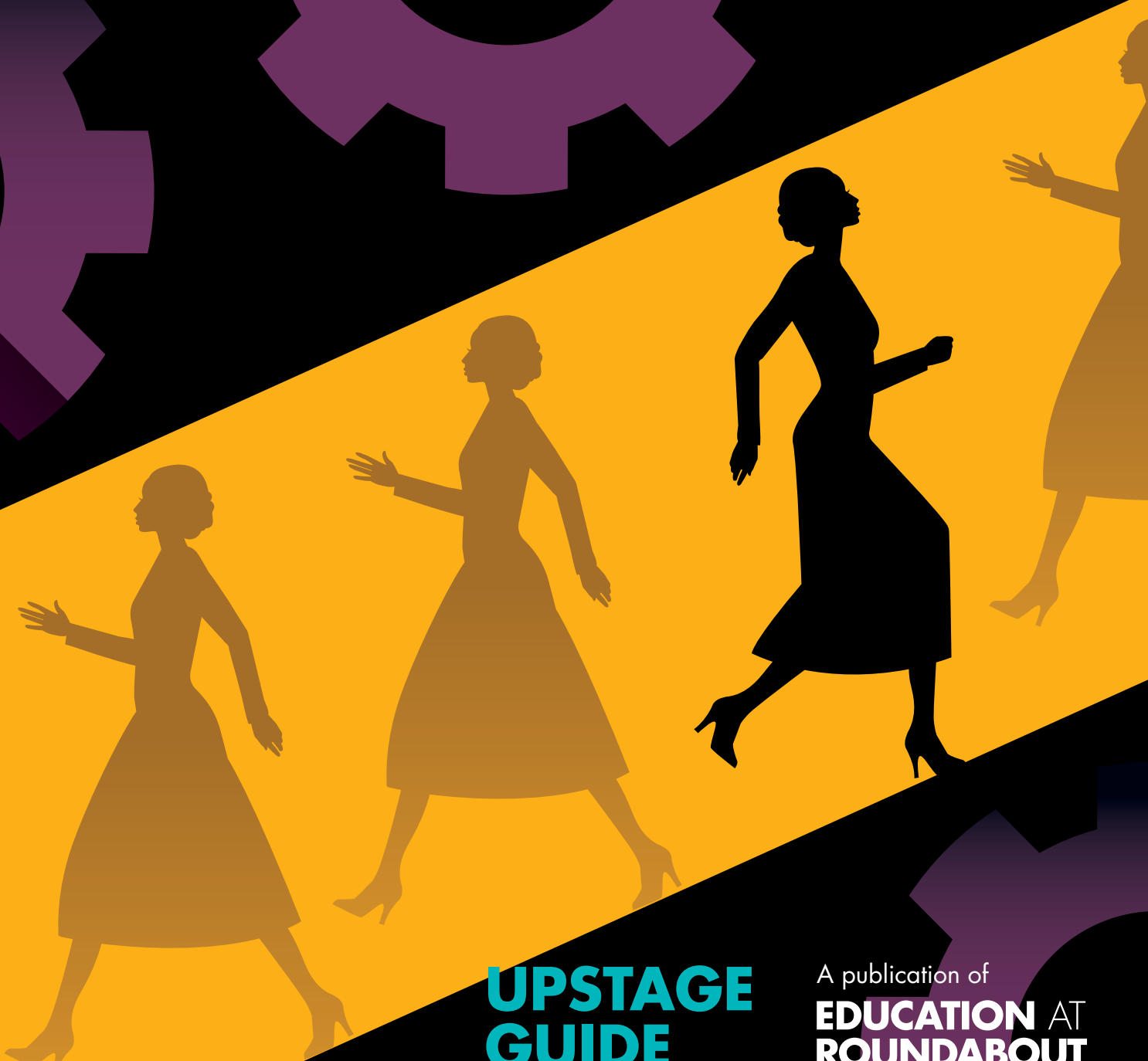


MACHINAL



**UPSTAGE
GUIDE**

A publication of
**EDUCATION AT
ROUNDBOUT**

UPSTAGE CALLBOARD

Machinal

It's America's Golden Age, a time of happiness, freedom and prosperity—or is it? For one young woman in the industrial, male-dominated world of the 1920s, life is nothing like she hoped it would be. Restless and unfulfilled in a passionless marriage and an unwanted motherhood, she finds her only joy in the form of an illicit love affair. But when reality sets in and she must return to her routine existence, she'll go to any lengths to regain her freedom.

a note from Artistic Director Todd Haines

The play's title, *Machinal* (or *The Life Machine*, as it is known to some British audiences), directly references the mechanization that was taking place at the time and that swept many women into new and uncomfortable workplace roles. As industrialization and assembly lines took over, what was happening to people who went from being individuals to being cogs in a vast machine they could barely understand? Treadwell asks us to look at the bleak options in front of the Young Woman we follow throughout the play: Should she remain a cog, settle for a loveless marriage, or seek happiness in whatever way she can? Will society judge her if her own happiness comes at the expense of others'?

when 1922-1928

where New York City

who **Young Woman** (essentially soft, tender) and the people who surround her.

Mother	Doctor	Lawyer for Prosecution
Husband	Young Man	Court Reporter
Lover	Girl	Bailiff
Telephone Girl	Man	Reporter
Stenographer	Boy	Second Reporter
Filing Clerk	Another Man	Third Reporter
Adding Clerk	Waiter	Jailer
Bellboy	Judge	Matron
Nurse	Lawyer for Defense	Priest

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INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR LYNDSEY TURNER

Roundabout's Education Dramaturg Ted Sod asked director Lyndsey Turner some questions about the process of working on *Machinal*.

Ted Sod: Why did you choose to direct *Machinal*?

Lyndsey Turner: I first read *Machinal* when I was at university: I was struck by the boldness of the writing, the way Treadwell follows, with brutal, inexorable logic, the journey of an unremarkable woman through a series of encounters which lead her to commit a remarkable act. The play is a brilliant account of the impact of mechanization and industrialization on American society, as well as a forensic and unflinching portrait of a young woman in crisis. I've loved the play for years, so when the Roundabout approached me and asked whether I might be interested in making a new production of it, I pretty near fell off my chair. *Machinal* isn't *Medea*: it's not about a princess making a grand gesture in order to exact revenge, it's about an ordinary working woman. And as much as it concerns itself with love, death, birth, and identity, Treadwell's scenes are also full of the stuff of life: salesmen who dream of Swiss watches, a panic attack on the subway, the proper way to wash dishes. But it's also a play which demands a great deal of the actor playing Helen, which is why I was beyond thrilled when Rebecca Hall came on board. It takes a great deal of humanity, craft, and courage to play a character who isn't allowed to act on her own behalf, and Rebecca is one of the only actors of her generation with the creativity, precision, and insight to create that performance.

TS: What do you think the play is about?

LT: The play was written as a response to the death of Ruth Snyder,

the first woman to be sentenced to the electric chair as a punishment for murdering her husband. Despite the fact that no cameras were permitted in the chamber where Snyder died, a journalist hid a device in his trousers and managed to take a picture moments after her death. The photograph made the front pages of newspapers around the country the next day. Treadwell was a journalist who had covered a number of high profile trials in which women were accused of murdering their husbands. I feel certain that the writer was interested not only in the circumstances that led to these murders, but also in the way these trials became media sensations. This image of a woman whose words, movements, clothes, sexual relationships, and fitness to be a mother had come in for daily scrutiny throughout a court case which had lasted months, now sitting dead in an electric chair for all the world to see, must have struck Treadwell as obscene. Even in death, Snyder was regarded as public property.

Treadwell had completed *Machinal* within four months of Snyder's death. And although the play isn't concerned with telling the story of this now notorious murderess, its focus on the ways in which the increasing mechanization of the workplace, the stultifying domesticity of marriage, the ruthless expertise of the medical profession, and the impossibility of finding a place of peace or rest in an increasingly frenetic world provides a context in which a woman might be driven to take a violent and radical action in order to break free.

The play gives the lie to the image of the 1920s as a decade of unprecedented freedom: it's a savage indictment of a society whose pursuit of efficiency and prosperity leads to a woman becoming trapped in the very machines designed to liberate her.

TS: Do you feel audiences will see the play as contemporary or as a period piece and why?

LT: It's striking how contemporary the play still feels, despite the fact that it was written 85 years ago. The questions it raises about women in the workplace, our expectations of marriage and childbirth and the relationship between the justice system and the media seem as relevant now as they would have done then. I hope that audiences leave the production feeling not as if they've seen a period piece, but a new play. However, it's important to me that we retain the play's original setting: the action takes place over the course of five years, from 1923 to 1928. The scenes are underscored by sounds (a riveting machine, popular songs on a radio, telegraphic machines and a chorus of typewriters) which evoke a machine working at full speed. The year after the play was written, the Wall Street Crash decimated the economic system which had gathered such momentum over the previous decade. Attempting to reset the play in a later era would risk robbing Treadwell's writing of its specificity, but would beg more questions than it answered. The play has a huge amount to say about life in the early 20th century, but it also speaks to us across the decades in a way which I'm hoping audiences will be excited by.



Rebecca Hall and Michael Cumpsty

TS: The play is often described as expressionistic.

Do you believe that to be true, and if so, how will that be manifested in your production?

