

NEWCITY Stage

Theater, Dance, Comedy and Performance in Chicago

Jan
12

The Players: The 50 people who really perform for Chicago

► Players 50

[Add comments](#)

In this town of performers—theater makers, dancers, comedy creators—you'd think it'd be pretty easy to assemble a list of artistic influencers and innovators. And it is. The challenge is paring that list down to a mere fifty. It's a testament to the wonders of the performing-arts culture in Chicago that we easily came up with about 200 names when we set out to create this year's version of The Players. Unfortunately, we're only listing a fraction of those worthy of your attention, but that's the problem with an abundance of riches. Hopefully you'll see a handful of recognizable names and a whole lot more you'll start noticing from this point on. We've retooled the criteria for this year, focusing on onstage artistic achievement, rather than the backstage influence of artistic directors, executive directors and the like—who will get their day again next year. Let the arguments begin.



Tara DeFrancisco, No. 36

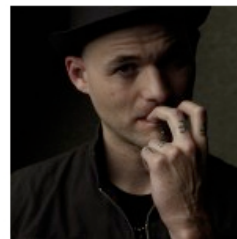
17. Brian Sidney Bembridge Scenic and lighting designer

Brian Sidney Bembridge, member of Lookingglass and artistic associate at other theaters, is no stranger to awards and high praise—he's even been called the scenic designer of the decade—and one of the busiest. In the last year alone he did, among others, TimeLine's record-setting "The History Boys," "The Maids" at Writers', Teatro Vista's "Our Lady of the Underpass" and, most notably, Victory Gardens' New York-bound triumph "The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Diety."



18. Sean Graney Director

It always seemed that Sean Graney—no matter how outré his output—would remain Chicago's theatrical "it" boy who could do no wrong. But when some critics started implying that Graney's work on shows such as "Frankenstein" was starting to get repetitious, Graney returned with "The Mystery of Irma Vep." Like "What the Butler Saw" the year before, it was the perfect marriage between an accredited avant-gardist like Graney, and a bold theatrical institution like Court willing to throw resources at wild ideas. And while "Vep" ultimately bore the stamp of a "Sean Graney show," it also showcased Graney at his most aesthetically confident yet directorially restrained, proving that this director was capable of new ideas. When it comes to Graney, the only predictable thing is that he continues to earn his place on this list.



19. Amy Morton Actor and director

"[Hers] is the sort of performance that comes along rarely. So palpably honest, the line between acting and reality becomes forever blurred. Actors of the Golden Age rave about their memories of Laurette Taylor in 'The Glass Menagerie.' I offer Amy Morton in 'August: Osage County.'" To quote a New York City-based blogger and self-confessed "August" fan seems the most apt way to capture the effect Morton's performance had



[Subscribe](#)

Categories

- -News etc. (138)
- Players 50 (3)
- Season Announcements (58)
- Comedy (188)
 - Improv/Sketch/Revue (55)
 - Improv/Sketch Reviews (42)
 - Recommended Comedy Shows (122)
 - Stand-Up (112)
 - Stand-Up Previews (102)
- Dance (232)

Backstage

About Face American Theater Company Anton Chekhov A Red Orchid Auditorium Theatre Bailiwick Brett Neveu
Broadway In Chicago
Charles Newell Chicago Dramatists Chicago Opera Theater
Chicago Shakespeare Theater ColLaboration
Court Theatre Drury Lane
Oakbrook **Goodman**
Harris Theater House Theatre Hubbard Street Joffrey Ballet Lakeshore Theater Light Opera Works Links Hall
Lookingglass Lyric Opera Mozart Museum of Contemporary Art Neo-Futurists Next Theatre Northlight Porchlight Raven Theatre
Sean Graney Second City Sir Andrew Davis Stephen Sondheim
Steppenwolf
The Hypocrites the side project TimeLine Theatre Tracy Letts Victory Gardens
William Shakespeare Writers' Theatre Zanies