

2013: The Year in Theater

Shining a light on region's actors, directors, designers

By Jeffrey Borak
Berkshire Eagle Staff

A nod to actors, actresses, directors and designers for exceptional work in the region's theaters in 2013.

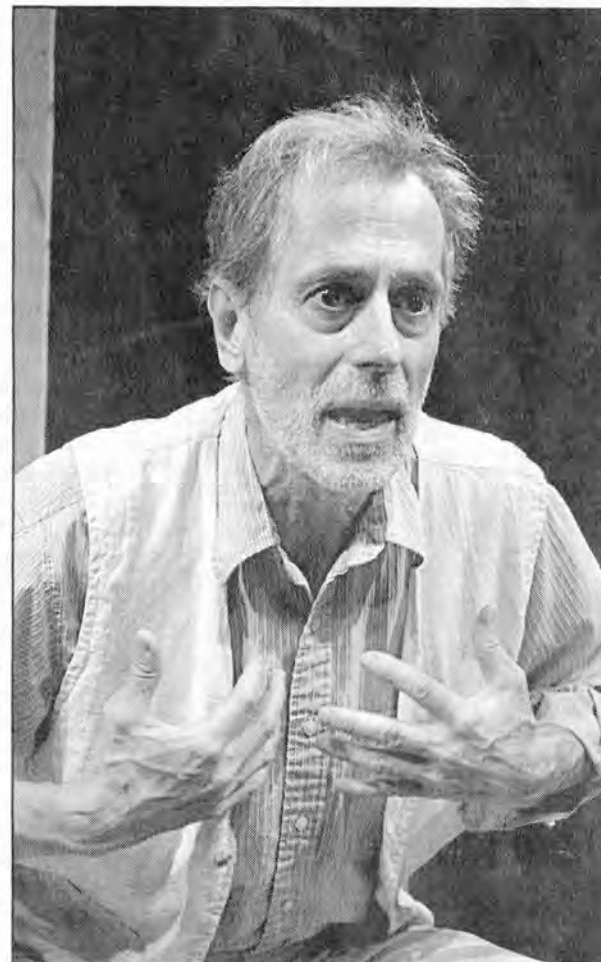
"Also noteworthy" listings are in order of having been seen.

Actors

Steve Hendrickson's solo performance as The Poet in "An Iliad" at Chester Theatre Company was a stunning tour-de-force that spoke to the essence of theater as narrative storytelling. Hendrickson rose to the occasion — and then some — as a world-weary traveler framing Homer's epic story as a cautionary tale about the waste of war. Even when the play threatened to buckle nearly 20 minutes from the end, Hendrickson held on, missing nary a beat or nuance.

Honorable mentions:

James McMenamin in a deeply unsettling performance as Raul, a wily, cunning, manipulative would-be rapist who gets his comeuppance in "Extremities" at Berkshire Theatre Group; and James Barry as Smith, a self-destructive, dependent, cagey man doing the best he can to hold on to a semblance of life in



Erika Rolfsrud (with Tim Altmeyer) as Sarah in 'Time Stands Still' at TheaterWorks in Hartford, Conn. and Steve Hendrickson as The Poet in 'An Iliad' at Chester Theatre Company delivered the year's most accomplished performances, in the opinion of The Berkshire Eagle theater critic Jeffrey Borak.

SETS

Luke Hegel-Cantarella, "Time Stands Still" (TheaterWorks)

Honorable mention — John McDermott, "Extremities" (BTG)

Also noteworthy — Meghan Raham, "The Chosen" (BSC); Michael Yeagan, "The Bridges of Madison County" (WTF); Vicki R. Davis, "An Iliad" (Chester Theatre Company); Patrick Brennan, "It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play" (Shakespeare & Company)

COSTUMES

Catherine Zuber, "The Bridges of Madison County" (WTF)

Honorable mention — David Murin, "Extremities" (BTG)

Also noteworthy — David Murin, "The Cat and the Canary" (BTG); Govane Lohbauer, "Its a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play" (Shakespeare & Company)

SOUND

James Sugg, "The Chosen" (BSC)

Photos courtesy TheaterWorks (left) and Chester Theatre Company (right)

"Arms on Fire" at Chester Theatre Company.

Also noteworthy — Jonathan Epstein, "Heroes" (Shakespeare & Company); Malcolm Ingram, "Heroes" (Shakespeare & Company); Guiseppe Jones, "Arms on Fire" (Chester Theatre Company); Robert Sean Leonard, "Pygmalion" (Williamstown Theatre Festival); Don Lee Sparks, "Pygmalion" (WTF); Adam Heller, "The Chosen" (Barrington Stage Company); Richard Topol, "The Chosen" (BSC); David Rosenblatt, "Body Awareness" (Chester Theatre Company); Steven Pasquale, "The Bridges of Madison County" (WTF); Michael X. Martin, "The Bridges of Madison County" (WTF); Tom Pacinka, "The Cat and the Canary" (Berkshire Theatre Group); David Sedgwick, "The Beauty Queen of Leenane" (Shakespeare & Company); Tim Altmeyer, "Time Stands Still" (TheaterWorks); Remi Sandry, "Clybourne Park" (BSC); Greg Jackson, "Clybourne Park" (BSC); Gray Simons, "QWERTY: The Typewriter Plays" (Mixed Comoany); David Joseph, "It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play" (Shakespeare & Company); Jonathan Croy, "It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play" (Shakespeare & Company).