LT: Treadwell's play certainly uses techniques which are associated with Expressionism: flat, repetitive dialogue; abstracted sounds underscoring scenes; characters defined by their function rather than their back story or their psychology. No wonder *Machinal* is sometimes mentioned in the same breath as Elmer Rice's *The Adding Machine*. However, Treadwell shifts the style of each scene according to the system she is trying to depict. The second scene in which Helen asks her mother whether or not she should marry George H. Jones isn't remotely expressionistic in style, nor is the central scene in which Helen finds a moment of intimacy with a man she meets in a speakeasy. We'll attempt to capture the rhythms of the writing and the impersonal facelessness of some of the play's encounters, but the chief goal of the production is to bring *Machinal* to life, rather than to "do expressionism."

And I'm not sure that we go to the theatre to see a meticulously recreated -ism anyway!

TS: What did you look for in casting the actors? What traits do you need? Will there be doubling?

LT: I'm new to the American acting community, but I've been struck by the talent, creativity, and professionalism of the actors I've met whilst I've been over here. *Machinal* is a big ensemble show with a huge amount of doubling. Between them, a company of 18 will work to bring to life a bustling court room, a hotel ballroom, a working hospital, and a busy office. I'm excited about working with a group of actors from a range of backgrounds who are united by a desire to bring this brilliant but rarely performed play to life. There's a streak of dark humor running through the play which requires actors with great timing, huge imagination and a genuine love of ensemble work.



Rebecca Hall

THE PLAY GIVES THE LIE TO THE IMAGE OF THE 1920S AS A DECADE OF UNPRECEDENTED FREEDOM: IT'S A SAVAGE INDICTMENT OF A SOCIETY WHOSE PURSUIT OF EFFICIENCY AND PROSPERITY LEADS TO A WOMAN BECOMING TRAPPED IN THE VERY MACHINES DESIGNED TO LIBERATE HER.

TS: How are you collaborating with your design team? How will the play manifest itself design-wise? Will there be original music?

LT: I'll be working with Es Devlin, a brilliant British designer who works across various media: from theatre to opera, pop concerts to the closing ceremony of the Olympic Games. She and I have worked together before, and I hugely admire her ability to get to the core of what a play is about. *Machinal* seems to demand a bold visual statement, and so we've taken inspiration from the title given to the play when it was first performed in London, *The Life Machine* (apparently British audiences couldn't be relied upon to pronounce the title Treadwell had given her work). We're creating a set which allows us to move fluidly between nine locations, but also allows us to stage the various ways in which Helen is processed by the life machine. I've asked the composer Matthew Herbert to create a score for the production: he specializes in making extraordinary music out of "found sounds," be they from

the kitchen of a restaurant, a pig farm, or an operating theatre. It seems important that the soundscape of the play is derived from the machine noises which Treadwell writes into the stage directions.

TS: Do you have any advice for young people who want to be directors?

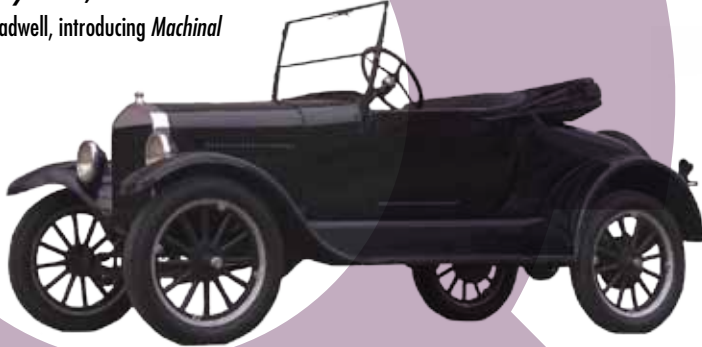
LT: See as much theatre as you can, read everything you can get your hands on: cultivate your own taste and sensibility. And draw inspiration from wherever you can find it: visit galleries, watch dance, read newspapers. But a sensibility isn't much good without the craft necessary to bring your ideas into being.

When I started directing, I would assemble groups of friends to practice on, making sure that I was finding a useful language in which to communicate, trying to plug the gaps in my experience and expertise. I'm pretty sure I must have driven them mad, but directing is a collaborative process and you can only get better by doing it. 🌟

THE MECHANIZED CITY: 1920s INDUSTRIAL AGE

"The woman is essentially soft, tender, and the life around her is essentially hard, mechanized."

—Sophie Treadwell, introducing *Machinal*



Each episode of *Machinal*—from office to home, hospital to speakeasy, courtroom to execution—shows the impact of new technologies on 1920s city life. While Americans had experienced changes from industrialization for over 50 years, the accelerated output of new machinery and products radically transformed lifestyles during the aptly named “Roaring ‘20s.”

ON THE ROAD

The most important new American product of this time was the automobile. Although sold as expensive luxury items in the late 19th century, Henry Ford allowed millions of Americans to purchase cars by applying the assembly line process to his manufacturing process. Workers would now repeat simple tasks rather than specialized craftwork to assemble automobiles. With increased productivity and reduced manufacturing costs, Ford drastically dropped the price of his most popular car, the Model T, to \$395 in 1921—equivalent to around \$4600 today. Car ownership grew tremendously, and the number of registered drivers rose to 23 million by the end of the decade.

This proliferation of automobiles drove a surge in other industries and jobs: the steel and rubber industries thrived on the demand for more raw materials, and more oil was needed for fuel. Mechanics now earned good livings fixing broken cars. Government highway construction projects created thousands of new jobs, although this emphasis neglected development of mass transit systems like railroads. Gas stations, motels, and roadside diners appeared along the new highways. Fast food, such as hamburgers and fries, became standard menu choices for commuters eating on the road.

THE MODERN OFFICE

The decade’s modernism and a mood of optimism were symbolized in the rise of skyscrapers in major cities—most visibly in New York.



Innovations such as steel framing, concrete use, elevator machinery, and improved heating and plumbing allowed buildings to be taller than ever. Inside, businesses now relied on the telephone as an essential technology for communication. The decade also saw first production of the spiral notebook, the stapler, the electric printing calculator, and the “Kleenex” disposable tissue. The assembly line method began to impact the lives of office workers, who now repeated the same basic task all day long. Typists only typed, file clerks only filed, couriers only delivered mail. Managers ran the new offices with scientific efficiency, using what they learned from factory operations to count the number of typists’ strokes or the number of letters opened per hour. This standardization made office work as monotonous as factory work and is expressed by the rhythmic repetition of *Machinal*’s first scene.

AMERICA TUNES IN

In the 1920s, radio technology, which was previously limited to the government and the military for communications during World War I, transformed into a must-have household product and created a nationwide popular culture. The first commercial radio broadcast went out on November 2, 1920, when KDKA (located in Pittsburgh) aired the results of the presidential election. The station continued to offer a nightly broadcast, including music, church services, plays, and sports in its programming. Over 500 local radio stations came on the air in the next two years. A half-million



Electrical refrigerators and ranges, as well as a flood of modern electrical domestic appliances changed the modern home. New technologies made housework easier and increased leisure time for women and families.

On the darker side, electricity also made capital punishment more efficient. The electric chair, first utilized in 1899, used the new alternating current (AC) technology to develop a more “humane” form of execution. In 1928 Ruth Snyder became one of only 26 women to be sentenced to death, by electric chair in the United States. The 1920’s represented a time of quick social progress that was enhanced by the advances in electric technology. ⚡

[Click here To see some of these household images and advertising,](#)

radios were sold to consumers, mostly by Westinghouse Electric & Manufacturing Company, which also owned and operated stations to produce content. The first nationwide station, National Broadcasting Company (NBC), broadcast cross-country from New York to California in 1926, and for the first time, Americans living

A 1920 NATIONAL ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN, “ELECTRIFY YOUR HOME” CLAIMED YOUR HOUSE IS NOT ELECTRICALLY MODERN WITHOUT THE FOLLOWING:

- Porch lights
- Doorbell
- Automatic door-opener and latch
- Burglar alarm
- Electric oven
- Electric dishwasher
- Electric water heater
- Electric waffle iron
- Electric shaving mug
- Electric curling iron
- Electric hair dryer
- Electric toaster
- Electric coffee maker
- Sewing machine
- Vacuum cleaner
- Washing machine
- Iron

anywhere could listen to the same program. Radio was dominated by variety shows (mixing music and comedy), short dramatic radio plays, and news. Radios were relatively inexpensive, and real industry profits came not from selling actual radios but from advertising. By the end of the decade, about 40% of the US population had a radio in their home, and sponsors paid up to \$10,000 for an hour of prime air time.

[Click here to see pictures of radios from the 1920s and print advertisements for the new technology.](#)

“ELECTRIFY YOUR HOME”

An expanding electricity industry drove this machine age, powered by better transmission wires, motors, and controls. Contractors replaced miles of obsolete wiring in buildings and homes, and electric motors replaced steam- and gasoline-powered motors in many kinds of machines. Municipal ownership of power stations and government regulation of utility costs allowed consumers to pay far less for electricity. Whereas in 1899, electricity provided about 5% of the nation’s energy, by 1920 it provided 60%. The tungsten lamp offered better, cheaper, and longer-lasting lighting.



THE LIFE OF SOPHIE TREADWELL: AN INTERVIEW WITH JERRY DICKEY

Jerry Dickey offered his expertise on the life and work of playwright Sophie Treadwell to Education Dramaturg Ted Sod.

Ted Sod: What can you tell us about Sophie Treadwell's life and career as a playwright? Like Mary Chase who wrote *Harvey*, she began as a journalist—correct?

