



Time Out New York / Issue 587: December 28, 2006–January 3, 2007

The best (and worst) of 2006

The Best (in alphabetical order)

David Cote, theater editor

Grey Gardens How did a cult 1975 documentary become such a great tuner? Ravishing songs by Scott Frankel and Michael Korie, a darkly witty book by Doug Wright, and Christine Ebersole's astounding performance.

The Mistakes Madeline Made A young woman terrified of bathing was the quirky but affecting center of Elizabeth Meriwether's darkly tinged social comedy.

The Pain and the Itch Bruce Norris let a clan of vicious, self-involved bourgeois vent spleen in his profoundly creepy-funny satire. Bravo to this Chicago scribe for getting under our liberal skin.

Red Light Winter Sex, obsession, disease, betrayal: Grunge dramatist Adam Rapp took all his favorite themes and brought them to new heights of intensity.

The Sewers Part gnostic metadrama, part art installation, this gorgeously designed meditation on human and industrial waste further sweetened Banana Bag & Bodice's reputation.

Shining City Ghosts—both psychological and terrifyingly literal—haunted Conor McPherson's bewitching character study of a Dublin priest-turned-therapist and his patient.

Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven Playwright Young Jean Lee exposed all kinds of kooky and disturbing aspects about being Korean-American in this lampoon of the ethnic-identity play.

Spring Awakening Duncan Sheik, Steven Sater and Michael Mayer took an obscure German play from 1891 and infused it with catchy rock songs to create the most ecstatic, adrenalized show on Broadway.

Stuff Happens David Hare's balanced, informative, utterly gripping docudrama about the

Anglo-American run-up to the Iraq War was political theater at its finest.

The Thugs Post–September 11 urban dread was palpable—and nervously funny—in Adam Bock’s workplace cringe comedy, intricately staged by Anne Kauffman.

[title of show] Hunter Bell and Jeff Bowen’s self-reflexive backstage musical was a charming mash note to Broadway fanatics and aspiring stars.

Adam Feldman, theater writer

The Busy World Is Hushed Keith Bunin’s incisive foray into the psychology of religious belief gave reason for faith in the future of American playwriting.

DruidSynge Dublin’s Druid Theatre awakened six works by John Millington Synge in the Lincoln Center Festival’s ravishing eight-hour centerpiece.

Faith Healer Ralph Fiennes, Ian McDiarmid and Cherry Jones worked small miracles of empathy in Brian Friel’s gorgeous fugue on themes of love, trust and confidence.

Grey Gardens Christine Ebersole and Mary Louise Wilson flower as their characters go to seed in this moving before-and-after diptych of hope in decline.

The History Boys Alan Bennett redefined *class action* in this literate, complex schoolroom exploration of the means and ends of knowledge.

Measure for Pleasure Restoration comedy got a queer-feminist goose in David Grimm’s wild and woolly romp at the Public.

Mother Courage and Her Children A formidable performance by Meryl Streep was the tiger in the tank of this high-powered Bertolt Brecht–Tony Kushner epic about the wages of war.

The Seven The often-touted timelessness of classical theater was put to the test—and passed—in Will Power’s kinetic hip-hop remix of Aeschylus’ *Seven Against Thebes*.

Spring Awakening Although set in the 19th century, Steven Sater and Duncan Sheik’s wounded, hormonal outburst of teen angst is the most modern Broadway musical in memory.

Stuff Happens David Hare expertly navigated the swirling currents of current events in this swift, thoughtful and persuasive seminonfictional collage.

The Thugs Adam Bock’s brilliantly observed microcomedy about temps in a legal office couched a sly analysis of the insidious dynamics of fear itself.

The Worst (in alphabetical order)

David Cote, theater editor

Hot Feet For large-scale, jaw-dropping awfulness, nothing beats this craptastic dance-funk train wreck with songs by Earth, Wind & Fire.

Lestat Elton John supposedly took two weeks to scribble the score for this trashy vampire flop. Sitting through it felt twice as long.

The Times They Are A-Changin' Twyla Tharp's tacky, incoherent dance setting of Bob Dylan songs had us doing a *grand jeté* for the exit.

Adam Feldman, theater writer

High Fidelity Step one: Give rock-snob characters Broadway schlock to sing. Step two: Desperately add swear words. Step three: Close in a fuckin' week.

The Threepenny Opera Brecht-Weill was blech-vile when director Scott Elliott was done molesting it.

The Treatment Eve Ensler's preachy, exploitive two-hander was torture. I mean, it was *about* torture. No, wait, I was right the first time.

Note: The Coast of Utopia will be considered for 2007, since its third part, Salvage, opens Feb 15.