

## Best Plays of 2012

Top plays of 2012 have a strong Vermont flavor

Written by  
Brent Hallenbeck

It's not a stretch to say 2012 was one of the strongest years for theater in northern Vermont in a long time. That's because the most memorable plays weren't always famous plays; local companies often did their best work when producing scripts written by Vermonters. These five productions, including a trio of Vermont-made plays, were among the best this year:



Alex Dostie, who played an actor playing Napoleon Bonaparte in the Green Candle Theatre Company's 'The Napoleon 2012,' rehearses his role.  
/ ELLIOT deBRUYN/Free Press

- January, **“The Clean House,”** Vermont Stage — Sarah Ruhl’s script about love, illness and the search for the perfect joke can drift off into an esoteric netherworld in the wrong hands. The new leader of Vermont Stage, Cristina Alicea, nailed “The Clean House” in her first directing job for the Burlington company, finding every last piece of humanity and humor and weaving it together beautifully.
- March, **“Icon,”** by Seth Jarvis — The Burlington actor/playwright often comes up with comically weird plays such as 2005’s “The Once and Future Ubu” and this fall’s “The Moreau Horrors.” For “Icon,” though, he got serious and penetrating with his look at the tragic life of ‘50s movie star Montgomery Clift. Jarvis’ younger brother, Nathan Jarvis, turned in a compelling performance in this one-man play.
- April, **“Lyddie,”** Lost Nation Theater – The Montpelier company’s directors, Kim Bent and Kathleen Keenan, turned Barre author Katherine Paterson’s book about a girl working in a 19th-century sweatshop into a creative, energetic, music-filled production. Much of that energy came from 16-year-old actress Liz Gilbert of East Montpelier, who was on stage for almost the entire production and never let up.
- May, **“The Napoleon 2012,”** Green Candle Theatre Company – The Off Center for the Dramatic Arts, the Burlington theater incubator that hosted “Icon,” was also home to this inventive production that was more ambitious than successful. But the unique approach, with participants sharing writing and behind-the-scenes duties, shouted to the local theater scene that there should be no limits on imagination.
- July, **“Over the Pub,”** St. Michael’s Playhouse – The Colchester summer-theater company might be best known for its musicals, but often finds the sweet spot with simple, touching comedy-dramas. That was the case with the Tom Dudzick script, which tells the story of an Irish family’s evolution during the tumultuous 1960s and benefited from universally outstanding performances from the Playhouse cast.