Jerry Dickey: Actually, Sophie Treadwell's interests in theatre and journalism developed simultaneously, especially while she was a student at the University of California at Berkeley between 1902 and 1906. After a short stint as a vaudeville performer upon graduation, she was hired as a journalist for the *San Francisco Bulletin*, where she met her husband, William O. McGeehan, a noted sports writer. They were married in 1910, and Treadwell continued writing plays as she rapidly made a name for herself as an investigative journalist and serial writer. McGeehan moved to New York in 1914 to write for the *New York Evening Journal*, and Treadwell followed the next year when she was hired as a journalist by the *New York American*. She had her first play produced on Broadway in 1922, the first of seven of her plays to reach Broadway stages, with *Machinal* being by far her most critically successful.

Treadwell led a remarkable life that fueled much of her playwriting. She marched for women's suffrage with the feminist Lucy Stone League; during World War I, she was one of the first state-accredited female foreign war correspondents; she collaborated with Marcel Duchamp on a work of modern art; she had an affair with the painter Maynard Dixon; as a journalist she covered the tumultuous events of the Mexican Revolution, including a first-hand account of the assassination of Mexican President Carranza and the only western journalist's interview with Pancho Villa at his post-Revolution hideaway in Canutillo; she studied acting with the Moscow Art Theatre-emigré Richard Boleslavsky; she sued John Barrymore for plagiarism; she wrote, produced and acted in her own plays on Broadway; and at age 64—sixteen years after the death of her husband—she became a single mother when she adopted a German baby boy. When the Royal National Theatre in London produced *Machinal* in 1993, the critic for the Daily Telegraph wrote that "Treadwell is one of those fascinating people whose life was full of adventure but about whom little was ever recorded. [...] Inexplicably, there is no biography of her." Only now are the details of her life becoming better known.

TS: *Machinal* had a run of 91 performances on Broadway in 1928. Was the play ahead of its time? Were audiences ready for what was described as its "expressionistic" style? It seems the play was given new life after the Public Theatre's 1990 production—is that true?

JD: The expressionistic style of *Machinal* would not have been altogether unfamiliar to New York audiences in 1928. Georg Kaiser's *From Morn to Midnight*, Elmer Rice's *The Adding Machine*, and several expressionistic plays by Eugene O'Neill had previously received critical acclaim in the New York press. But what was different about Treadwell's use of expressionistic techniques was her blending of them with moments of intimacy that seemed more like



domestic American realism. According to stage directions in an early manuscript, Treadwell hoped the unique style of the play—inner monologues, an expressionistic soundscape of the world around the Young Woman, and the quieter moments of intimacy—would create a suggestive atmosphere that would encourage the audience to fill in the gaps and complete the narrative for themselves. As Treadwell wrote, she hoped these effects would quicken "still secret places in the consciousness of the audience, especially of women." The play never received a fully expressionistic staging until it was produced by the famed Russian director Alexander Tairov at the Kamerny Theatre in 1933.

The appearance of *Machinal* in a couple of drama anthologies kept the play alive for critical study in colleges and universities and probably facilitated an off-Broadway revival in 1960. But, yes, it was Michael Greif's Public Theatre production featuring Jodie Markell in 1990 that accelerated interest in the play and Treadwell.

TS: What are the challenges of producing and directing *Machinal*? How have you noticed that contemporary audiences relate to Treadwell's play? What do you feel resonates for people when they see a modern production?

JD: One of the greatest challenges I've noticed is that Treadwell does such a remarkable job of dramatizing the various social and economic factors that have shaped the Young Woman's circumstances and attitudes that it is sometimes easy to dismiss her as a victim. Our contemporary society is also more open in sexual matters than it was in the 1920s, so some audience members may grow slightly impatient with the Young Woman's sexual anxieties in the first part of the play. The actions that Treadwell presents as "prohibited" in Episode 5—homosexuality, abortion, extramarital affairs—don't possess the same aura of taboo they did during the play's premiere. That said, I have seen that the play's depiction of our society's unequal treatment toward women, the pervasiveness of technology in our lives, the seeming anonymity of existence in urban cities, and biases in our

media coverage and judicial system—including the issue of capital punishment—all have a powerful effect on contemporary audiences.

TS: How do you pronounce *Machinal* and what does it mean?

JD: I should have mentioned earlier that the play's title is also something of a challenge in producing the play! Whenever *Machinal* has been produced, playbills and reviews offer a guide as to the meaning and pronunciation of the title. The title is a French word meaning mechanical, automatic, or involuntary; its pronunciation is "ma-SHIN-al." The playbill for the original Broadway production at the Plymouth Theatre identified the pronunciation of the play as "MAK-i-nal." Other Anglicized pronunciations of the title have appeared in print as "MA-shin-al," "mock-en-AHL," and "MAK-in-al" (long A).

TS: *Machinal* was inspired by the Ruth Snyder murder trial. Why do you believe Treadwell was attracted to that story?

JD: The short answer is that in 1927 seemingly everybody was intrigued by the Ruth Snyder murder trial. The notion that an apparently "normal" Long Island housewife and mother of a little girl would have an affair with a corset salesman, Judd Gray, and then conspire with him to murder her husband undermined the very ideal of marital domesticity as the bedrock of American society. As depicted in much of the press, Ruth Snyder must have been some sort of cold, calculating monster who ensnared a somewhat overwhelmed lover to do her beck and call. New York newspapers assigned 180 reporters to cover the trial, which was also attended by journalist-authors Damon Runyon and James M. Cain, the latter's novels *The Postman Always Rings Twice* and *Double Indemnity* being inspired by the Snyder case. The fact that Snyder became the first woman executed by electric chair in New York State further fueled sensational coverage in the media.

Although Treadwell did not report on the trial for a newspaper, she had plenty of journalistic experience with similar high-profile murder cases involving women. Treadwell's coverage of these trials often focused on the defendants' seemingly unimportant mannerisms and behaviors, often reading into them suggestions of their motives or indicators of physical or verbal abuse by their deceased husbands or lovers. Like many women reporters of her era, Treadwell had been encouraged by editors to avoid the typical objective prosaic style used by male journalists and use instead short phrasing that emphasized the emotions behind the incidents. This type of female reporting led to the women journalists being trivialized with the moniker "sob sisters." *Machinal* is Treadwell's answer to the questions: "What circumstances would make a woman like Ruth Snyder perform such actions? Is there more to this story than an all-male jury, which was the legal norm of that time, or a patriarchal society conditioned to certain ways of thinking and seeing, can discover?"



Sophie Treadwell, 1925

TS: How does Treadwell compare to other playwrights of her generation? What themes were most important to her in her writing? Did she consider herself a feminist or a "new woman," as they were called early in the 20th century?

JD: Treadwell most certainly saw herself as a feminist. As an early member of the Lucy Stone League, she believed that women should retain their own names—and at times their own residences—upon marriage. While she later distanced herself from formal activist organizations, her devotion to the rights of women never waned. She consistently placed women in the subject positions of her plays, and one of her recurring themes is the conflict encountered by women who desire both an independent identity through work/career as well as fulfillment in marriage and family. She dramatized the so-called "new woman" in several plays, always depicting with sympathy their unconventionality in the eyes of traditional society. Although her central female characters are not uniform in terms of class, ideology or behavior, they are consistent in terms of their demand for women's rights and self-determination.

I would compare her work most closely with that of her contemporary Susan Glaspell. Both dramatists were writing about women's experiences at a time when America was in transition from Victorian traditionalism to progressive modernism; both wrote in a variety of mediums—including drama, fiction, and journalism; both had deep connections in the modernist art movement as well as the more commercial Broadway theatre; and in works such as Glaspell's *The Verge* and Treadwell's *Machinal* and *Intimations for Saxophone*, both experimented radically with dramatic form in an effort to create a new theatrical aesthetic that might be more reflective of women's experiences.

TS: What do you think Treadwell's legacy as an artist is?

JD: I think it's safe to say that in *Machinal* Treadwell wrote a play of startling originality that will be remembered as one of the great American dramas of the twentieth century. Her achievements as a pioneer for women's rights seem secure. Perhaps above all, she will be remembered as an absolutely *uncompromising* artist who refused to abide by any system—political, social, or personal—she felt was abusive or unfair. ⚙️

Jerry Dickey currently serves as Director and Professor of the University of Florida School of Theatre and Dance. Dickey's research and teaching specializes in the history of early twentieth-century theatre in the United States. He is the co-author of *Susan Glaspell and Sophie Treadwell* (with Barbara Ozieblo; Routledge, 2008), co-editor of *Broadway's Bravest Woman: Selected Writings of Sophie Treadwell* (with Miriam Lopez-Rodriguez; Southern Illinois UP, 2006), and author of *Sophie Treadwell: A Research and Production Sourcebook* (Greenwood, 1997).

THE LOST WOMEN OF BROADWAY



Susan Glaspell



Lillian Hellman



Mary Chase



Zona Gale

The Pulitzer Prize for Drama was first given out in 1917. In what has been almost a full century since this recognition of extraordinary playwriting began, only 14 women have received the honor. In the early days of the Pulitzer, men like Eugene O'Neill, Thornton Wilder, George S. Kaufman, and Tennessee Williams found themselves immediately turned into household names, each winning the prize multiple times. They had female contemporaries who both won the prize and found commercial success. So why do names like Zona Gale, Susan Glaspell, and Clare Booth Luce fail to command attention today while their male counterparts remain as popular as ever?

