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Good Moments by Hilton Als

While most ten-best lists are posted at the end of the year, I prefer to send mine along at the beginning, when the world, culturally at least, is still a bit of a tabula rasa, and one's mind is still floating along on the memory of what we, as audience members, experienced, and how those experiences left us wanting or fulfilled while simultaneously reminding us of what we look forward to seeing in the coming months.

I'm not very different from you—I like to be amused and moved, and I resent being bored or condescended to when I go to the theatre. (My idea of what constitutes “theatre” is fairly broad, and includes dance, rock concerts, art shows, television, films: any place where spectacle makes us feel more alive as thinkers.) Sometimes, though, even bad theatre—like the majority of musicals that went up on Broadway last season, or the recent revival of “The Maids,” starring Isabelle Huppert—can be inspiring. Poorly conceived or executed shows sharpen our critical eye and lead to rigorous discourse: Why didn't this or that work? Did all the elements—actor, script, director, set—not come together? Was one thing better than another? Was any of it relevant to who we are now? Herewith, a collection of some events that had special relevance for me in 2014.

Certain performers

Sometimes, at the close of the theatre season (and sometimes after I've seen a film or a television program of note), I like to spend time with the afterimages in my head. Here are a few that entertain me still: The cast members of Young Jean Lee's “Straight White Men,” all of whom made the best out of a difficult situation, which is to say being straight white men without apology.