Winter Chicago theater preview: From 'Funny Girl' to Philip Seymour Hoffman - Chris Jones

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After a busy late fall when several big and much-anticipated shows in Chicago—from "Banana Shpeel" at the Chicago Theatre to "High Holidays" at the Goodman to "My Fair Lady" at the Marriott—did not fully live up to our elevated expectations, we feel good and ready for a new year and a fresh start on the Chicagoland boards.

So while the proof will, as always, be in the opening-night pudding, here's a look at ten upcoming Chicago productions, opening between Jan. 1 and March 31, that have our New Year hopes running high.

"The Lost Boys of Sudan, "Victory Gardens Theatre. Fans of the Victory Gardens playwriting ensemble know that Lonnie Carter is a king of linguistic theatricality. "The Lost Boys of Sudan," a play for young people about the aftermath of the civil war in that challenged country, premiered to mixed reviews in 2007 at the Children's Theatre of Minneapolis. The piece is all about three Sudanese boys who find themselves in a refugee camp in Fargo, N. D., where they must comes to terms with their terrible losses and rebuild their lives. Carter says he has retooled this play for its Chicago premiere under the direction of Jim Corti. Mar. 18 to Apr. 25 at Victory Gardens Biograph Theatre, 2433 N. Lincoln Ave.; $39-48; 773-871-300 or victorygardens.org.