger question is whether second-guessing the writer himself, who occasionally adapted his short fiction for the stage, is a fruitful pastime. Over all, on the evidence of this production, I'd have to say no.

"You Lied to Me About Centralia," by John Guare — who shares with Williams a flair for titles — is based on "Portrait of a Girl in

Desire Mickey Theis and Megan Bartle in John Guare's "You Lied to Me About Centralia," one of six short plays at 59E59 Theaters.

Glass," an unusually straightforward account of some of the events that Williams expanded into his breakthrough work, "The Glass Menagerie." Obviously, it would be folly for Mr. Guare to write his own version of that play, so instead he imagines what took place when Jim (Mickey Theis), having left dinner with the family of his poetry-writing co-worker at

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SARA KRULWICH/THE NEW YORK TIMES

# Super Troupers Give Thanks for the Music

By ERIK PIEPENBURG

IT looks as if the dancing queens are finally facing their Waterloo.

On Saturday, the Abba jukebox musical "Mamma Mia!" will close on Broadway after 14 years of body-hugging jumpsuits, chest-baring chorus boys and singalongs in the aisles. It will have played 5,773 performances, making it the eighth-longest-running musical in Broadway history, surpassing "Rent" and "Fiddler on the Roof."

The show got off to an uneasy start. It opened on Oct. 18, 2001, weeks after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. While it was a hit with audi-

ences, critics were less generous. In his review in The New York Times, Ben Brantley called it "a giant singing Hostess cupcake" that nonetheless could turn out to be "the unluckiest hit ever to win over cynical, sentiment-shy New Yorkers." It received Tony nominations in five categories but didn't win any. ("Thoroughly Modern Millie" won the top musical honor.)

For years, "Mamma Mia!" took in over \$1 million a week at the box office, but sales started to decline around 2013. Still, for many first-time New York tourists it was a must-see musical, and fans were caught off-guard by its closing notice. So why is it leaving now?

From left, Karen Mason, Louise Pitre and Judy Kaye in "Mamma Mia!" in 2001.

"It comes down to economics," said Judy Craymer, one of the producers. "To run 14 years is incredible. It's a show that people love. But generally it's tough in New York." Ms. Craymer, who has made "Money, Money, Money" from the show's estimated \$2 billion worldwide gross (\$700 million on Broadway), said lowering the curtain was the "sensible" thing to do.

But first, a look at the history of "Mamma Mia!" in facts, figures and interviews.



SARA KRULWICH/THE NEW YORK TIMES

## In It for the Very Long Run

After 14 years in "Mamma Mia!," Brent Black has a trick for keeping his performances fresh.

"It's corny, but honestly sometimes I just peek through the curtains and know somebody is there for the first time," said Mr. Black, the only actor to appear for the show's entire Broadway run. "This is something I've wanted to do since I was young, and I appreciate that I have a gig. If I'm tired, I get over it."

Most nights, Mr. Black is in the ensemble. But he has also played two of the three father characters, a role that became a personal one when his son, Jack, now 11, was born.

"He was raised in the Winter Garden," Mr. Black said. "The girls would play with him and his trucks. He got lots of attention." Sherry Cohen said working as a stage manager for "Mamma Mia!" since Day 1 has made her "the luckiest girl in the world." Saying goodbye to her "Mamma Mia!" universe won't be easy.

"To think that we're not going to be going there every day is going to be emotionally challenging," she said. "Fourteen years — that's a huge chunk of life."



KRISTA SCHLUETER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

The stage manager Sherry Cohen and the actor Brent Black have been with "Mamma Mia!" since it opened.



SARA KRULWICH/THE NEW YORK TIMES

195

PAIRS OF PLATFORM BOOTS USED.

## 'Mamma' and Daughter

What kept "Mamma Mia!" on Broadway so long? CJ Millamena, for starters.

"There are no words to describe how much I love this show," said Ms. Millamena, a 22-year-old Fordham student who says she has seen the Broadway production 55 times.

One element that kept Ms. Millamena and other female fans going back is the show's fraught but loving mother-daughter relationship — between Donna and her daughter, Sophie — that anchors the story. (Three men may be Sophie's father.) Especially resonant is the show's tear-jerker, "Slipping Through My Fingers," a bittersweet song in which Donna, preparing for Sophie's wedding, sings of a "feeling that I'm losing her forever."

"My daughter is that age, and you don't want them to grow up," said Ms. Millamena's mother, Carmen, who herself has seen the show a modest handful of times. "That's why I cry every time at that scene."

Elizabeth Faidley, 35, says she has seen the Broadway production almost every year since 2003 with family members and female friends. During one visit, the show calmed tensions between her and her mother.

"We were fighting earlier in the day, and the show made everything better," Ms. Faidley said. "You can be in whatever state you are in your life, but when you see it you're happy and dancing. It takes you out of reality."

Chalk that up to the show's catalog of popular Abba songs, including "Dancing Queen," "Take a Chance on Me" and the title song. One of the show's most popular moments is what's known by fans as the Mega Mix, a roundup of songs at the curtain call that brings the audience into the aisles, dancing and singing along with the actors onstage.

