
The Broadway Critic

Top 10 Best Plays/Musicals of 2010

12/10/2010 · 10:00 AM



Disclaimer: I didnt see every play and musical in the Bay Area or on Broadway, so unfortunately this isnt a comprehensive list. I did see over 60 productions this year and saw a wide variety of plays and musicals at most of the Bay Area Theatre companies and several in Las Vegas, London and New York City.

There are still a few main companies that Im missing in the Bay Area, but planning on reviewing next year (most notably, ACT in San Francisco). Im excluding two productions that I was a part of: RENT at City Lights Theatre Company and Smokey Joes Cafe at Bus Barn Stage Company they were both fantastic productions, but would be totally biased if included.

These 10 plays/musicals were my favorite productions that I saw in 2010. (You can see the list of all of the shows I saw, [here](#).) The Bay Area has had many success stories this past year, from Theatreworks production of *Memphis* that won the Tony Award for Best Musical and Berkeley Rep transferring Green Days *American Idiot* (which also won two Tony Awards). The Bay Area Theatre community is definitely representing well but heres a list of my favorites of 2010 that includes the Bay Area, Las Vegas, New York City and London!

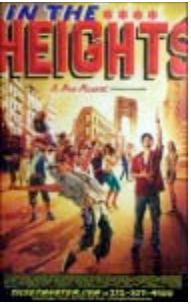
Congratulations and I cant wait to see whats in store for next year! Im hearing that some of my favorite shows are going to be produced right here in the Bay Area.



Number 10: [Rain at Broadway San Jose](#): Broadway San Jose has brought a lot of fun productions this year to San Jose. They started off the year with the super high-spirited shows, [Avenue Q](#) and [Legally Blonde](#). In September, their second season started off with a bang, with the sizzling show, [Burn the Floor](#) (which I surprisingly loved). But, my favorite, so far this year, was *Rain: A Tribute to the Beatles*. I said in [my review](#), *Rain: A Tribue to the Beatles* does an incredible job of grabbing everyones attention and giving them a show thats instantly likable at any age.

I had more fun at this performance, (which technically seemed more like a concert than a musical) than I ever expected to have, plus I was able to hear some of my favorite Beatles songs performed live. 100% recommended.

Read the full review, [here](#).



Number 9: [In the Heights at Curran Theatre](#) (SHNSF touring production): Out of all of the touring productions that SHNSF brought to San Francisco, *In the Heights* was by far the best one. There was [Fiddler on the Roof](#), *Young Frankenstein* (which I missed), *Beauty and the Beast*, *West Side Story*, [Shrek](#) and of course, the [San Francisco cast of Wicked](#) which sadly closed at the beginning of September. Heres an excerpt of my review of *In the Heights*:

I never expected to love it as much as I do, but its infectious rhythms and beautiful melodies accompanied with a story that has more heart than most Broadway musicals makes for an electrifying evening of theatre. I might just have to go back and see this again. Its *that* good.

Im sad that *In the Heights* is closing on Broadway in January, but happy I had the experience of seeing this incredible show.

Read the full review, [here](#).



Number 8: [Aint Misbehavin at San Jose Repertory Theatre](#): For my first introduction to this fantastic show, San Jose Reps production was Broadway-caliber. I thought the performers were incredibly talented and the overall production was one of the best shows Ive seen at SJ Rep. I really enjoyed several productions at SJ Rep this year and [Black Pearl Sings](#) was another favorite, but *Aint Misbehavin* had an energy that was totally infectious.

I think the entire audience was ready to dance and clap at the end because all of us leapt to our feet during the closing song!

I couldnt be more thrilled that this was my first introduction to *Aint Misbehavin*! Its a perfect treat!

Read the full review, [here](#).



Number 7: [San Francisco Symphony Audra McDonald & Duncan Sheik/Holly Brook](#): San Francisco Symphony is creative and innovative with their programming choices. I would be remiss if I didnt mention the two programs that I saw at SF Symphony this year, because they were

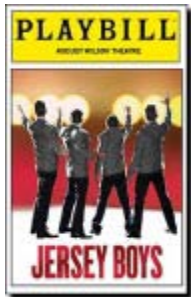
excellent. Audra McDonalds performance was genius (per usual). McDonalds voice accompanied by the SF Symphony was absolutely breathtaking. This is a night I wont soon forget. The other show I saw was Duncan Sheiks symphonic arrangement of his newest musical, [Whisper House](#). The beautiful arrangements added so much texture and layers to his already haunting score. I just wished it was a longer concert. (It was great to see [Duncan Sheik in concert](#) while I was visiting Glasgow.) Well done SF Symphony.

Read the full review of Audra McDonald, [here](#). Read the full review of Duncan Sheik/Holly Brook, [here](#).



