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## Top 25 Chicago Plays of 2010

[Scotty Zacher](#) | February 2, 2011



### Top 25 Chicago Productions of 2010

*(in alphabetical order)*

All told, Chicago Theater Blog covered an astounding **508 shows** in 2010—proving without a doubt that this town is truly a non-stop theater machine! Whittling 500 shows down to the year’s top 25 productions was not an easy task, but we think this list illuminates what makes Chicago such a dynamic place to perform and create – a mix of works produced by small storefront companies all the way up to large Equity houses.

So, without further ado, here – [listed alphabetically](#) – are the top 25 productions of 2010:



## 1001

[Collaboraction](#) (Sept 2010)

Written by [Jason Grote](#)

Directed by [Seth Bockley](#)

[our review](#)

"The Arabian Nights" are replayed in a near-futuristic setting, taking place in the belly of New York City's underground tunnels after a nuclear blast. [Says reviewer Oliver Sava](#), "Grote masterfully intertwines the various story threads, bleeding slapstick comedy, relationship drama, political criticism, and post-modern philosophy together to create a play that defies categorization." [Chris Jones](#) of the Chicago Tribune called the play "savvy, self-aware and adroit at noting the power of myth in generations of sectarian strife . . ." and [Monica Westin](#) of New City noted, "It's almost impossible to overstate the wit, fluidity and complexity . . ." of the production. ([our review](#))



## Abigail's Party

[A Red Orchid Theatre](#) (Feb 2010)

Written by [Mike Leigh](#)

Directed by [Shade Murray](#)

[our review](#)

[A Red Orchid Theatre](#) brought out some of their best ensemble work for [Mike Leigh](#)'s class-conscious play about stifled lives in 1970s English suburbia. Director [Shade Murray](#) lovingly crafted middle class malaise out of Leigh's caustic script, while [Kirsten Fitzgerald](#) lit the torch as Beverly—leading the tight and superb cast in a reckless, discontented charge to mutual destruction. As Susan, [Natalie West](#) "essentially reprises her role of Crystal from *Roseanne* but with a British accent . . . she becomes the play's most relatable character. Watching in horror as suburban drama unfolds before her eyes, she is an audience member on the other side of the curtain: sober, shocked, and completely in awe." ([our review](#))



## Awake and Sing

[Northlight Theatre](#) (Feb 2010)

By [Clifford Odets](#)

Directed by [Amy Morton](#)

[our review](#)

On Broadway, the original, 1935 production of *Awake and Sing* ran for 120 performances and fixed [Clifford Odets](#)' reputation as a playwright to reckon with. Chicago audiences were not so impressed. "They threw oranges and apples. I was hit by a grapefruit," recalled [Group Theatre](#) actress [Phoebe Brandt](#). From today's viewpoint, it's hard to see why, especially considering [Northlight Theatre](#)'s powerful revival of this blackly humorous hard-times drama. The play stands on the side of the working class, documenting the warring of capitalism vs. socialism, plodding resignation vs. revolutionary fervor, and long-range hope vs. live-for-today fatalism among them. As director, Steppenwolf's [Amy Morton](#) adeptly paced the show, no doubt helped with a top-knotch cast, including seasoned performers [Cindy Gold](#), [Peter Kevonian](#), [Mike Nussbaum](#) and [Jav Whitaker](#). ([our review](#))



## Baal

[TUTA Theatre](#) (May 2010)

Written by [Bertolt Brecht](#)

Directed by [Zeljko Djukic](#)

[our review](#)

[TUTA Theatre](#) will remount its very successful production of Brecht's *The Wedding* this February. However, their stronger tour de force was the young Brecht's very first play, *Baal*, which explored the rise and fall of the ultimate rebel artist. Assisted by a brilliantly clean and powerful translation by [Peter Tegel](#), director [Zeljko Djukic](#) and cast executed a searing interrogation of the subversive artist as pop idol, while at the same time delivering to audiences a wildly intuitive and anarchic performance by [Ian Westerfer](#) in the title role. An exactly cohesive ensemble cast matched Westerfer moment-to-moment, composing the perfect Petri dish for pre-Nazi cynicism, cruelty and decadence. [Josh Schmidt](#)'s original music contemporized and rounded out the mood and atmosphere for the piece. (See our review [here](#).) [Tom Williams](#) of [Chicago Critic](#) called the production "refreshingly inventive as it swiftly blends drama with raw sensuality . . . demonstrates what the power of dedicated artists can produce once they are in creative sync." [Albert Williams](#) of the Reader called *Baal* "a vivid, dreamlike work of stage poetry." ([our review](#))



## The Book of Liz

[Chemically Imbalanced Comedy](#) (Sept 2010)

Written by [Amy](#) and [David Sedaris](#)

Directed by [Angie McMahon](#)

[our review](#)