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[NEXT»](#)

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BEST ACTOR

Steve Hendrickson

This past year, Steve Hendrickson may have been the hardest-working actor in town. Most recently, he appeared as the self-loathing Roy Cohn in Pillsbury House Theatre's production of *Angels in America*. Before that he was clowning through Shakespeare in local prisons and homeless shelters with Michelle Hensley's Ten Thousand Things company, and hamming it up in Wendy Knox's admirably lowbrow staging of *Lysistrata* at the Guthrie Lab. But it was Hendrickson's performance in Frank Theatre's *The Threepenny Opera* that solidified our esteem for this actor's talents. As Macheath, the leering antihero and crime boss of Brecht's blackly comic masterpiece, Hendrickson exuded just the right balance of venom, violence, and oily charm: Dean Martin crossed with Jimmy Hoffa. We won't soon forget the play's satiric and spectacular finale, when Hendrickson was hoisted to the top of a scaffold like some dark Christ and given the chance to spit out his profane denouncement of this wretched world.

[«PREV](#) [NEXT»](#)

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[Home](#)
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[Personals](#)
[Directories](#)

[Best of the Twin Cities](#)
[Annual Manual](#)
[Summer/Fall/Winter Guides](#)
[MN Music Directory](#)
[Menu Guide](#)
[Travel Pages](#)



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[««PREV](#)

[NEXT»»](#)

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BEST STAGE PRODUCTION

The Threepenny Opera

As the driving force behind Frank Theatre, Wendy Knox is the ideal mix of pragmatist and dreamer: She is as artistically adventurous as any director in town, but also sensible enough never to let her ambition overleap her company's resources. Last year's Frank production of Brecht/Weill's *The Threepenny Opera* was proof positive of Knox's talent. Set in the gloomy warren of the Southern Theater and suffused with hellish red light, Frank's *Threepenny* created an atmosphere of amplified gloom. From the very first scene, in which the cast posed in lurid tableaux of sexual congress and violence, it was clear that Knox knew exactly how to play this tricky script: Here was an indignant condemnation of avarice lurking just below the veneer of black comedy. As this "beggar's opera" took shape, however, it was her cast who took over. Steve Hendrickson, as the misanthropic artful dodger Macheath, managed to sneer and prance at the same time, while Heidi Fellner, Molly Sue McDonald, and Ruth McKenzie as a trio of soiled doves fluttered and shrieked in the foreground. This was Brecht as Brecht would have had it: a throng of thoroughly despicable characters floundering in an industrial morass. Dark stuff, to be sure, but illuminating as well. Though Brecht's play is famous for alienating its audience with uncomfortable truths, Frank's *Threepenny* had us bewitched from the very start.

[««PREV](#) [NEXT»»](#)

[BACK TO ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT](#)