Actresses

Count photojournalist Sarah, one of two pivotal characters in Donald Margulies' "Time Stands Still," as one of the world's most anguished walking wounded. The physical wounds she bears as she returns home to her Brooklyn apartment from an extended assignment in Iraq are

emblematic of deeper injuries that drive her relentlessly toward what her live-in companion and professional partner a writer named James, believes is an inevitable rendezvous with destiny. As indelibly played by **Erika Rolfsrud** in TheaterWorks' haunting production, she was a character who is hard to forget — someone you want to protect as much as you want to shake her up; whose idealistic passion and commitment are as admirable as they are worrisome.

Honorable mention:

Elena Shaddow will not be playing Francesca, the unfulfilled Italian immigrant wife of an Iowa farmer and mother of their two teenage kids, when the new musical adaptation of "The Bridges of Madison County" opens on Broadway next month. Those of us who saw her at Williamstown Theatre Festival this summer experienced an extraordinary performance that is as memorable for its nuance and rhythm as it is for its honesty and a seeming simplicity that belied a web of complexity.

Also noteworthy — Alysha Humphress, "On the Town" (BSC); Renee Elise Goldsberry, "Animal Crackers" (WTF); Mara Davi, "Animal Crackers" (WTF); Jayne Atkinson, "The Lion in Winter" (BTG); Tara Franklin, "The Lion in Winter" (BTG); Brooke Parks, "Love's Labours Lost" (Shakespeare & Company); Maureen Anderman, "Pygmalion" (WTF); Brooke Parks, "Mother Courage and Her Children" (Shakespeare & Company); Elizabeth Aspenlieder, "The Beauty Queen of Leenane" (Shakespeare & Company);

Karen Lee, "QWERTY: The Typewriter Plays" (Mixed Company); Kim Stauffer, "Emilie: Madame du Chatalet Defends Her Life" (WAM Theatre); Sarah Jeanette Taylor, "It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play" (Shakespeare & Company).

Directors

In a year of some uncommonly strong directing, **Rob Ruggiero**'s work on "Time Stands Still" at TheaterWorks was an absolute stand-out. Ruggiero has a way of letting the playwright speak his, or her, piece. At the same time, he draws his actors deep into the heart and soul of their respective characters to the point that the line between acting and life is virtually non-existent. The result, as it was here, is raw, powerful, agonizingly human.

Honorable mention:

Bartlett Sher's intricate and seamless orchestration of all the elements of the stage, human and technical, made "The Bridges of Madison County" an exceptional example of just how effective and revealing a storytelling medium theater can be when all its components are operating as one.

Also noteworthy — Karen Allen, "Extremities" (BTG); Aaron Posner, "The Chosen" (BSC); Sheila Siragusa, "An Iliad" (Chester Theatre Company); Giovanna Sardelli, "Clybourne Park" (BSC); Joan Ackermann, "QWERTY: The Typewriter Plays" (Mixed Company); Jenna Ware, "It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play" (Shakespeare & Company).

Choreographers

John Carrafa, "Animal Crackers" (WTF)

Honorable mention — Jennifer Webber, "Stockholm" (Stageworks/Hudson)

Also noteworthy — Gerry McIntyre, "Oklahoma!" (BTG)

Special mention — Lisa Kopitsky, fight choreography, "Extremities" (BTG)

Music directors

Tom Murray, "The Bridges of Madison County" (WTF)

Honorable mention — Kris Kukul, "Animal Crackers" (WTF)

Also noteworthy — Darren Cohen, "On the Town" (BSC);

Steven Freeman, "Oklahoma!" (BTG).

Designers

LIGHTING

Donald Holder, "The Bridges of Madison County" (WTF)

Honorable mention — John Lasiter, "Time Stands Still" (TheaterWorks)

Also noteworthy — Shawn E. Boyle, "Extremities" (BTG); Tyler Micoleau, "The Chosen" (BSC); Shawn E. Boyle, "The Cat and the Canary" (BTG); Lara Dubin, "An Iliad" (Chester Theatre Company)

Honorable mention — "An Iliad" (Chester Theatre Company)

Also noteworthy — Steven Brush, "The Cat and the Canary" (BTG)

ORIGINAL INCIDENTAL MUSIC

Scott Killian, "Extremities" (BTG)

Honorable mention — Steven Brush, "The Cat and the Canary" (BTG)

SPECIAL MENTION

Joe Rossi, special make-up design, "Time Stands Still" (TheaterWorks)

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