These women, along with Mary Chase, Lillian Hellman, and *Machinal's* Sophie Treadwell, found success on Broadway in the early decades of the 20th century. What is fascinating is that very few of their plays seem to have entered the canon of work that continues to be performed today. In some cases, unlike the men of the era, these women were seen as one-hit-wonders. *Machinal* was one of seven Broadway productions for Treadwell, but it was the only one to become a hit. In spite of winning the Pulitzer for *Alison's House* in 1931, Susan Glaspell's Broadway career was over by 1933. And Zona Gale's *Miss Lulu Bett* won the prize in 1921 and has never once received a Broadway revival. Compare that to 1922 winner *Anna Christie*. The play itself has been seen in three major Broadway revivals (including one at Roundabout in 1993), and playwright O'Neill has had a staggering 15 Broadway revivals in the past 30 years alone, covering nine different plays from his oeuvre. Is it possible that O'Neill was a uniquely gifted and prolific playwright? Of course. But how can we account for the fact that putting together the careers of every female playwright from the early 20th century will still not equal that of one man?

Access to education certainly played a role in those years. Women were encouraged to stay at home, marry, and start

a family. While they found some greater attention paid to their education and potential for work during both the first and second World Wars, as soon as the men returned home, there was an expectation that women would return to their "proper" place. Even successes led to failures. Getting the vote in 1920 was a huge triumph for American women, but this accomplishment allowed many men to believe that other "women's issues" could then be shifted to the back burner, and progress was halted.

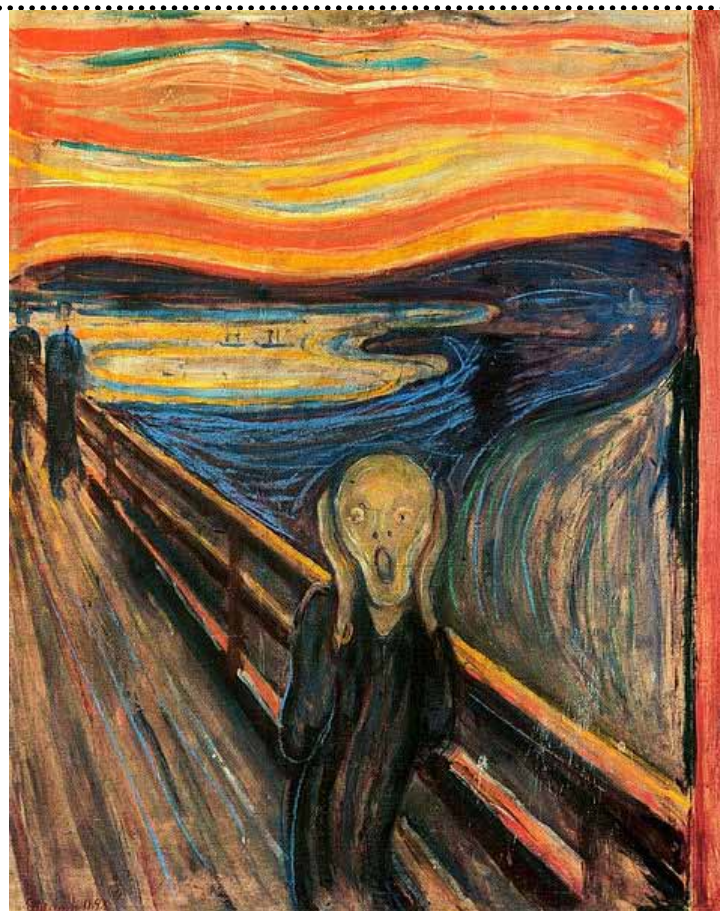
It certainly didn't help that, for the select few women who were making a place for themselves in the theatre, they were only being reviewed by male critics, and those critics were not generous with their praise. Critic Joseph Mersand saw fit to write an article in 1937 called "When Ladies Write Plays," his attempt to explain why the plays of women were ultimately inferior. He claimed that female playwrights "rarely hit the high note of drama." And in 1941, critic George Jean Nathan wrote in the essay "Playwrights in Petticoats" that "even the best of our women playwrights falls immeasurably short of the mark of our best masculine." He felt that women did not know how to control emotion in their writing: "Give her an emotion, whether tragic or comic, and she will stretch it not only to its extreme limit, but beyond." With their work open to this kind of condescension and dismissal by the only critical voices available to the public, it is less surprising that so few plays by women in the early 20th century have survived to have any kind of attention paid to them today.

Machinal has not been seen on a Broadway stage in more than 85 years, and Sophie Treadwell's name is now being brought back to the public consciousness. But she is only one of many women playwrights from her era longing to be rediscovered and given the fair chance they were once denied. ❁

THE EXPRESSIONIST MOVEMENT

In 1928 Broadway was predominantly home to musical follies by the likes of George and Ira Gershwin and productions of naturalistic favorites like *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *The Cherry Orchard*, and *Beyond the Horizon*. But Sophie Treadwell was in the midst of a new movement focused on evoking a deeper emotion through less traditional methods; this movement is known as expressionism. The expressionist movement started in Germany around the turn of the century, characterized by the distortion or distillation of an image or idea in order to evoke a subconscious reaction. Edvard Munch's "The Scream" is a textbook example of expressionist art; the dream-like image is not meant to communicate a concrete idea or story, but instead to stimulate your subconscious to produce a visceral reaction. He describes his inspiration:

One evening I was walking along a path, the city was on one side and the fjord below. I felt tired and ill. I stopped and looked out over the fjord—the sun was setting, and the clouds turning blood red. I sensed a scream passing through nature; it seemed to me that I heard the scream. I painted this picture, painted the clouds as actual blood. The color shrieked. This became The Scream.



Edvard Munch's "The Scream"

In translating this artistic style to theatrical form, Treadwell and her contemporaries were inspired by psychoanalysts to aim for a less direct mode of communication. To accomplish this she eliminated "all non-essential features, such as unnecessary scenery, props, or acting tricks" that could distract from the main action of the play. Treadwell saw the trappings of traditional theatre as distracting from the true emotional core of the play, and sought to stimulate raw emotion through this pared down presentation.

While the inspiration for the Young Woman in *Machinal* came from the Ruth Snyder case (See page 14), Sophie Treadwell did not set out to tell Ruth's story; instead she focused on the essence of a woman trapped in an ever suffocating world of technology and societal expectations and the length to which she will go to escape. The characters are rarely referred to by name. Treadwell specifies that the Young Woman is "an ordinary young woman, any woman." Through this abstraction, the audience is brought inside the Young Woman's emotional story, as opposed to judging the character's actions and motivations from a safe distance. Treadwell achieves this essence by manipulating the dialogue and creating a soundscape that swarms the central character, and lets the audience see directly from her perspective. Treadwell's introduction includes, "In the dialogue of these scenes there is an attempt to catch the rhythm of our common city speech, its brassy sound, its trick of repetition, etc. Then there is, also, the use of many different sounds chosen primarily for their inherent emotional effect, but contributing also to the creation of a background, an atmosphere." And instead of plotting out a story with scenes to show each action the woman takes, *Machinal* is presented in episodes that focus in on the "different phases of life that the woman comes in contact with." All of these elements create an environment unique to the expressionist style and present an unmistakable departure from any type of theatre that came before. ⚙️

INTERVIEW WITH ACTRESS REBECCA HALL



Rebecca Hall sat down with Education Dramaturg Ted Sod before rehearsals began to talk about her role in *Machinal*.

TED SOD: Where were you born and educated? Your father, mother, and some of your siblings have worked in opera and theatre—did your family influence your decision to become an actress?

REBECCA HALL: I was born and educated in the UK and went to university to study English Literature at Cambridge. The question of whether my family influenced my choice of career is a bit which came first, the chicken or the egg? Of course they have shaped who I am—there isn't a parent who doesn't! However, they never encouraged me to do anything that wasn't what I wanted.

TS: Why did you choose to do the play *Machinal* and the role of Helen Jones — also known as Young Woman?

RH: It is an extraordinary piece of writing that needs to be voiced and take up more than a footnote in America's theatrical history. It was as simple as that really—being a part of getting it performed felt like reason enough.

TS: Can you share your initial thoughts about the play after you first read it?

RH: I have never had a more visceral response to anything. I felt like I couldn't breathe for a minute.

TS: What kind of preparation and/or research do you have to do in order to play the role? Is the fact that the play was inspired by the Ruth Snyder murder trial important to your process? The play is often described as “expressionistic” — is that valuable to you as an actor?

RH: The preparation and research is always extensive for anything set in a period. How one goes about doing that for a play is very much determined by the company and director. We all have to do it together, so we know we are all existing in the same world. That is the work of rehearsals. But there is always a lot of reading and immersing, whether it's films, photographs, music...whatever sparks one's imagination about the era and the part.

I don't believe Sophie Treadwell meant the play to be about Ruth Snyder. I believe it is an emotional response to witnessing that case



Rebecca Hall and Morgan Spector

and processing the feelings that it generated, but it is not about her specifically; it is about a society in a much broader sense. If she wanted to write the Ruth Snyder story, I doubt she would have so pointedly called the character I play “Young Woman” or occasionally “Helen.” So, no, I've deliberately chosen not to think about Ruth Snyder too much. Helen is and should be an ordinary woman, like any one of us, an every woman.

