

Sections 

- [News](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Entertainment](#)
- [Life](#)
- [Obits](#)
- [Cars](#)
- [Jobs](#)
- [Homes](#)
- [Classifieds](#)
- [Scanner](#)
- [Subscribe](#)
-
- Site
- Archive

Search this site 



- [Log in](#)
- [Weather](#)

WICKED LOCAL[®] PROVINCETOWN

Best theater of 2018: A delectable dramatic dozen



By R. Scott Reedy, Correspondent

Thursday

Dec 27, 2018 at 10:54 AM Dec 27, 2018 at 10:54 AM

Theater audiences had a lot to choose from this year, with thought-provoking plays and memorable musicals taking to stages across greater Boston, and Tony Award-winning performers also coming to town to share their talents in dazzling concert appearances.

Here are a dozen reasons that I was glad to attend and write about theater in 2018.

“The Humans” (Boch Center, Shubert Theatre, Boston). This national tour of Stephen Karam’s 2016 Tony Award-winning Best Play used a Thanksgiving dinner setting to explore the turmoil roiling through a middle-class American family and raise issues that so many of us face. Directed by Joe Mantello and starring Richard Thomas, Pamela Reed, and Daisy Eagan, this production was a feast for theatergoers who’ve been hungry for the return of plays to the commercial stages of Boston’s theater district.

Audra McDonald (Celebrity Series, Symphony Hall, Boston). Six-time Tony Award winner McDonald lent her magnificent voice to a set list of Broadway show tunes including “I Could Have Danced All Night” (“The King and I”), “Climb Ev’ry Mountain” (“The Sound of Music”), “Vanilla Ice Cream” (“She Loves Me”), “Being Alive” (“Company”), and “Summertime” from “The Gershwins’ Porgy and Bess,” in which McDonald starred in 2011, first at the American Repertory Theater’s Loeb Drama Center and then on Broadway. The swoon-inducing songstress also served up standards like “When Did I Fall in Love,” “It Might as Well Be Spring,” and “Make Someone Happy,” that were anything but standard to a full house exulting in her every note.

“Skeleton Crew” (Huntington Theatre Company, Wimberly Theatre, Calderwood Pavilion, Boston Center for the Arts). In this hauntingly powerful Dominique Morriseau drama, four co-workers at a Detroit auto plant toil in the shadow of a possible lay-off. Morriseau deals with that and the deeper issues it entails here, perhaps most affectingly with the character of Faye, an aging auto worker facing an uncertain future but not looking for sympathy. Under Megan Sandberg-Zakian’s fine direction, and perfectly played here by Patricia R. Floyd, Faye uses her every wile when she’s backed up against a wall by a world where too many companies cast aside longtime, older workers rather than rewarding their service.

“Love! Valour! Compassion!” (Zeitgeist Stage Company, Plaza Theatre, BCA). Zeitgeist’s closing at the end of this season will be a major loss for the Boston theater scene. With his moving and eminently worthwhile staging of this 1994 Terrence McNally play, however, Zeitgeist’s founding artistic director David J. Miller made it clear that the quality and significance of his productions will continue to the end, ensuring that the longtime company won’t soon be forgotten.

“On the Town” (Boston Pops, Symphony Hall, Boston). The Pops pulled out all the stops for this semi-staged performance of Leonard Bernstein’s 1945 musical. With Keith Lockhart conducting and David Chase as music director, Tony Award-winning director and choreographer Kathleen Marshall turned Symphony Hall into a Broadway theatre. To tell the tale of three sailors on a 24-hour shore leave in New York City, Marshall brought together a crackerjack company of some of today’s biggest and brightest Broadway stars including Brandon Victor Dixon (“Shuffle Along, or, the Making of the Musical Sensation of 1921 and All That Followed”), Andy Karl (“Pretty Woman: The Musical”), Andrea Martin (“Pippin”), and Laura Osnes (“Rodgers & Hammerstein’s Cinderella”). To paraphrase a line from one of the show’s songs, “New York, New York,” it was a helluva show.

