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Times critics choose favorite shows from 2010

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Ashlea Potts and Andrew Eldredge in "Eurydice."

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By **CAPE COD TIMES**
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Around this time each year we ask our theater critics to come up with their favorite local productions from the past 12 months.

What's striking about this year's list is how spread out the top productions are among the Cape companies and how many old favorites, from "Fiddler on the Roof" to "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum," "The Gin Game" to "The Glass Menagerie," made the cut.

Here are our choices, in alphabetical order:

"Arcadia," Eventide Arts, Dennis. The lengthy Tom Stoppard piece is a brainteaser, yes. But it's successful because of how effortlessly its players present the extremely complicated information, and actually make it interesting and dramatic.

"Cyrano," Wellfleet Harbor Actors Theater. Adapted by Jo Roets from Edmond Rostand's "Cyrano de Bergerac," "Cyrano" is a fast-paced jaunt with the obviously serious undercurrent that plays out over the platitude that beauty is only skin deep and the belief that true love is embedded in the soul.

"The Drowsy Chaperone," Cape Rep Theatre, Brewster. This production was pure entertainment from start to finish with spot-on delivery of laugh-out-loud funny lines and over-the-top musical numbers. It's a perfect mesh of form and function. The point of the fabulously clever script is that there's nothing like musical theater to provide the perfect escape from the horror and dreariness of the real world, and this production proved that is oh so true.

"Eurydice," Cape Rep Theatre. Sarah Ruhl's modern version of the Greek myth – with young Eurydice torn between wanting to be with her father or her husband, wanting to stay back in safety or go forward into the unknown – was impeccably directed by Maura Hanlon and wowed with set design and evocative lighting. This production was lovely and moving, enhanced by anguished and tender performances by Ashlea Potts, Andrew Eldredge and Richard Jay Sullivan.

"Fiddler on the Roof," Monomoy Theatre. An utterly joyous telling of the musical about loss and the power of family, faith and community. The Ohio University Players made the chorus sound twice its size.

"The Frog Prince of Spamalot," Harwich Junior Theatre. It offered a clever mix of popular music, lively dancing and nonstop fun that was hilarious and wildly entertaining for audience members of all ages. Under Lisa Canto's deft direction, the talented cast gave sparkling performances.

"A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum," College Light Opera Company, Falmouth. This zany, campy classic all wrapped up in a toga was presented riotously by CLOC. The show is crude, yes, but it's a Three Stooges-meet-Beavis-and-Butt-Head mashup that is hysterical.

"Ghosts," Cotuit Center for the Arts. For this production, director Tristan DiVincenzo figured out a great way to update a classic: use innovative staging that put audience members literally in the middle of the show. Theatergoers used to standard dim-the-lights kind of theater etiquette suddenly found themselves sitting next to



the main characters or accepting a cup of tea from the maid, and these choices made the audience become even more invested in the tragic fate of the Alving family. Buoyed by strong performances from the small cast, "Ghosts" successfully updated an old-fashioned story for contemporary times and kept theatergoers spellbound until the last scene.

"The Gin Game," Academy of Performing Arts, Orleans. This production was so seethingly angry it was frightening. But it was also compelling. You didn't want to look away because you were never sure what would happen next. And you wouldn't want to miss the glimpses of survival, even hope.

"The Glass Menagerie," Harwich Winter Theatre. Poignant, lyrical and provocative, Tennessee Williams' beautiful play is a challenging piece for a company to take on because it has a lot to live up to. Directed by Dafydd Rees, this production was all it should be and then some, blending humor and depth and making the most of Williams' brilliant script.

"Hopper's Ghosts," Payomet Performing Arts Center, North Truro. Kevin Rice's play insightfully examines the relationship between artist Edward Hopper and his wife, Jo. It focuses on an exuberant Jo, who unsuccessfully tries to pierce the gloom of the introverted Hopper, well-known for his paintings of silent, isolated people.

"In the Next Room (or the vibrator play)," Wellfleet Harbor Actors Theater. Set in the late 19th century, the play, written by Sarah Ruhl, explores the sexual repression and innocence of women of that era and the lack of communication between them and their men. From our 21st-century sexual liberation perspective, "Next Room" is alternately funny and serious.

"Much Ado About Nothing," Monomoy Theatre. A clever retelling by director Dennis Lee Delaney of Shakespeare's often-overdone love story. Set in World War II, this version had so many funny stage bits and winning performances, the Bard himself would have given it a standing ovation.

"Our Town," CTEK Arts, Provincetown. Director David Drake tenderly took this 1938 play by Thornton Wilder, set in contemporary times with cast members wearing jeans and other modern clothes, and artfully made it seem even more timeless. Everything that the beautifully rendered production communicated about life, love, death and the importance of the little moments of a day still rang true.

"Peter Pan," Harwich Junior Theatre. Maura Hanlon's superb direction ensured that this was a polished production with fabulous casting that provided an energetic and enthusiastic performance that was simply memorable. The impressive set, special effects and skillful choreography all added to the magic. Best of all, it showcased the powerful pull that fabulous storytelling has on us all.

"Rabbit Hole," Woods Hole Community Theater. David Lindsay-Abaire's Pulitzer Prize-winning play of a child killed in an accident got mixed reviews on Broadway when it opened in 2006. But Woods Hole Theater Company's version, directed by Joan Edstrom, was unreservedly good, a fine production with stunning moments and a uniformly wonderful cast.

"The 39 Steps," Cape Playhouse, Dennis. Patrick Barlow took the Alfred Hitchcock chase-thriller film and turned it into a slapstick comedy, and director Mark Shanahan and four physically and verbally deft actors milked the concept for all it was worth. This was laugh-out-loud funny, with odd accents; many changes of hats, wigs and costumes to create dozens of characters; a few pieces of furniture and low-tech props and effects to suggest numerous locales; and sly references to other Hitchcock films.

"Treasure Island," Cotuit Center for the Arts. A multifaceted jewel that managed to reflect both the in-your-face intimacy of live theater and the sweeping adventure of a pirate movie. Director Lisa Canto had pirates thundering down the aisles and swinging from masts in the two-story theater. The live action was supported by background sounds, such as ocean lapping against the side of a ship; a gull's cry; and a fast-paced instrumental selection that fuels a chase scene and gives the play the layer that feels like a movie.

Kathi Scrizzi Driscoll, Alicia Blaisdell-Bannon, Molly Driscoll, Debbie Forman, Gwenn Friss, Laurie Higgins, Heather Wysocki and Debi Boucher Stetson contributed to this story. Shows and performances reviewed by others also were considered.

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