Lyndsey said in rehearsal once, “No writer writes to an ‘ism.’ I thought that said it all really...it's interesting to know what expressionism is

PRODUCTION HISTORY HIGHLIGHTS

and what is meant by that—but you can't really let an “ism” take precedence over the humanity of a story. In that sense you can't act an “ism” either.

TS: Can you share some of your thoughts about Helen's relationship to her husband, mother and child with us?

RH: That is a complicated question. I think right now my thoughts are that none of these relationships are really hers, as it were.



Rebecca Hall

She didn't choose any of them and is oppressed by each one in different ways as a result.

TS: What do you look for from a director?

RH: Clarity, taste, honesty, vision, the ability to make an actor feel safe to be their bravest, and a respect for the material – not much then really!

TS: Do you think the author, Sophie Treadwell, was writing from a feminist perspective?

RH: I think if you are a woman, it is impossible not to write from a feminist perspective.

TS: Public school students will read this interview and will want to know what it takes to be a successful stage and film actress – what advice can you give young people who want to act?

RH: If you have that kernel of belief that you can do it and you love doing it, wrap that feeling up in cotton wool and look after it. If you can get through without that being knocked, you will be okay. ⚙



Zita Johann and Cary Grant in 1928 production of Machinal

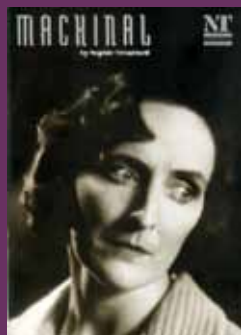
1928 Plymouth Theatre
New York, NY
Directed by Arthur Hopkins
Young Woman/Helen
played by Zita Johann

1933 Kamerny Theatre
Moscow, Russia
Directed by Alexander Tairov
Young Woman/Helen
played by Alisa Koonen

1960 The Gate Theatre
New York, NY
Directed by Gene Frankel
Young Woman/Helen
played by Dolores Sutton

1990 The Public Theatre
New York, NY
Directed by Michael Greif
Young Woman/Helen
played by Jodie Markell

1993 Royal National Theatre
London, England
Directed by Stephen Daldry
Young Woman/Helen
played by Fiona Shaw



Fiona Shaw as the Young Woman

2013 Roundabout Theatre Company
New York, NY
Directed by Lyndsey Turner
Young Woman/Helen
played by Rebecca Hall

RUTH SNYDER TRIAL: THE REAL “YOUNG WOMAN”

In the early morning hours of March 20, 1927, Albert Snyder, 45, an art editor of *Motor Boating* magazine, was killed in his Queens Village home. At first, the murder appeared to be the result of a violent break-in; Snyder had been found bound and strangled, injured with blows to the head and drugged with chloroform. His wife, Ruth Snyder, 32, had also been knocked out and bound hand and foot. Only the couple's daughter, 9-year-old Lorraine, was unharmed, awoken when her mother regained consciousness and managed to knock at her bedroom door.



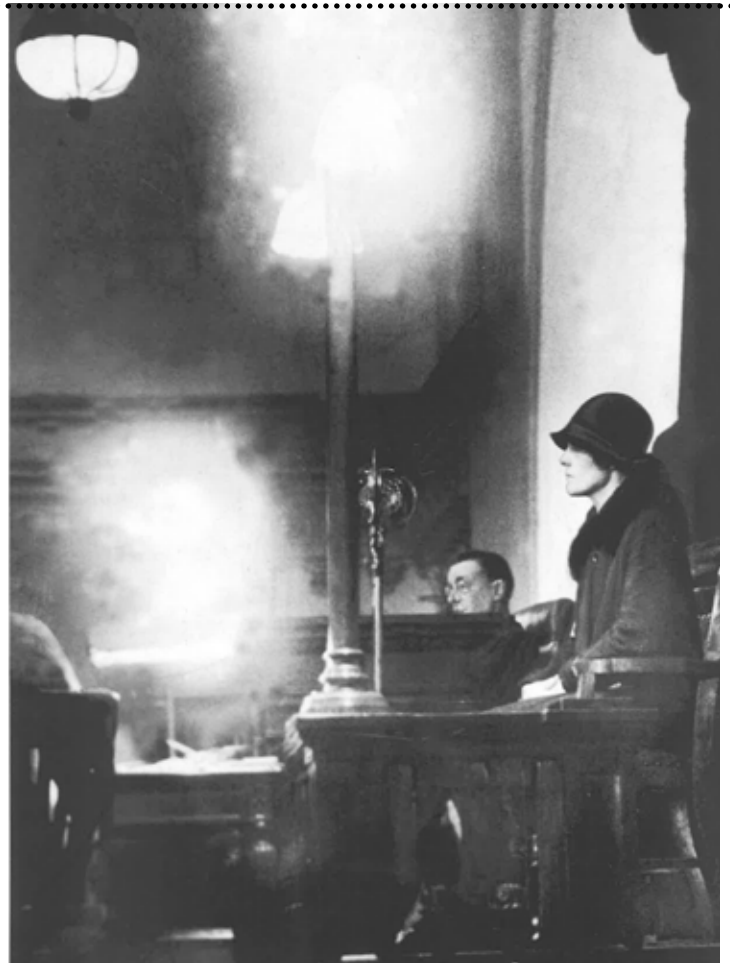
Ruth Snyder with mother and daughter.

Lorraine summoned the family's neighbors for help. When police arrived on the scene, they almost immediately suspected that something was amiss. The home had been thoroughly ransacked from top to bottom. The chaotic mess extended even to the kitchen, a room usually ignored by skilled burglars. Mrs.

Snyder, despite her claim to have been knocked unconscious for some six hours, had no evidence of head trauma, and her hands and ankles were bound loosely, bearing no marks from the ties. Her jewelry, thought stolen, was discovered under a mattress. The front door was unlocked. There was no indication of forced entry. The twin bed that Mrs. Snyder usually slept in next to her husband was undisturbed. And, after a little digging, the police discovered that Snyder had recently invested in an increase in her husband's life insurance policy, paying an \$850 premium out of her own pocket to bump the policy up to a \$95,000 double-indemnity payout.

Hours later, Snyder was in custody. Her detainment was quickly followed by the arrest of Henry Judd Gray, 35, a man suspected to be Snyder's lover and partner in crime. At first, both denied any charge that they had been involved in Albert Snyder's death. But by the 21st of March, they had confessed to both their affair and the murder. The trial that followed—in all of its sensational, voyeuristic drama—captured the fascination of New York and the country at large.

When Gray and Snyder confessed, their crime appeared to be an open-and-shut case; their stories, obtained separately, matched almost completely. Snyder's 12-year marriage had



Ruth Snyder on the stand.

been primarily one of mutual beneficence: the Mrs. secured financial stability; the Mr. secured a charming 20-year-old wife. But it soured quickly. Snyder had been harboring the desire to, in her words, “get rid of” her husband for some time (later testimony would reveal that she had attempted to kill him some seven times before enlisting Gray's help). Now, fortified by Gray, her longing for escape became even more urgent. She confessed that the final plan to kill Mr. Snyder was prompted by fear; in a recent argument, he had threatened to “blow [her] brains out.” With this threat on the table, Snyder and Gray resolved to take action. They laid out their plan in a series of letters, and, after a brief hiccup (their own nerves foiled an effort in early March); their plan came to fruition on the night of the 19th.

The only significant way in which Snyder and Gray's confessions differed was in their description of the murder itself. Snyder claimed she watched from the hallway as Gray killed her husband, while Gray said that Snyder administered one of the fatal blows herself. The conflicting attributions of responsibility



Camera that was smuggled in by reporter to capture Ruth Snyder's execution.



Picture of Ruth Snyder's execution that was captured by the camera above.

foreshadowed the trial itself, in which Snyder and Gray were constantly fighting to pass the buck of blame onto one another.

Despite the irrefutable clarity of both the motivation and evidence of the crime, Snyder and Gray both refuted the charges of first degree murder. They both entered the April 25th trial with multiple lawyers and fervent pleas of "not guilty." It quickly became apparent that, co-conspirators as they may have been, Snyder and Gray would not be courtroom allies. They both claimed that their confessions had been made under duress and that the real truth of the story was, essentially: *(s)he made me do it!* Snyder claimed that Gray had been plotting to kill her husband for some time, but she had begged him not to and even pulled him off of Snyder during the attack. Meanwhile, Gray claimed that Snyder had induced him to kill her husband, plying him with sex and liquor. Though he admitted he'd carried out the orders, he insisted that the ultimate fault lay with Snyder.

This *he said/she said* approach worried Gray and Snyder's lawyers even as they crafted it; with their clients blaming each other for the murder, the two counsels would really need to mount two defenses: one against the prosecution (led by district attorney Richard S. Newcombe) and one against the attacks of the co-defendant. They requested that the case be carried out in two separate trials, but Supreme Court Justice Townsend Scudder dismissed the request. Ruth Snyder and Henry Judd Gray found themselves on the same side of an extremely tense table, at once fighting for innocence and trying desperately to assign guilt. In the effort to cast suspicion away from their clients, Snyder and Gray's lawyers painted their doomed relationship in the most heightened terms possible: the biblical.

Utilizing Garden of Eden imagery, both councils attempted to sway the jury by claiming the other represented all that was problematic about both Adam and Eve.

