

WHAT TO DO THIS WEEK 2.27-3.6



STAGE SATURDAY, MARCH 2

DAVID ROUSSÈVE/REALITY: HALFWAY TO DAWN

Duke Ellington didn't write his band's signature theme song, "Take The 'A' Train." Billy Strayhorn, the Harlem Renaissance composer who spent his childhood in Hillsborough, did. During the quarter-century that he worked as Ellington's arranger, collaborator, and sometimes, pianist, Strayhorn also penned "Lush Life," "Chelsea Bridge," and a number of other songs now recognized as jazz standards. Choreographer David Roussève spent the last year coaxing the unsung jazz great out of Ellington's shadow, exploring the gay composer's friendship with Martin Luther King Jr., his contributions to the civil rights movement, and his mentorship of jazz vocalist Lena Horne. On Thursday and Friday—before the Saturday premiere of *Halfway to Dawn*, the multimedia dance work based on Roussève's research—NC State LIVE also presents free performances of local puppet wizard Jeghetto's *An Evening with Billy Strayhorn* at Hunt Library. —Byron Woods

STEWART THEATRE, RALEIGH | 8 p.m., \$28-\$33, www.live.arts.ncsu.edu

David Roussève/REALITY PHOTO BY ROSE EICHENBAUM

STAGE WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27-SUNDAY, MARCH 17

LIFE OF GALILEO

Two infamous anniversaries take place during PlayMakers' production of *The Life of Galileo*. Just over four hundred years ago, the Catholic church ordered the famed Italian astronomer to "abandon completely ... the opinion that the sun stands still ... and the earth moves." A week later, the Inquisition would add the heliocentric writings of Copernicus to its Index of Prohibited Books. Bertolt Brecht wrote and revised his historical biography play between 1938 and 1955, as a warning that progress—in science, society, or politics—is never truly irreversible. Artistic director Vivienne Benesch and set designer Jim Findlay follow Brecht's lead, placing Galileo in a modern-day scientific storage facility similar to the global seed vault in Norway. But why Galileo's teachings need an underground bunker is the real question. —Byron Woods

PLAYMAKERS REPERTORY COMPANY, CHAPEL HILL

Various times, \$12-\$72, www.playmakersrep.org

STAGE FRIDAY, MARCH 1 & SATURDAY, MARCH 2

CAMILLE A. BROWN & DANCERS: MR. TOL E. RANCE

There is an undeniable tenderness in *Mr. TOL E. RANCE*, the 2012 work that began Camille A. Brown's trilogy of evening-length works, which concludes the choreographer's season-long residency at Duke Performances this weekend. We easily sense the love in its acts of retrieval and remembrance, as Brown's dancers move in tandem with long-dead performers seen in rare footage from the previous century. But the work is just as undeniably a sharp, sometimes scathing work of cultural criticism that closely analyzes a cavalcade of reductive—but socially accepted—representations of African Americans, from the era of minstrelsy (once the most popular form of public entertainment in America) to modern mass media. As Brown's dancers take on those physical vocabularies, the mask made manifest by poet Paul Lawrence Dunbar slips, and we witness the toll it takes on performers coerced into all but intolerable roles. —Byron Woods

REYNOLDS INDUSTRIES THEATER, DURHAM

8 p.m., \$10-\$25, www.dukeperformances.com