Number 6: [Love Never Dies at Aldephi Theatre \(London\)](#): With all of the negative press that has been surrounded by *Love Never Dies* I was pleasantly surprised how much I enjoyed myself. Ive never been too partial to *Phantom of the Opera* ([though I do love the shortened Vegas production](#)), but I was absolutely intrigued by the beautiful set, costumes and world that Andrew Lloyd Weber has created at the Aldephi Theatre. I was enraptured the entire time (and I had the worst seats ever). Im seeing this production again on New Years Day and am looking forward to seeing the changes that they have made to the plot/story-line, but the melodramatic story [accompanied the music](#) perfectly. Its a spectacle and one that you shouldnt miss. It was my favorite show I saw in London.

Read the full review, [here](#).



Number 5: [Jersey Boys at The Palazzo \(Las Vegas\)](#): For some reason, I avoided *Jersey Boys* like it was the plague. I had no interest in seeing this musical, even though it won the Tony Award for Best Musical. But on my [Las Vegas Broadway Vacation](#), I saw [The Lion King](#), [Phantom](#) and [Jersey Boys](#) and both the missus and I absolutely loved *Jersey Boys*. Heres an excerpt from my review:

The Las Vegas production of *Jersey Boys* is so engaging that even someone who has never cared to acquaint themselves with the music and story of *The Four Seasons* (like myself) cannot escape being sucked into this world.

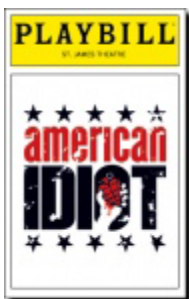
Read the full review, [here](#).



Number 4: *Compulsion* at Berkeley Rep: This particular play will be in New York City (with the same cast) in the Spring and you wont want to miss this heart-breaking play. The interweaving of puppets, matched with Mandy Patinkins intensity makes this play one of the best things I saw this year!

Berkeley Rep is known for producing first-rate theatre, but out of everything that I saw this year at Berkeley Rep, *Compulsion* was the best. Its remarkable.

Read the full review, [here](#).



Number 3: Tie between [American Idiot](#) and [Next to Normal](#) on Broadway: The reasons behind the tie is that I have seen both of these productions before. I saw [American Idiot four times at Berkeley Rep](#) and [Next to Normal](#) four times on Broadway (all with Alice Ripley). This was the first time I saw *American Idiot* on Broadway and the first time I saw *Next to Normal* without Alice Ripley. Out of all of the new shows I saw on [Broadway that weekend](#), these two shows still resonated with me the most.

I cant get enough of either show. I rarely see a show multiple times, and both of these shows I have now seen five times. If you havent seen either, than I suggest running to theatre and grabbing tickets! Ill be seeing both of these shows in the new year *American Idiot* again on Broadway with Billie Jo Armstrong as St. Jimmy and *Next to Normal* on tour in San Francisco with Alice Ripley.

Read the full review of *American Idiot*, [here](#).



Number 2: Closing night of [Finians Rainbow at St. James Theatre](#): On a whim, I saw the closing night of *Finians Rainbow*. It was one of the most emotional nights of theatre I have ever witnessed. Heres an excerpt of the review:

Song after song, scene after scene, it just kept getting better and better. It ended with a beautiful rainbow as they sung, How are Things in Glocca Morra? The audience leapt to their feet, tears in their eyes and gave a rousing standing ovation unlike any standing ovation Ive ever seen in theatre. What a special show, night and cast.

Its truly a travesty that this show closed so early, but its a gift that will never be forgotten. The magic of the rainbow is far but over.

Read the full review of *Finians Rainbow*, [here](#).



Number 1: [Whisper House at Old Globe Theatre \(San Diego\)](#): This is a musical that has stayed with me all year. Time after time, Im thinking about this show, listening to the music and recounting the experience to friends and family. Duncan Sheik and Kyle Jarrows new musical, [Whisper House](#), carefully crafts a new style of story-telling that is powerful, unique and riveting. I love that Sheik and Jarrow upset the standard musical comedy with a different way to present a musical. It tells me that there is a future in this craft and that people are still willing to make huge strides in storytelling in musical theatre instead of adapting

movies into musicals (over and over).

I absolutely loved *Whisper House* and I will go and see it anywhere in the country. I wouldnt miss it for anything.

Read the full review of *Whisper House*, [here](#).

HONORABLE MENTIONS:

- [Dirty Blonde at San Jose Stage Company](#) The insightful script about Mae West was completely intriguing. A great show!
- [Ovo \(Cirque du Soleil\) in San Jose, CA](#) Its a theatrical and athletic feast of epic proportions. Fantastic show!
- [Peter Pan at Ferry Landing \(San Francisco\)](#) - Though I didnt believe in fairies at the beginning, by the end of the show I did and with a full conviction. *Peter Pan* was a theatrical experience unlike Ive ever had; it was absolutely breathtaking.
- [Wicked at Orpheum Theatre \(San Francisco\)](#) A show thats only 7 years old is now deemed a classic.