The heightened drama of 1920s newspaper coverage amplified the theatrics of the courtroom to an even greater degree. Gossipy prose described the glares exchanged between defendants (or, rather, between Snyder and the back of Gray's head, as the two were refusing to make eye contact) and doted on the angelic features of Lorraine Snyder, called before the jury as a sympathy-inspiring character witness.

Ultimately, however, Snyder's denial was not enough to convince the 12-man jury of her innocence. On May 9, 1927, after only one hour and forty minutes of deliberation, the jury filed back into the courthouse and found Ruth Snyder and Henry Judd Gray guilty of murder in the first degree. A week later, their sentence, death by electric chair, was officially pronounced. The sentence put Ruth Snyder in an historically small group: fewer than ten women had ever been executed for murder in New York state, and Snyder would be only the third executed by the electric chair since its inception in the 1880s. The rarity of her position placed even greater public scrutiny on the case. In the months following the trial both Snyder's and Gray's lawyers attempted to appeal the case, but were denied. Snyder's lawyers submitted a writ of habeas corpus for their client, but it was denied. Both parties applied for clemency from New York Governor Alfred E. Smith. He refused.

And so, on January 12th, 1928 shortly after 11pm, Snyder and Gray went to Sing Sing's electric chair. In one of the most famous and contentious media moves of the 20th century, Tom Howard, a *Chicago*

Tribune photographer hired by the *New York Daily News*, photographed Snyder moments after the electric current surged through her body. Cameras were forbidden in the execution room, but Howard managed to smuggle a small camera in by strapping it to his ankle. The picture ran on the front page of the *Daily News* the next day, bringing closure to this very public trial. ✿



Front page of newspaper reporting on Ruth Snyder's execution.

JUSTICE AND JOURNALISM IN THE 1920s



In *Machinal*, the character of the Young Woman finds herself at the center of the media attention when she's put on trial for murder. The news media has always influenced how Americans interpret world events, or, as the first paper printed in the American colonies called them, "Publick Occurrences, both Foreign and Domestick." How a journalist tells a story shapes how the reader understands the events described: from the Patriot press of 1775 through the partisan news reports of modern 24/7 cable channels.

THE ERA OF JAZZ JOURNALISM

In 1920, Americans of all classes invariably got their news from newspapers, which were cheap to print, cheap to buy, and available everywhere. More than 2,000 different newspapers were printed in the United States, and emerging newspaper chains ensured that readers from Poughkeepsie to Portland read many of the same stories. Some papers printed two or three editions a day: a morning edition, an afternoon paper, and the evening version, each reporting the latest updates on the day's big stories.

Readers in large urban markets like New York had tens of different papers from which to choose. Respected dailies like *The New York Times* focused on objective reporting of serious stories. But a new type of newspaper, the tabloid, featuring "jazz journalism," defined the industry in the 1920s.

The nation's first tabloid, the *New York Illustrated Daily News*, debuted in 1919 and quickly became the highest-circulating paper in the country. Imitators were ubiquitous. Competition for readers,

and their money, was high, prompting reporters and editors to print the most salacious news they could find—or invent.

Compared to traditional papers, tabloids were smaller, with easier—to flip—pages. They drew an urban, working class readership and focused on sex, crime, and celebrity gossip, featuring large, often tawdry, images. Tabloids were notorious for altering and manipulating photographs: pasting movie stars' faces onto the bodies of scantily-clad showgirls and running a composite image of heartthrobs Rudolph Valentino and Enrico Caruso together in heaven. Tabloids were also known for their enormous, splashy headlines:

First Reporter: MURDERESS CONFESSES.

Second Reporter: PARAMOUR BRINGS CONFESSION.

Third Reporter: I DID IT! WOMAN CRIES!

FAMOUS CASES, FAMOUS STORIES

Crime was a hot topic in the 1920s. It was the era of Prohibition and bootleggers, organized crime, kidnappings, and silent movie stars behaving badly. Crime sold papers, and papers influenced how the public perceived the accused.

FATTY ARBUCKLE

On Labor Day weekend of 1921, Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle, the highest paid silent film star in the world, attended a "gin party,"

despite Prohibition. During the party, a 25-year-old model, actress, and known party girl, Virginia Rappe, fell ill from an infected, ruptured bladder. She died several days later.

The original story of what happened between Rappe and Arbuckle at that party was told to the press by Maude Delmont. Delmont, who had a reputation for being a Madame and blackmailer, insinuated that Rappe had sustained the ruptured bladder in a sexual assault by Arbuckle. Her story was quickly picked up by the papers: the country's most beloved movie star killed a woman by sexually assaulting her at a glamorous, boozed up party. It made for great headlines. The case was a bonanza for publishers as readers clamored for the latest gossip.

By the time the facts of the case were established—Arbuckle had not sexually assaulted Rappe, she had a chronic bladder condition, and she had never accused him of anything—the newspaper coverage had turned the country completely against him. He lost his entire fortune defending himself during a string of trials and was finally acquitted by a jury that took the extra step of composing a statement about the injustice they felt had been perpetrated against him. Despite acquittal, he was briefly banned from appearing on screen, changed his name, and spent the rest of his life eking out a living behind the scenes.

LEOPOLD AND LOEB

Newspapers of the 1920s relied on crime headlines to sell papers—but they also had a financial stake in important cases being solved. A dramatic trial could provide weeks of front-page copy. In pursuit of a story, reporters sometimes cracked the case.

On May 22, 1924, 13-year-old Bobby Franks failed to return home for dinner. His worried parents soon received a phone call demanding a \$10,000 ransom.

As Bobby's family prepared to pay, the body of a boy was discovered in a culvert near Wolf Lake. Descriptions of the body didn't match

Bobby Franks, but a reporter, tipped off about the discovery, convinced Bobby's uncle to come take a look. It was Bobby.

The Chicago press was all over the case. They printed notices seeking information on the kidnapping, lists of open questions, and any clues they could get their hands on. Newspapers offered rewards for solving the case and cash for interesting theories about what had happened.

Forensic science in the 1920s was not advanced, and the manhunt for the killer came down to analysis of a typewritten ransom note and the hunt for the owner of a pair of unusual glasses found near the body. The glasses pointed to an unlikely pair of suspects, Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb, a pair of wealthy, teenage neighbors of Bobby Franks. But the cops' questioning of the boys stalled when they provided each other with alibis.

Meanwhile, two reporters tracked down typewritten notes made by Leopold for a study group and compared them with the ransom note. They were a match, and cops had a new direction for their investigation. Eventually, Leopold and Loeb confessed: they murdered Bobby for the thrill, in an attempt to commit the perfect crime.

After their confessions, Leopold and Loeb played the press, inviting them on a tour of the crime scene and speaking with reporters at length. They were chatty, attractive, rich, well-spoken and their crime involved a car, a novelty at the time. The nation was captivated.

WGN considered broadcasting their trial over the radio but decided it was inappropriate subject matter for the public airwaves. But they didn't give up the idea. A few years later, the lawyer who defended Leopold and Loeb, Clarence Darrow, would lead the defense in the Scopes monkey trial, the first trial in American history to be broadcast over the radio. A new era in news began. ❁



Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb

INTERVIEW WITH COSTUME DESIGNER MICHAEL KRASS



Inspiration for *Machinal* costume designs.

Costume Designer Michael Krass discussed his process of costume designing *Machinal* with Education Dramaturg Ted Sod.

Ted Sod: Where were you born and educated? How did you become a costume designer?

Michael Krass: Born in Connecticut, the first plays that I saw were Broadway plays, so it set a standard in my head and eye. I went to school at the College of William and Mary in Virginia, which meant that I did a bit of everything—when I got out, I had designed a lot of scenery, I thought acting was not for me and that I wasn't smart enough to be a director, so I came to New York and talked my way into a job at a costume company. I actually had never designed costumes before, and I never had a costume class.

TS: I want to talk about your approach to this specific show, *Machinal*, because if I am not mistaken, there is an extraordinary amount of costume changes.

MK: When I met with Lyndsey Turner, the director, for the job interview this summer, we talked for an hour. She only looked at three images from my portfolio, total. She really just wanted to know who I was. We had a great talk, and she politely warned me that there would be a huge amount of costumes, and I said, "Bring it on." There are transitions between each scene full of characters

who may or may not be in the text, but certainly are in the play. So, yes, it's enormous. There are already six full racks of clothes and we are adding to that. Lyndsey just got to New York, and she looked at the racks yesterday. We spent two hours talking through everything. Every single thing that she said about the clothes she saw was in response to the story—only the story—not personal taste or judgments—and that was great.

TS: What did you do to get inside this particular play?

MK: I started by looking at images of the 1920s in New York, while simultaneously keeping my eye on today's clothing. It is always important to look at it with a modern eye because that is how the audience is looking at the play. Lyndsey and I sent images back and forth to each other and started to narrow down the world. I would send her ten images saying, "What do you think of this? What do you think of these kinds of people?" And she would send back three of the images and would say, "I think this kind of thing because of this, that and this." It became clear that every garment would be authentic to the '20s. I am in fact using a great number of garments that were made then, which has taken a good amount of work. In some cases we will have to copy them because they are fragile. And then what I developed on my own here, when Lyndsey was working with Es Devlin on the scenery in England, was a color palette. I thought we needed to tell an emotional story through color, and so I proposed a color journey which came from the emotional feeling of each scene. Everything is chosen very specifically per scene. There may be a shoe from 1923 which is perfect, but if it is not the right color, then it is not in the play.



Inspiration for *Machinal* costume designs.