“Anything Goes” (Reagle Music Theatre of Greater Boston, Robinson Theatre, Waltham). This classic Cole Porter musical was “Easy to Love,” thanks to that and other instantly familiar songs like “I Get a Kick Out of You,” “It’s De-Lovely,” “You’re the Top,” and of course the title tune. Director and choreographer Eileen Grace put a talented 43-member company – led by the always impressive Leigh Barrett as Reno Sweeney and on-the-rise leading-man Jared Troilo as Billy Crocker – to full, fun use in one tap-happy production number after another, making this a stand-out in Reagle’s 50th anniversary season.

“Moulin Rouge! The Musical” (Ambassador Theatre Group, Emerson Colonial Theatre, Boston). Set during the Belle Époque in the Montmartre Quarter of Paris and based on the 2002 feature film of the same name, “Moulin Rouge! The Musical” depicts a world of rare beauty and unrivaled luxury. So it just seemed right that this lavish musical’s world premiere took place on the stage of the sumptuously appointed Emerson Colonial Theatre, following a meticulous restoration by its new owner, Ambassador Theatre Group. With the Colonial’s rich history as a Broadway try-out house, it was also appropriate that it was recently announced that “Moulin Rouge! The Musical” is set to begin performances at New York’s Al Hirschfeld Theatre on June 28, 2019.

“Jagged Little Pill” (American Repertory Theater, Loeb Drama Center, Cambridge). Directed by Tony Award winner Diane Paulus, with music by Alanis Morissette and Glen Ballard, with lyrics by Morissette and based on her 1995 album of the same name, and book by Academy Award winner Diablo Cody, this new musical was one of this year’s hottest tickets. Mid-show standing ovations are very rare in the theater, but Lauren Patten earned one at almost every performance with her powerhouse rendering of “You Oughta Know.” That’s a good indication that this show is probably headed to Broadway, and a sure sign that we’ll likely see a lot more of the gifted Patten in the future.

“Hamilton” (Broadway In Boston, Boston Opera House). The winner of 11 Tony Awards, the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, and a Grammy Award for Best Musical Theater Album, composer, lyricist and book writer Lin-Manuel Miranda’s 2015 masterpiece about American Founding Father Alexander Hamilton not only lived up to its near avalanche of hype, it exceeded it. In 2018, Boston theatergoers wanted nothing more than to be “In the Room Where It Happened” when this superb national tour came to town.

“Between Riverside and Crazy” (SpeakEasy Stage Company, Roberts Studio Theatre, Calderwood Pavilion, BCA). In this 2015 Pulitzer Prize winner for Best Drama, playwright Stephen Adly Guirgis’s exquisitely naturalistic writing brings vividly to life the story of an African-American police officer exiled from the force after being shot years earlier by a fellow officer in an alleged racial incident. Encamped in his rent-controlled apartment, Walter “Pops” Washington (a wondrous Tyrees Allen), is surrounded by an eclectic array of well-played characters who spin, sometimes wildly, on his axis. Tiffany Nichole Greene’s perfectly paced direction of a first-rate cast made it impossible to look away from this arresting drama.

“Talisman Roses” (Provincetown Tennessee Williams Theater Festival, Provincetown Theater). As if a world premiere of a never-before-seen play by Tennessee Williams weren’t exciting enough, this production of an early, unpublished work was directed by Marsha Mason and starred the always extraordinary Amanda Plummer, making it one of the most sublime theater experiences of 2018.

“Broadway @ the Huntington: Chita Rivera with Seth Rudetsky” (Huntington Theatre Company, Wimberly Theatre, Calderwood Pavilion, BCA). Tony Award winner and gold-plated Broadway legend Rivera proved she still has “All that Jazz” and then some when she joined SiriusXM’s Rudetsky to celebrate her singular career in conversation and song. Indeed, there were few moments this year more genuinely thrilling than when Rivera – the original Anita in “West Side Story,” Velma Kelly in “Chicago,” Rosie in “Bye Bye Birdie” and Aurora in “Kiss of the Spiderwoman” – was at center stage performing songs from those shows. (The Huntington Theatre Company will present “Broadway @ the Huntington: Christine Ebersole with Seth Rudetsky” for two shows at the Calderwood Pavilion on Jan. 26.)

Sign up for weekly e-mails

Sign up

Site Services