

Theater: The year in review in Sacramento

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The year's biggest local theater news was the March resignation of Capital Stage artistic director and co-founder Stephanie Gularte. Eight months later, the national search ended as close as possible to its origins, as [Jonathan Williams](#), Gularte's husband and also a co-founder of the company, was surprisingly named the new artistic director. Williams had initially not been a part of the search process but put his name in at last minute, and now he'll lead the company forward.

The region's professional theaters continued to keep pace with national trends by offering the most popular plays of the past year. Of American Theatre magazine's Top 10 Most-Produced Play list of 2013-14, the top six have been professionally produced regionally in 2013 or are scheduled for 2014: "Venus in Fur" at B Street Theatre, "Clybourne Park" at Capital Stage, "Good People" at Capital Stage in April 2014, "Other Desert Cities" at B Street Theatre, "The Mountaintop" at Capital Stage, and "4,000 Miles" at Capital Stage in March 2014. Not surprisingly the most satisfying productions featured the strongest ensembles from top to bottom.

Several shows deserve recognition. Here are some thoughts on the past year in this region's professional theater.

Performances of the year

Connor Mickiewicz in "Ordinary Days," New Helvetia Theatre: Mickiewicz sensationally multitasked as both director and as the deceptively cheerful Warren, a sensitive young [New Yorker](#) trying to make his way in a often brusque world.

David Silberman in "Other Desert Cities," B Street Theatre: The classy veteran actor has never been more assured or essential than he was as Lyman Wyeth in the intense Jon Robin Baitz family drama at B Street Theatre.

Stephanie Gularte in "Hedda Gabler," Capital Stage: Gularte was magnetic and overwhelming as the flighty, uncomfortable newlywed in the modernist reworking of Ibsen's classic.

Andrew Perez in "The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity," Capital Stage: Perez shined as the thoughtful narrator and main character Macedonio Guerra (a.k.a. The Mace) in Kristoffer Diaz's Pulitzer Prize-nominated, pro wrestling comedy-drama.

Will Block in "Master Harold and ... the Boys," Sacramento Theatre Company: Block was extraordinary as Hally, a deeply conflicted young Afrikaner with profound ties to both of South Africa's entrenched racial cultures.

Dana Brooke in "Venus in Fur," B Street Theatre: Brooke's easy familiarity as a longtime B

Street regular didn't detract from her sharp performance as the coolly sexy and very complicated Vanda.

Best ensembles

“Clybourne Park,” Capital Stage: In “Clybourne Park” director Michael Stevenson’s versatile seven-person cast played two sets of characters in two different eras. Every character on stage was distinct and completely realized.

“Ordinary Days,” New Helvetia: Kiera Anderson, Tristan Rumery, Courtney Glass and Connor Mickiewicz were a finely meshed and tightly nuanced group in the poignant comedy drama.

Best production nobody saw

“How We Got On,” B Street Theatre: Either B Street shouldn't have let people know the play dealt with [hip hop](#) or it should have gone all in with the musical connection. Somehow the smart, funny coming-of-age story fell through the cracks and audiences avoided a charming show.

Most Satisfying

“Ordinary Days,” New Helvetia Theatre: Composer Adam Gwon’s up-to-the-minute, sung-through narrative showed a bright, unaffected grasp of modern city life with honestly vibrant comic, sad and hopeful characters. Two separate complementary character story lines unexpectedly come beautifully together at the end.

Most elegant

“The King and I,” Music Circus: Director Stafford Arima orchestrated this lush production with design highlights from Stephen Gifford’s scenic design, Martin Vreeland’s dramatic lighting, and Marcy Froehlich’s opulent costumes.

Best revival

“Master Harold ... and the Boys,” Sacramento Theatre Company: Buddy Butler directed an outstanding cast in this nearly flawless revival of Athol Fugard’s allegorical masterpiece about the effects of apartheid in South Africa.

Most effortlessly first class

“Chicago,” Music Circus: A group of savvy Broadway veterans dropped in on the Music Circus this summer and smartly delivered the sophisticated satire of Bob Fosse’s cheeky “Chicago” as if it was what they do every day. Oh wait ...

Always very funny

Amy Kelly (“B Sketchy,” “Robyn Is Happy,” “Beauty and the Beast”): Kelly has become a not-so-

secret weapon for Buck Busfield with her delirious over-the-top characters.

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