TS: Weren't the 1920s a radical shift for clothing? Can you fill us in on that?

MK: It's the most enormous shift in fashion history. Following World War I, life changed, social life changed, the class system changed, women left the house, women had work, women played sports, and classes mixed. That all happened during the 1920s. Hair was cut during the course of the '20s, and for the first time in history, women were showing their legs, arms, back—it was a very, very fast race away from the horror of the war. Simultaneously, we entered the machine age, and there was speed, there was movement. The '20s are about physical freedom. The beginning part of the play we are setting in the early '20s when things were just shifting. Dresses are

long, men's collars are very high and formal and then, in the later part of the play, you will see more leg, more flesh, some amount of color and some amount of sleekness. We are aiming at 1923 for the early scenes and about 1928 for the later ones.

TS: Can you remember your emotional response to first reading the play?

MK: It is one of the great plays, and it's been marginalized into "women's theatre" instead of being recognized as a great human play. Lyndsey is very specific. She's not doing a feminist play, she's doing a human play, and I find that approach to be exhilarating.



Inspiration for *Machinal* costume designs.

TS: Talk about working with actors. I understand you are very empathetic to the actors' needs.

MK: We need to be specific. That's what actors do: they develop incredibly specific characters. When the cast starts rehearsals this week, they will start to be assigned characters who may or may not be scripted and they will start to form ideas in their heads. So if I don't use who they are inventing, I have failed. If an actor is creating a high-powered, glamorous lawyer, I need to know that, so we can make the suit fit precisely. We can get the precise collar, special shoes, and the right jewelry. We can make sure the hair has shine and glow to it. So I have 18 actors who are, for the most part, creating well over a hundred characters, and it is all about reacting to their personal discoveries.

TS: Do you have an inordinate amount of assistants working with you on this piece?

MK: No, I wish I could. But I have a great associate designer, Tracy Christensen, who is a dear friend and has worked with me for 25 years. She is extraordinary.

TS: In today's economy it is rare to get the opportunity to work on a play of this scope. True?

MK: The Roundabout has afforded me that opportunity more than any other theatre. I have designed *Twelve Angry Men*, I did *A View from the Bridge*, which was enormous, and *After the Fall*, and I did *The Constant Wife*, which was also set in the '20s and was, in fact, the flip side of the costume coin—it has all the gloss of upper class Britain.

TS: How will you collaborate with the other designers?

MK: It is interesting because Lyndsey works primarily in the British system where scenery and costumes are done by one person. So this is new for her. I have written a long document to the designers upon Lyndsey's request, about the color path I am inventing. She sent it to Es,

and I was so anxious. In fact, Es was very excited by it and had some great suggestions. She was, it turns out, inspired by some of the choices that I had made. Jane Cox, the lighting designer, has been copied on everything. I've invited her to see the racks of clothes, which are in scene order, so she can walk through all the color and texture changes and react to them in her medium.

TS: Lyndsey made me aware of a *Vogue* shoot you worked on with Rebecca Hall.

MK: It's a story for *Vogue* about Rebecca in this play, and it needed to be shot in August or September. I got a call from Phyllis Posnick, who is one of the legendary photo editors at *Vogue*, she was making the photo shoot happen—booking the photographer and creating the imagery. She asked me for my point of view. She said that she had some garments that might work for Rebecca, who was in London, and asked if I would be interested in coming up to *Vogue* and looking at them. I told her I had some dresses as well that might be useful to the photo shoot if she wanted me to bring them. So I arrived at *Vogue* with a suitcase filled with '20s dresses and coats, so excited. I showed Phyllis mine and she showed me hers, and she lit up at one of the dresses that I have had under my bed for 25 years. I was there for about an hour. I walked through the halls of *Vogue* and I was thrilled by it. My impression was that it was a laboratory in the sky above Times Square where people truly cared about the world of human clothing in a way that was heightened and very, very thoughtful. It was amazing.

TS: If a young person were interested in designing clothes for the stage, what advice would you give them?

MK: Read plays, know plays, see plays. Travel, go to art museums, understand what the world is. It is not just about clothes, it's about human beings, and it is about human history. It's about telling stories. About once a year, someone sends me a student who has been in fashion at



Inspiration for *Machinal* costume designs.

FIT or somewhere and who is "interested in theatre." My first question is: What plays have you seen? If they look blankly at me, I say go see some plays and I'll talk to you in six months. I usually never see them again.

TS: Is there anything else you want to say about your craft or the play?

MK: I want to say this is the best job that I have ever had. It is exactly what I care about: working intimately with actors and creating authenticity in a world where authenticity is leaving us. I spend my life on the subway watching people and understanding who they are by what they wear. I am getting to translate that into a piece of theatre that really matters with a great director. I am in heaven. ✿

PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

FOR
EDUCATORS

HOW DOES AN ENSEMBLE COLLABORATE TO “BUILD” A MACHINE?

In *Machinal*, the ensemble of actors (some of whom play multiple roles) uses movement, voice, and repetition to suggest the impact of new machines in everyday life of the 1920s. This activity allows a class to work together and focus on a single goal. For best results, push aside desks to create an open area.

ACTIVATE

1. One student starts in the center of the space, starting a machine by making a simple, repeatable gesture and a sound with a consistent rhythm.
2. Invite, or select, another student to join the machine by connecting to the first student, but using a new gesture and sound.
3. Each student joins in with a new sound and gesture and connects, until all students are involved in creating the machine.

VARIATIONS

- Machines can have a theme related to the play or other content the class is studying. Examples: History—1920s machine. ELA—a poetry machine. An argument essay machine. Science—photosynthesis machine, etc.
- Depending on the trust and maturity in the room, students can make contact or can simply connect with sound and rhythm.

REFLECT

How did you contribute to the machine? How did you keep the machine going? What was challenging about being part of a machine? What was fun about it?

HOW DID ARTISTS OF THE 1920s EXPLORE TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE THROUGH THEIR WORK?

The 1920s were a period of great technological change for Americans. They were driving cars, listening to the radio, working on assembly lines, and adjusting to new office technology. The pace of life and communication changed. Sophie Treadwell wasn't alone in reacting to the mechanization of daily life through her art: American visual artists and poets were reacting as well.

Materials: blank paper, colored pencils or markers

READ

Share the following poem by William Carlos Williams with students.

The Great Figure (1921)

Among the rain
and lights
I saw the figure 5
in gold
on a red
firetruck
moving
tense
unheeded
to gong clangs
siren howls
and wheels rumbling
through the dark city



"I Saw the Figure 5 in Gold"

REFLECT

Which words in this poem suggest the changes 1920s city dwellers experienced? How do you think these changes made William Carlos Williams feel?

ACTIVATE

If this poem were an illustration, what colors would it be? How would the lines look? Ask students to illustrate "The Great Figure," expressing both the literal meaning of the words and their emotional content.

RESPOND

Display student work and invite students to "gallery walk" around the space to explore other's creations. Encourage students to offer objective feedback on each other's work, using the phrase "I see..." and naming something (a color, a shape, etc) they objectively see. After several student work examples have been discussed, share "I Saw the Figure 5 in Gold," a 1928 painting by Charles Demuth based on "The Great Figure" and invite students to respond in the same objective style they used to discuss each other's work.

REFLECT

What choices did Mr. Demuth make to emphasize the changes happening in American cities? How does his painting illustrate Mr. Williams' poem? How were your choices different from Mr. Demuth's?

POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

FOR
EDUCATORS

HOW DOES A SOUND DESIGNER CREATE AN EMOTIONAL SOUNDSCAPE THAT REFLECTS MODERN URBAN LIFE?

Sophie Treadwell, the author of *Machinal*, specified sounds to be used throughout the play. These sounds were “chosen for their inherent emotional effect” on the audience and also reflected the changing, increasingly mechanical soundscape of the 1920s city.

WRITE Working in small groups, have students brainstorm a list of 5-7 sounds they hear regularly in one of these environments: school, home, work, a party. Encourage them to include both mechanical sounds and human sounds. What is a possible “emotional effect” of each of these sounds?

ACTIVATE Ask each group to choose an emotion they want to convey to the audience through their soundscape. Once each group has selected an emotion, invite students to create a 30 second soundscape using classroom objects and their own voices. Share soundscapes.

REFLECT What sounds did you hear? What choices did your group make in order to convey that specific emotion to your audience?

HOW DO SITUATIONS CHANGE THE ROLES WE PLAY IN LIFE?

ACTIVATE Use this open scene (or any other you prefer) to explore the impact of different situations. Working in pairs, students take on either A or B. Each pair then is assigned one situation and the accompanying roles, to become the given circumstances for their scene. A or B can be in either situational “Role.” (For best results, give students a chance to briefly discuss and rehearse)

A: What are you doing?

B: It should be obvious.

A: You shouldn't.

B: I know.

A: I mean, I really wish you wouldn't.

B: You should have thought of that.

A: Stop doing that and really listen to me.

B: You don't recognize “No” do you?

A: I just asked you to listen.

B: I said “No.” That's it. (End of Scene)

Situation 1: SCHOOL. Roles: TEACHER/STUDENT

Situation 2: HOME. Roles: CHILD/PARENT

Situation 3: WORK. Roles: BOSS/EMPLOYEE

Situation 4: PARTY. Roles: HOST/GUEST

REFLECT How did the same scene become different, when it was played in different situations? How do we play different roles in different situations in our own lives?

