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### FAMILY FARE

## It's Backyardigans versus Paper Girl! These children's shows won't stay stationery

By Doug George

Chicago Tribune reporter

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Fall is jam-packed with theater for kids, too. Here are seven good curtain-raising options in the next month or so.

### "Backyardigans Live"

When Nickelodeon ramps up one of its successful TV shows into a live touring production, Dora and Diego and their buds usually makes their stops in Rosemont. This one's coming right downtown. The Backyardigans are five computer-animated animal friends with imaginations as big as all outdoors. In each episode, their neighboring back yards turn into jungles, snowstorms and stellar constellations as they zip off on adventures. Though the 'Yardigans are pink and purple, they have names like Pablo and Uniqua and, interestingly enough, are a recognizably diverse cast. "Backyardigans Live! Tale of the Mighty Knights" crowns Uniqua and Tyrone as knights who embark on a quest to protect King Pablo's runaway egg.

*Best for:* All ages, fans of the TV show.

*When/where:* Saturday at 11 a.m., 2 p.m., 5 p.m.; Sunday at 11 a.m., 2 p.m.; Chicago Theatre, 175 N. State St.; \$20-\$45 at Ticketmaster outlets or [thechicagotheatre.com](http://thechicagotheatre.com).

### "If All the World were Paper"

Chicago Children's Theatre kicks off its 2008-09 season with "If All the World were Paper," written by Tim Webb and originally created by Oily Cart of London, directed by Jacqueline Russell. Paper Girl is born as a string of paper cut-outs and journeys to the bottom of the sea of ink and a colorful jungle island.

*Best for:* Ages 2-6

*When/where:* Wednesday to Nov. 30; Little Theater at the Museum of Science and Industry, 5700 S. Lake Shore Drive; \$18-\$28; 866-811-4111, [chicagochildrenstheatre.org](http://chicagochildrenstheatre.org).

## "Holes"

Adventure Stage Chicago opens its 10th season with the Louis Sachar novel adapted for stage. Fourteen-year-old Stanley Yelnats is punished for a crime he didn't commit and sent to a camp where boys spend their days digging holes under the desert sun. He blames the Yelnats family curse—until he discovers the reason behind the holes and hints of his true destiny.

*Best for:* Ages 10 and up.

*When/where:* Nov. 16 to Dec. 18 at Vittum Theater, 1012 North Noble St.; \$12-\$17, 773-342-4141 or [adventurestage.org](http://adventurestage.org).

## "If You Take a Mouse to School"

The chain-reaction books by Laura Numeroff get another turn on stage, thanks to Emerald City. A boy takes a mouse to school, the mouse wants his lunch box, and then the next thing happens, and the next.

*Best for:* Ages 3-6, fans of the books.

*When/where:* Through Nov. 2 at the Apollo Theater, 2540 N. Lincoln Ave.; \$12-\$15, 773-935-6100 or [emeraldcitytheatre.com](http://emeraldcitytheatre.com).

## "The Giver"

Apple Tree's Theatre for Young Audiences' version of Lois Lowry's classic about a young boy in a supposedly perfect world.

*Best for:* Ages 10 and up.

*When/where:* Oct. 8-17 at Metropolis Performing Arts Centre, 111 W. Campbell St., Arlington Heights; \$9.50, 847-577-2121 or [www.metropolisarts.com](http://www.metropolisarts.com).

## "The Little Mermaid"

Not the current Broadway show—this musical version of the Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale features book and lyrics by R. Eugene Jackson and music by Carl Alette.

*Best for:* All ages.

*When/where:* Through Oct. 18 at Steel Beam Theatre, 111 W. Main St., St. Charles; \$10 at 630-587-8521 or [www.steelbeamtheatre.com](http://www.steelbeamtheatre.com).

## "Red Riding Hood"

The fairy tale told as a sing-along by Chicago Kids Company.

*Best for: Ages 2-12*

• *Oct. 11-Nov. 22 at Wilmette Theater, 1122 Central Ave., Wilmette; \$10-\$12, 847-251-7424 and [wilmettetheatre.com](http://wilmettetheatre.com).*

• *Oct. 21-29 at Metropolis Performing Arts Centre; \$9.50, 847-577-2121 and [metropolisarts.com](http://metropolisarts.com).*

• *Oct. 31-Nov. 26 at Beverly Arts Center, W. 111th & S. Western Ave., Chicago; \$10, 773-205-9600 and [chicagokidscompany.com](http://chicagokidscompany.com).*

*Kerry Reid contributed to this report.*

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