

The Vermont Plays: Four Plays

By Annie Baker



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"Baker has a soft spot for the abandoned, the discarded, the hard luck case... her heartbreaking works of staggering focus have actually rescued realism from the aesthetic scrap heap" -- Helen Shaw, *Time Out New York*

"Baker is a writer whose plays have a quiet, hypnotic charm, a grace and humor. She's able to take ordinary, low-key situations--a small-town acting class, guys wasting time in an alley behind a cafe--and fill them with gentle comedy, generosity of spirit and an eye (and ear) for the foibles that make us all so hopelessly human." --Village Voice

The debut play collection of Annie Baker includes *The Aliens*: an exploration of friendship and music in the lives of three misfits behind a coffee shop; *Circle Mirror Transformation*: a meditation on life within the rhythms of an adult drama class; *Nocturama*: A dark comedy in which a grown son returns home to live with his mother and stepfather; and *Body Awareness*: a close look at a nontraditional family dealing with an unexpected guest.

Annie Baker's other plays include *The Flick* and an adaptation of *Uncle Vanya*. She won an Obie Award for Best New American Play for *The Aliens* and *Circle Mirror Transformation*. She is a 2011 United States Artists Fellow and a resident playwright at the Signature Theatre.



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The Vermont Plays: Four Plays By Annie Baker Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Review

NAMED BEST YOUNG PLAYWRIGHT OF 2010 BY THE VILLAGE VOICE

The Aliens

FIVE STARS: "Baker has a soft spot for the abandoned, the discarded, the hard luck case... her heartbreaking works of staggering focus have actually rescued realism from the aesthetic scrap heap" -- Helen Shaw, *Time Out New York*

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"Our first glimpse in Britain of work by Annie Baker, the much-lauded young US dramatist...evinces a real talent for the kind of gentle humour that illustrates how the sadness and the silliness of life are interwoven." - Paul Taylor, *The Independent*

FOUR STARS: "What I like about this play is that it's funny, but doesn't go for easy laughs. It has the courage to be, like its central characters, quite unambitious." -- Dominic Cavendish, *The Telegraph*

"Baker's play will have you laughing one moment and tearing up the next.." -- Jenna Scherer, Boston Herald

Circle Mirror Transformation

"Annie Baker's play is an absolute feast. *Circle Mirror Transformation* is the kind of unheralded gem that sends people into the streets babbling and bright-eyed with the desire to spread the word. The play traces the lives of a handful of small-town Vermont residents who gather each week for an acting class taught at the local community center. By the play's end we seem to see to the very bottom of these souls, and feel how the artificial intimacy of the acting class has shaped their lives in substantial ways." -- Charles Isherwood, *The New York Times*

"...Orchestrated with a subtlety and unfailing naturalness that make the play's small revelations disarming and unexpected. The characterizations display a miniaturist attention to detail that goes down to the bone...Baker is never blind to their weaknesses and faults, yet regards them all with a warm, empathetic eye." -- David Rooney, *Variety*

"Baker develops her characters slowly through their interactions each week in class, which is the only place we see them. Naturally, their real, offstage lives gradually infiltrate the classroom, revealing insights and transformations both humorous and heartbreaking." -- Jessica Farrar, *Associated Press*

FIVE STARS: "The way that a complete picture of each of the characters is built up is stunningly accurate. A little room sucks in the whole world." -- Aleks Sierz, *The Arts Desk*

FOUR STARS: "A quirky, entertaining and quietly poignant piece... Scenes as apparently aimless as a group count-up to 10 or a dialogue improvised using nonsense words acquire a sudden powerful intensity as

latent emotions bubble to the surface." -- Dominic Cavendish, The Telegraph

FOUR STARS: "A Disarming surprise... The piece is remarkably open-minded in its supple, low-key way, shifting from the preposterous to the poignant, the tender to the silly, with a sharply observant but uncensorious spirit." -- Paul Taylor, *The Independent*

FOUR STARS: "Baker's writing is compassionate, cinematic (in an understated sort of way) and wonderfully, wonderfully droll." -- Andrzej Lukowski, *Time Out London*

"...Baker's play, which does not have an intermission and is divided into episodes that correspond to the weeks of the class, walks a careful line between satirizing how people look to the arts to solve their problems and admiring them for having the guts to do so. It would be too easy to be mean to these people, and while *Circle Mirror Transformation* eschews sentimentality, it always seems to believe in the promise of the third word of its title." -- Chris Jones, *Chicago Tribune*

Body Awareness

"An engaging new comedy by a young playwright with a probing, understated voice...Its quiet rewards steal up on you." -- Charles Isherwood, *The New York Times*

"Sexuality's endless capacity to make us miserable is the keynote of Annie Baker's gentle satire, which takes just four actors and 90 minutes to spin an astonishingly complex web of emotions and ideas...Body Awareness is a smart, modest work about ordinary, flawed people, grasping for connection, but none of it feels small, thanks to Baker's sharp ear for the deeply painful—and funny—longings squirming under her characters' dialogue. What a beautiful start to a young playwright's theatrical body of work." -- David Cote, Time Out New York

"In rising playwright Annie Baker's Body Awareness, you can surely see the seeds of compassionate humanism and warm comedy that have helped make her such a rapid success." – Chris Jones, *Chicago Tribune*

"Highly Recommended! What distinguishes *Body Awareness* is Annie Baker's wealth of empathy for her troubled, fallible characters. Throughout, Baker's touch remains both daring and marvelously subtle, suggesting layers of personal history in a few deft strokes." -- John Beer, *Time Out Chicago*

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From reader reviews:

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