NEXT STEP Combine a situation performance with its corresponding location soundscape from the previous activity. How does the addition of sound design into the scene alter the audience experience? What changes do the actors need to make when this production element is added to the scene?

GLOSSARY

HALITOSIS	Bad breath <i>An office worker asks if Young Woman has halitosis.</i>
MEMORANDUM	Full name for "memo" <i>An office worker is reading a memorandum.</i>
PULLMAN PORTER	Someone who works on railroads who assists passengers <i>Husband tells Young Woman a joke about a Pullman porter and a tart.</i>
BRACE UP	To muster up courage <i>Husband tells Young Woman to brace up and face the realities of life.</i>
VIXEN	Temperamental and attractive woman <i>Young Woman, grappling with the difficulties she is facing after giving birth, describes a vixen attempting to hide.</i>
PURGATORY	Location between heaven and hell <i>A man sitting in a bar explains that the noise levels felt like he was in purgatory.</i>
AMONTILLADO	A Spanish alcohol <i>A man is explaining that his drink isn't nearly as good as amontillado and then begins describing the flavor.</i>
VERLAINE	Paul Verlaine was a French poet in the late 1800s <i>A man in a bar is explaining to a boy about his first edition Verlaine that is such good writing it would make the boy's mouth water.</i>
DEMURRER	Someone who objects <i>A clerk in the court room states the name of a case, Bing vs. Ding, and states that a demurrer existed and therefore needed a signature from the judge.</i>
HABEAS CORPUS	The law ordering someone to appear in court or before a judge, especially to stop someone from being wrongly imprisoned <i>A clerk in the court room states the name of a case, Case of John King, and then explains that he needs a judge's signature for Habeas corpus to proceed.</i>
STENOGRAPHER	A person who writes quickly by using abbreviations and symbols to record dictations <i>Young Woman explains that she was a stenographer for Mr. Jones.</i>
PEIGNOIR	A woman's nightgown <i>A lawyer questions the Young Woman about what she was wearing when the police arrived after her husband's murder.</i>
UNDAUNTED	Not discouraged, not in fear <i>A lawyer explains that his witness was undaunted by the prosecution's cross examination.</i>
AFFIDAVIT	A written declaration under oath made before an authorized official <i>The lawyers explain that an affidavit has been taken, which was signed by a previous witness.</i>

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ABOUT ROUNDABOUT

ROUNDABOUT THEATRE COMPANY

Founded in 1965, Roundabout Theatre Company has grown from a small 150-seat theatre in a converted supermarket basement to become the nation's most influential not-for-profit theatre company, as well as one of New York City's leading cultural institutions. With five stages on and off Broadway, Roundabout now reaches over 700,000 theatergoers, students, educators and artists across the country and around the world every year.

We are committed to producing the highest quality theatre with the finest artists, sharing stories that endure, and providing accessibility to all audiences. A not-for-profit company, Roundabout fulfills its mission each season through the production of classic plays and musicals; development and production of new works by established and emerging writers; educational initiatives that enrich the lives of children and adults; and a subscription model and audience outreach programs that cultivate and engage all audiences.

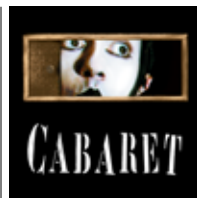
2013-2014 SEASON



By Terence Rattigan
Starring Michael Cumpsty, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, Alessandro Nivola, Roger Rees
Directed by Lindsay Posner



By Sophie Treadwell
Starring Rebecca Hall
Directed by Lyndsey Turner



Book by Joe Masteroff
Music by John Kander
Lyrics by Fred Ebb
Starring Alan Cumming and Michelle Williams
Co-directed and choreographed by Rob Marshall
Directed by Sam Mendes



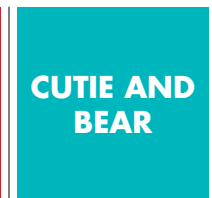
Book and lyrics by Brian Crawley
Starring Sutton Foster
Music by Jeanine Tesori
Directed by Leigh Silverman



By Joshua Harmon
Directed by Daniel Aukin



By Donald Margulies
Directed by Pam MacKinnon



By Bekah Brunstetter
Directed by Evan Cabnet

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STAFF SPOTLIGHT: SUSAN FALLON, WARDROBE SUPERVISOR

Ted Sod: What does a Broadway wardrobe supervisor's duties include? Do you ever get to see the show if you are working backstage?

Susan Fallon: As supervisor I am responsible for organizing the wardrobe department. A few of my responsibilities include: script breakdowns, hiring dressers, supply orders, overseeing costume repairs, answering to the designers and assistants and being sure to keep the integrity of the designed show, setting up quick changes, arranging the back and forth of costumes to the shops during the preview period and payroll for my department. I usually get to see a show twice. Once at the final rehearsal in the rehearsal hall and once when I "swing out", which means I get someone to cover the backstage goings on while I watch to be sure the show is still as beautiful or as ugly as the designer wants.

TS: *Machinal* has a large cast playing multiple roles, how does your job change when you have so many characters and costumes to look after?

SF: The basics don't change, it just gets more intense as the numbers climb. Dealing with a complicated show like *Machinal* needs concentration and a wonderful crew. If I didn't have a great, strong, smart, capable team, the job wouldn't get done.

TS: You started the Sunday brunch tradition for cast and crew during the run of each show — how did that come about?

SF: During *Major Barbara* in 2001, the idea of a Sunday brunch was suggested as a nice way for all of us to come together at the end of a long week. The tradition has continued and grown to be a highlight of our week for cast and crew. Sometimes, depending on the food of the day, the show is either slower (carbohydrates) or zooming (sugar!!)

TS: Will you share a favorite story or anecdote about working at The American Airlines Theatre?

SF: One of my favorites — there are many — *Machinal* marks my 74th show with the Roundabout! — happened during *Twelve Angry Men*. Our beloved Tom Aldredge would enter the stage at the beginning of the play and promptly go into the sets restroom. Shortly thereafter John Pankow would also go into this restroom. Tom would meet him with a bit of a "gag": panhandling, mussed hair, etc. When this was discovered, I told Tom I could get him small hand props to surprise John. A hula hoop, a paddle ball, a pipe, etc. These small hand props evolved into full out production numbers involving the entire running crew. We had costume changes, furniture, and at least 7 or 8 extra people in this little restroom. And, we did it all in about 1 minute because Tom had to make his entrance very quickly after John did. Neither John nor Tom was ever late, and John never broke character...it was tremendous! 🌟

WHEN YOU GET TO THE THEATRE

FOR
EDUCATORS

TICKET POLICY

As a student participant in Producing Partners, Page To Stage or Theatre Access, you will receive a discounted ticket to the show from your teacher on the day of the performance. You will notice that the ticket indicates the section, row and number of your assigned seat. When you show your ticket to the usher inside the theatre, he or she will show you where your seat is located. These tickets are not transferable and you must sit in the seat assigned to you.

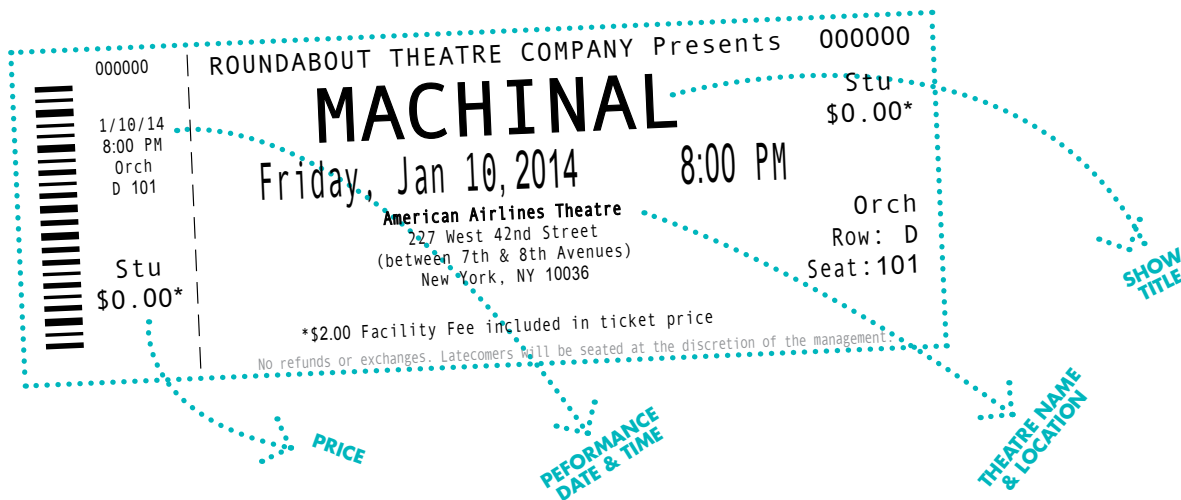
PROGRAMS

All the theatre patrons are provided with a program that includes information about the people who put the production together. In the "Who's Who" section, for example, you can read about the actors' roles in other plays and films, perhaps some you have already seen.

AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE

As you watch the show please remember that the biggest difference between live theatre and a film is that the actors can see

you and hear you and your behavior can affect their performance. They appreciate your applause and laughter, but can be easily distracted by people talking or getting up in the middle of the show. So please save your comments or need to use the rest room for intermission. Also, there is no food permitted in the theatre, no picture taking or recording of any kind, and if you have a cell phone, beeper, alarm watch, or anything else that might make noise, please turn it off before the show begins.



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