"The music is so melodic," said the younger Ms. Millamena, who grew up listening to her mother's Abba recordings. "The familiarity of the music allows one to get lost in the scene and almost participate in your seat. Every single time 'Dancing Queen' is on, there's some older man behind me singing along. I'm like, 'Yes, let's sing together.'"

It's that spontaneous musical camaraderie, missing from almost every other show now on Broadway, that has fans like Ms. Faidley and Ms. Millamena and her mother in mourning. "It's devastating that it's going away," Ms. Faidley said. As for Ms. Millamena, she will be at the final show.



KARSTEN MORAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

CJ Millamena (with her mother, Carmen) has seen "Mamma Mia!" 55 times.

## Abba or a Requiem?

"Mamma Mia!" was in rehearsal when terrorists attacked the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001. Three people who were in the studio that day recently reflected on the chaotic days that followed.

**SHERRY COHEN, STAGE MANAGER** "We were rehearsing the show at 890 Broadway in Union Square, and we were in a studio that had huge windows facing south. The towers were centered in the windows. On Sept. 12, when we showed up at the studio, later than our usual 10 a.m. rehearsal time because we knew people would have problems getting there, we brought the company together and sat and thought: How do we move forward? How do we start singing 'Dancing Queen'? We shared and cried and people said, 'What do we do?' We said, 'People are going to want to go to something where they can be entertained and lose themselves.' That's how we were able to continue rehearsal."

**JUDY CRAYMER, PRODUCER** "I remember having a conversation with Jerry Schoenfeld, who was at the time the head of the Shubert Organization, about 'If we open, should we have a party?' Jerry said, 'Judy, you have to have a party, because the caterers and car companies and everyone is depending on you having this party.' We had a big party in Bryant Park. It was a tribute to all of Broadway that going to the theater was such an important part of the recovery process of the city. If 'Mamma Mia!' offered anything, it was restorative to the people that came. I think it was a show that was about pure escapism. It was also a time when other shows didn't survive, because tourists weren't coming in. Giuliani was about getting people out and getting Broadway lights back on again. We were proud to be part of that."



SHERRY COHEN

The 2001 Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade as seen from the Winter Garden roof by the stage manager Sherry Cohen.

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**PHYLLIDA LLOYD, DIRECTOR** "In the hours and days after the catastrophe, there were some people on the team who really began to wonder whether 'Mamma Mia!' was the thing, or in fact quite the entirely wrong thing, for that moment, which felt it needed the Verdi 'Requiem' rather than Abba. But we realized by the time we opened at the Winter Garden that the city needed diversion and lightness and that people were desperate for something to take their children to, to distract them from the questions of what happened to the world. There was an intensity about that experience that was unique in all the 'Mamma Mias!' we made anywhere in the world, and most of the productions I've made of anything. That gives the closing of the show a special resonance."

## The Flowers Flung



SARA KRULWICH/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Joe Machota; Tina Maddigan, center; and Louise Pitre in "Mamma Mia!" in 2001, its first year on Broadway.

5,773

BOUQUETS TOSSED FOR THE WEDDING SCENE.



RICHARD PERRY/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Former and current members of the cast and crew of "Mamma Mia!" assembled in Times Square in July for a family photograph.

2,000

PEOPLE EMPLOYED BY THE SHOW DURING ITS BROADWAY RUN.

23

ACTRESSES WHO HAVE PLAYED THE FEMALE LEADS, DONNA, ROSIE AND TANYA.

28

ACTORS WHO HAVE PLAYED THE THREE POSSIBLE FATHERS, HARRY, BILL AND SAM.

"IT'S NOT A FUNERAL, AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED. IT'S A MOMENT TO FEEL PROUD OF. IT'S FULL OF JOY, AND A CELEBRATION."

— PHYLLIDA LLOYD, DIRECTOR, ON THE CLOSING OF THE SHOW, HER ALL-FEMALE PRODUCTION OF 'HENRY IV' WILL BE AT ST. ANN'S WAREHOUSE IN BROOKLYN IN NOVEMBER.

## And the Sign Makes A Handy Accessory



PETER KRAMER/GETTY IMAGES

When the show moved from the Winter Garden to the Broadhurst in 2013, pieces of the billboard above the marquee were made into tote bags (below) for the cast.



KRISTA SCHLUETER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

"IT WAS ALL ABOUT GETTING IN SHAPE, BECAUSE I HAD TO WEAR A SPEEDO ONSTAGE. THAT WAS TERRIFYING. I COME FROM A VERY MODEST FAMILY."

— JOE MACHOTA, WHO ORIGINATED THE ROLE OF SKY, THE HUNKY YOUNG ROMANTIC LEAD, ON BROADWAY. AFTER THREE YEARS, HE LEFT THE SHOW AND NEVER PERFORMED ON BROADWAY AGAIN. HE NOW RUNS THE THEATRICAL DIVISION OF CREATIVE ARTISTS AGENCY.