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Ten Theater Companies That Made My 2012

By Shoshana Greenberg

Another year of theater has come and gone. In celebration, here are the theater companies that made some of my favorite 2012 shows possible.

[The Public Theater](#)

Most of my favorite shows this year came from The Public. From the zany yet poignant *Gob Squad's Kitchen* to the splendor of Michael John LaChiusa and Sybille Pearson's *Giant*, The Public had it all (and I still missed so much). I got glimpses into the wacky mind of Ethan Lipton in *No Place to Go* and into the lives of a group of artists in the new musical *February House*. *Into the Woods*, the second of the two wonderful, sylvan Shakespeare in the Park productions, shed new light on a show ingrained in me since childhood. I would have seen any of these shows more than once, and two of them, I did.

[Two River Theater Company](#)

I'm glad I discovered the ease of traveling to this New Jersey theater because its seasons have been essential. I made the short train trip for two shows this year and would happily go for more, as the productions and casts were of such high quality. The first show I saw, *In This House*, a chamber musical about two couples one New Year's Eve, perfectly filled the theater's intimate space while *A Wind in the Willows Christmas*, the children's show I saw earlier in December, enchanted families in the beautiful larger theater. As rich in theater as New York City is, sometimes it's nice to make theater into a journey the way it used to be when I traveled to New York City as a child. Two River is now one of my theater destinations of choice.

[Sydney Theatre Company](#)

I wasn't too impressed with Sydney Theatre Company's production of *Hedda Gabler* back in 2006, but their sublime *Uncle Vanya* this summer (at New York City Center as part of the Lincoln Center Festival) was one of my favorite theater experiences this year. It also reawakened my love for Chekhov, a favorite playwright of mine in high school. I'd seen many *Three Sisters*, *Cherry Orchards*, and *Seagulls*, but never a production of *Uncle Vanya*... and I'm glad I started with this one. It was a joy to see these actors -- every movement was a sort of dance. I'll be looking forward to whatever they bring to New York next, especially if Cate Blanchett is starring.

[13P](#)

This is the last year 13P can be on this list because 13P is no more. They went out with a bang, though, with a huge implosion party at Joe's Pub this fall, generously free and open to the public. The party included a show with performances from 13P plays, featuring Wallace Shawn, Jeremy Shamos, and the cast of the last play, the musical *Melancholy Play*, with its composer Todd Almond on the piano. *Melancholy Play* played earlier this year in Brooklyn and featured a score so beautiful that its lack of recording makes me horribly melancholy. As with all the 13P plays, I hope to see more productions of it (and a recording!). Goodbye, 13P.

[Playwrights Horizons](#)

Every show I saw at Playwrights Horizons this year was entertaining, well-done, and thought provoking. Their plays included the two most thrilling and cathartic final scenes I saw this year (*Assistance*, *The Whale*) and one of my favorite new playwrights (Amy Herzog of *The Great God Pan*). I also enjoyed the contemporary feminist perspective of *Rapture*, *Blister*, *Burn* and the surprising and haunting *Detroit*. While the shows are great, my favorite part of the Playwrights Horizons experience? The interviews with the playwrights they give out after the shows... on actual hard-copy paper.

[Prospect Theater Company](#)

I've seen many Prospect shows over the years, so their recognition for *Myths and Hymns* and *Working* this year was especially exciting. Both were re-imaginings of older shows, and while I didn't see the originals, these productions (*Myths and Hymns* in the spring and *Working* this past month) were perfect for 2012. The company is known for its focus on new musical theater, and I was also fortunate to see one of their smaller productions, *Rites of Passage*, a collection of new 10-minute musicals from various writing teams. I'm looking forward to their upcoming productions of Peter Mills and Cara Reichel's *Death for Five Voices* and Carner and Gregor's *Unlock'd* next year.

[The Artful Conspirators](#)

The Artful Conspirators were at it again this year with the hilarious *Leaving Ikea, A New Play in Two Cantos* (one-acts) about two couples stuck in the Swedish furniture superstore overnight. This Brooklyn-based collective really uses its surroundings -- productions have been at The Brooklyn Lyceum, Old Stone House, and Green-Wood Cemetery -- as well as its audience with an open rehearsal series. I'm excited to find out where they'll take me next.

[Imported Talent](#)

Imported Talent, a fledgling company, supports the work of fledgling playwrights. I was fortunate to have had my work performed in their monthly FRESH PRODUCE'd series, in which they present three new short plays or excerpts of plays each month. The communal atmosphere of the group creates the feeling of a company of actors, as familiar faces return each month. Directors act, and writers direct. For playwrights, it's a great low-cost way to workshop

new plays. For audiences, it's an affordable evening of theater (admission is suggested donation) and, who knows, you might see a Tony-winning work on the ground floor.

The Wooster Group

When I heard that The Wooster Group was bringing back its acclaimed production of *Hamlet* with Scott Shepherd (*Gatz*), I bought my tickets the morning they went on sale. I couldn't wait to see how one of my favorite Shakespeare plays would mix with the recording of Richard Burton's 1964 Broadway production as they "[reconstructed] a hypothetical theater piece from the fragmentary evidence of the edited film." Indeed, it was an evening like no other. The theater was stifling hot on the night I attended, but that didn't stop me from experiencing the wonder that is Scott Shepherd, *Hamlet*, and The Wooster Group.

Premieres

Premieres' noble mission is to support the development and promotion of new music theater works. In that vein, they produce a biannual series called *Inner Voices* (three 30-minute musical monologues written by newly-formed writing teams), the third of which was produced this past November. This incarnation featured the breathtaking work of composer Polly Pen and bookwriter/lyricist Victor Lodato, whose piece "Arlington" goes inside the head of a soldier's wife (Alexandra Silber). Arielle Jacobs' strong voice fit perfectly into the soaring lines of Jim Bauer's music in the next piece, "Farhad or The Secret of Being," with book and lyrics by Nilo Cruz. I look forward to keeping up with Premieres' work in the music theater community until the next *Inner Voices* installment.

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