



August: *Osage County*, a powerful account of epic familial dysfunction, was the dramatic event of the year.

Great White Way with deconstructed panache. Rupert Goold's funhouse-abattoir production was perhaps a bit overhyped (had none of the New York critics seen any Shakespeare in London in the past two decades?) but it was a terribly entertaining romp through the play with some striking images that really worked (the Red Cross nurse witches, the double-played banquet scene from two viewpoints, the reeking kitchen-in-hell atmosphere complete with industrial sink and hot and cold running blood taps) and some that didn't (all that Stalinist Russian imagery and anthems and musicales that made little sense). Stewart's account of the murderous king had lots of clever moments but little continuity or cohesiveness—rather it was Kate Fleetwood's icy depiction of Lady Mac as a murderous Martha Stewart in haute couture and Michael Feast's revelatory Macduff that gave the evening its real dramatic thrills.

Things were much less interesting in the magic realm of the Broadway musical this season. The two biggest shows of the season—Disney's *The Little Mermaid* and Mel Brooks' sophomore effort, *Young Frankenstein*—were critically lambasted and shunned by Tony voters. I didn't bother with the Disney show—after suffering through the horrific *Mary Poppins*, I just couldn't bring myself to go under the sea on 46th Street. The Brooks show suffers from bombast, miscasting and a general sense of ennui. Thankfully, the two stellar supporting performances from Christopher Fitzgerald (as the guy with a hump) and Andrea Martin (as Frau-“neiggghhh”-Blucher) got deserved Tony nods.

The big musical news were the wonderful *In the Heights* and the revival of the powerful classic *Gypsy* starring Patti LuPone as the indestructible Mama Rose. *In the Heights* garnered a well-deserved 13 Tony nominations for its impassioned cast and creators. Conceived and written by Lin-Manuel Miranda from his own life and experiences through two years of workshops and an off-Broadway run, *Heights* is a totally traditional Broadway book musical but told in a fresh, heartfelt way. Its cast of mostly unknown powerhouse talents ignites the theater with the force and irresistible joy of its work. Filled with the raw sound of rap, hip-hop and salsa, the score is truly groundbreaking in its use of contemporary idioms to tell a classic Broadway story. There is no denying the clichés that abound—they just don't matter given the love and electricity that fill the stage.

Arthur Laurents has directed his third revival of *Gypsy* (at the age of 90!) and has managed to find a multitude of new things to say about this classic work. The production lacks the powerful continuity and gut-wrenching sadness of the recent Sam Mendes/Bernedette Peters Broadway

revival, but it has its own glories. Laura Benanti is the most affecting Louise I've seen, and her transformation from gawky wallflower to the charming erotic force that was Gypsy Rose Lee is both magical and heartbreaking. The trio of strippers bring down the house with their salute to their chosen art-form; Leigh

Ann Larkin has a most original take on Dainty June, and Boyd Gaines is a heartfelt Herbie. And then there is Patti. What can one say—she is a force of nature, a schizophrenic presence veering wildly from Lucille Ball slapstick to the guttural power of a tragic diva. And when it comes time for the amazing climax of “Rose's Turn”—surely the greatest musical soliloquy ever written—she holds nothing back in a torrential outpouring of pent-up sorrow, passion and pain that is simply a horrific wonder to behold.

Perhaps the most exciting theatrical work to be seen in the past two years isn't in a theater at all but at Metropolitan Opera House, which is in the midst of a creative renaissance because of the resurgence of energy bestowed upon it by savvy new general manager Peter Gelb. The Met is surging with excitement lately as it plays host to a dazzling roster of marvelous young singer-actors and a host of thrilling new productions, starting with last year's exquisite *Madama Butterfly* (by the late film director Anthony Minghella) and going through this season's haunting *Lucia di*



The *New Century* wove in some touching moments of real feeling among Paul Rudnick's fabulous one-liners.

Lammermoor (directed by theater wizard Mary Zimmerman) and Richard Jones' quirky, perverse and moving rethinking of *Hansel and Gretel*. Not everything has worked—Adrian Noble's confused and often incoherent modern-dress account of Verdi's *Macbeth* this fall was a rare misstep.

This spring the hottest ticket in town was Laurent Pelly's delicious new production of Donizetti's soufflé *La Fille du Régiment* starring the incandescent duo of Natalie Dessay and Juan Diego Flórez—two dazzling talents who combine incomparably gorgeous voices with the style and comic genius of commedia clowns. It was a magical evening and, looking at the multitude of delights Gelb is promising us for upcoming seasons, one of many, many more to come. **10**

The 62nd annual TONY AWARDS, including a special lifetime achievement recognition for gay composer Stephen Sondheim, airs 8 p.m. June 15 on CBS.

JON KRETZU is associate artistic director of Artists Repertory Theatre in Portland.

The night belongs to...



PHANTOM

Broadway's most haunting love story



AUGUST 13 – SEPTEMBER 7

KELLER AUDITORIUM

503-790-ARTS • BroadwayAcrossAmerica.com • 503-241-1802

ticketmaster

Groups of 20+ SAVE! 503-293-3000

KATU2

Opera

Fidelity

FIOS

THE OFFICIAL WINE PROVIDER FOR PRIDE NORTHWEST



Hip Chicks do Wine

Winery & Tasting Room
Open Daily 11am to 6pm

4510 SE 23rd Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97202
www.hipchicksdowine.com
503 753 6374

an urban winery for everyone