

In terms of quality, 2013 was neither the best of years nor the worst of years on the region's stages. Spring was uneventful; a summer that looked unpromising on paper had more than its share of surprises and accomplishments, as did the fall.

The Berkshires continued to attract directors, actors and playwrights looking to work on special projects away from the prying eyes and gossiping tongues of New York.



The year's best

1. TIME STANDS STILL / TheaterWorks

Donald Margulies' powerful play about a couple -- she's a driven photojournalist; he's a burned-out freelance journalist -- wrestling with physical and emotional wounds in the aftermath of an arduous, to say the least, period working in Iraq. Seamlessly directed and performed with unassuming skill and aching emotional resonance.

2. THE BRIDGES OF MADISON COUNTY / Williamstown Theatre Festival

Brilliantly adapted musical treatment of Robert James Weller's novel about a four-day affair between an immigrant housewife in rural Iowa and a well-traveled photojournalist. A haunting score by Jason Robert Brown, finely crafted acting and buoyantly imaginative staging.

3. THE CHOSEN / Barrington Stage Company

Chaim Potok's novel about a clash of values between two Jewish youths of sharply opposing Judaic traditions was brought to life in this richly poetic, vividly performed production.

4. AN ILIAD / Chester Theatre Company

Who would have thought that one actor narrating Homer's powerful story could hold an audience in his thrall for two uninterrupted hours and create, in the process, such a riveting and compelling theatrical experience.



5. EXTREMITIES / Berkshire Theatre Group

Theater doesn't get more visceral, raw and under your skin than this.

6. IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE: A LIVE RADIO PLAY / Shakespeare & Company

An unexpected delight. Imaginative, inventive and thoroughly captivating reconception of Frank Capra's much-beloved 1946 film. Beautifully acted and directed.

7. CLYBOURNE PARK / Barrington Stage Company

Bruce Norris' wily look at class and racial prejudice in an insightful production that made us laugh and squirm at the same time.

8. THE BEAUTY QUEEN OF LEENANE / Shakespeare & Company

An intense rendering of Martin McDonagh's harrowing play about the unforgiving relationship between a viciously manipulative mother and her adult daughter -- a virgin with a desperately lessening hold on reality.

9. ON THE TOWN / Barrington Stage Company

This clunky 1944 musical -- the first collaboration of Leonard Bernstein, Betty Comden and Adolph Green -- took flight on BSC's Boyd-Quinson Mainstage.

10. HEROES / Shakespeare & Company