

Best of the '10s: Remembering the decade's top theater productions

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Dame-Jasmine Hughes and Terry Bellamy in 'Jitney' at Penumbra.
Allen Weeks

Theater is by nature fleeting: a show happens, and then it's gone. The best productions, though, stick with you forever. Here are 10 Twin Cities shows from the '10s that were impossible to forget.

Glensheen

, History Theatre (2015-19)

A notorious double murder in Duluth's historic mansion was also a pathetic, desperate act. This darkly comic original musical by Jeffrey Hatcher and Chan Poling captured the fascinating sweep of the family drama behind the undeserved deaths of two women on one fateful night in 1977.

Harold

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Four Humors Theater (2012-17)

The Twin Cities Horror Festival, launched by Four Humors artists in 2012, has become an annual showcase of variously macabre productions. None have outdone this truly terrifying fable about domestic abuse, with a murderous scarecrow rustling in the dark.

Is God Is

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Mixed Blood Theatre (2018)

Aleshea Harris' shocking script had Mixed Blood audiences riveted in a visceral production anchored by a towering performance from Dame-Jasmine Hughes, the best actor to emerge on Twin Cities stages this decade.

Jitney

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Penumbra Theatre (2016)

Penumbra's productions of August Wilson plays, under the direction of Lou Bellamy, are legend. This masterclass in ensemble acting showed why, in an utterly absorbing production staged with meticulous attention to detail.

Miss Bennet

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Jungle Theater (2017-19)

The decade's most stunning success story was Sarah Rasmussen's transformation of the dusty Jungle into a can't-miss showcase for superb new plays. This one overflows with such heart, warmth, and wit, it leaves your eyes moist and your heart practically bursting out of your chest.

Mr. Burns

Guthrie Theater (2015)

The Guthrie struggled to market this show without saying, "It's a

Simpsons

dystopia play!" This extraordinarily rich production created a fascinating alternate universe where Bart and Sideshow Bob have become twisted and elevated to foundational figures of a new society.

Ragtime

Theater Latté Da (2016)

Peter Rothstein's company achieved a remarkable string of successes this decade, finding a happy permanent home in the Ritz Theater. This deeply moving show used that focused space to great effect, drawing viewers into an urgent American tragedy staged with fearless drive.

The Thing

Samantha Johns and George McConnell (2010)

Two independent theater artists took over a DIY basement space, filled it with eclectic props, and devised a show with a completely trusting group of collaborators. The result was pure magic and completely unclassifiable.

Two Mile Hollow

Theater Mu and Mixed Blood Theatre (2018)

A richly entertaining and sharply satirical production of Leah Nanako Winkler's brilliant script that exposes stereotypes by casting Asian-American performers in the roles of a wealthy WASP family. Several of this decade's standout actors shone onstage together.

West Side Story

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Guthrie Theater (2018)

The Statue of Liberty hung ominously askew in this bracing production, which took big risks and found fresh relevance in a Broadway classic. Director Joseph Haj was at his best, demonstrating a confident new vision for the storied Guthrie.

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