



Arthur
MILLER'S
THE PRICE

**ROUNDAABOUT
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COMPANY**

UPSTAGE GUIDE

A publication of **EDUCATION AT
ROUNDAABOUT**

UPSTAGE CALLBOARD

Arthur Miller's The Price

Directed by Terry Kinney

When the Great Depression cost his family their fortune, Victor Franz gave up his dream of an education to support his father. Three decades later, Victor has returned to his childhood home to sell the remainder of his parents' estate. His wife, his estranged brother, and the wily furniture dealer hired to appraise their possessions all arrive with their own agendas, forcing Victor to confront a question, long-stifled, about the value of his sacrifice.

a note from Artistic Director Todd Haines

To me, this play sits on a strange border between past and future. Its characters are, in many ways, shackled to their past. Everything that happens in the play is happening less because of decisions made in the present and more because of events that occurred decades earlier, back during the Great Depression. Yet at the same time, it's 1968, a time of incredible upheaval and forward motion in this country, and it's clear that these people will see a great deal of change ahead. It's this tension that makes the play so captivating, as Arthur Miller places these figures in a situation that speaks both to their own particular moment and to the questions faced by anyone trying to reconcile their conscience with the mistakes of the past.

when 1968

where A Manhattan Brownstone

who
Victor Franz
Esther Franz
Gregory Solomon
Walter Franz

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INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR TERRY KINNEY

Education Dramaturg Ted Sod spoke with Director Terry Kinney about his work on Arthur Miller's *The Price*.

Ted Sod: Where were you born and educated? How did you become an actor and a director in the theatre? Did you have any teachers who had a profound influence on you?

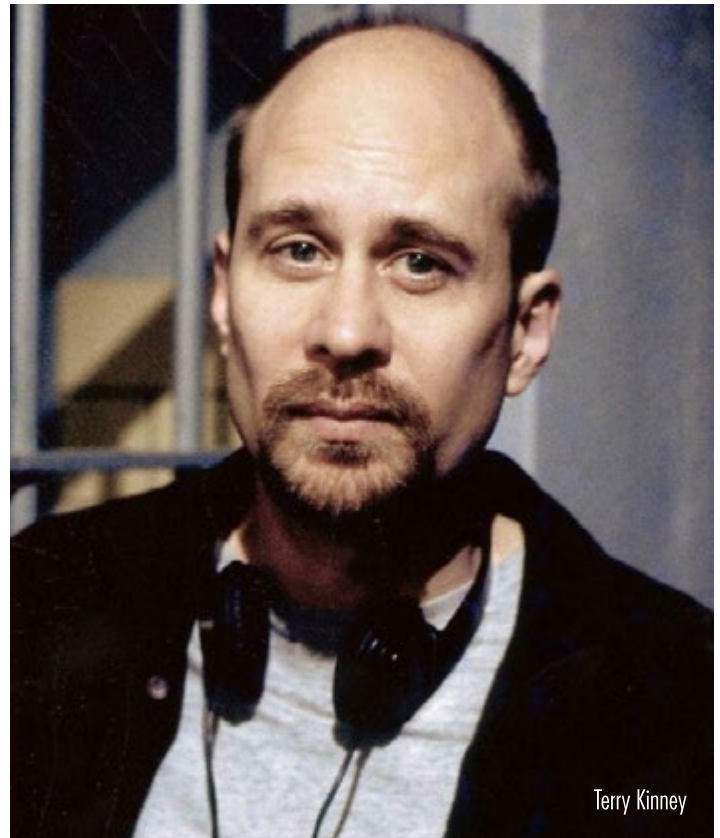
Terry Kinney: I grew up in a town called Lincoln, Illinois, which is in central Illinois near the state capitol of Springfield. There was not much exposure to theatre in Lincoln. I was peripherally involved in theatre until I went to Illinois State. I went in as a psychology major. But on the first day of school, someone told me they were handing out tuition waivers if you had an audition piece. I had one monologue semi-memorized from my speech team days, so I went to the tryouts and I got in. This was a fairly new department at the time. It had about 280 undergrads and 100 graduate students. They were all very serious about theatre, and that's where I met John Malkovich, Laurie Metcalf and Jeff Perry. The training there was really just doing plays. They kept the theatre open 24 hours a day and you could rehearse and put on shows on the weekend, which became the impetus for us starting Steppenwolf Theatre after we graduated. The teachers there were all remarkable and had a great influence on me. Most notably, Calvin Pritner taught me a lot about acting and spoke not only about objectives, but also really stressed "given circumstances." He had a very straightforward approach toward it. He used a lot of baseball metaphors. I had a directing teacher named Don LaCasse, who was integral in helping me understand how to take apart a play before I started working on it. He also taught me how to do a deep analysis of the architecture of a play and common sense blocking.

TS: Why did you choose to direct Arthur Miller's *The Price*? Does the play have personal resonance for you?

TK: Miller has always been my favorite American playwright, and *The Price* has always been very special to me since the first time I read it. I thought it was so different from many of Miller's other plays. It seemed more personal. It felt like he was writing about his own life. I had no evidence of that, and in fact Miller has denied it, but it's what I felt. Having a brother and older parents, the play has become more and more important to me. Every time I read it, it still moves me deeply. It makes me wonder about the aspects of our memories, and how we fashion ourselves into the protagonists of our own life stories. How we assign villains in our lives. How things that we can't take responsibility for, we assign to others. That metaphor resonates with me greatly and always has.

TS: How did you prepare to direct this play? Can you give us some insight into your process?

TK: When actors get in a rehearsal room, everything changes, and I like to allow for that. I really want ideas to flow, and that will dictate the direction of where we take the story. On the other hand, I prepare a lot. I try to do exhaustive research, you know, the time period, all that entails. I might let go of some of my preparation once we're all together, but I'll hang on to some of it. I inform myself by reading the play obsessively. I read it over and over to the point where I really know what's going to be on the next page. I don't pre-block a great deal because I don't want to lay that on the actors. I usually have a



Terry Kinney

clear notion of how I want to stage it, but the marriage of my ideas and the actors' impulses is what make a production far more nuanced and richer. The design elements—the set, the lights, the sound and composition of music—all of that goes into the preparation of any piece I direct. I would say the preparation I do is thorough, but it's also open. It's open to changes that will naturally develop.

TS: How do you understand the relationship between Victor and his brother Walter?

TK: It's like a lot of sibling relationships. Their perceptions of how their family operated and how they fit into that family—who they were to each other—has a lot of personal stinging truth and also a lot of fabrication. I'm talking about the kind of memories that you fabricate to protect yourself from your own responsibilities. These two guys are estranged because neither of them have the courage to face what really happened to their family. It was awful, and they had opposite impulses of how to deal with it. Victor martyred himself and has never been able to admit that he did it because of how he felt about himself. He was convinced it was his destiny. He sees himself as a loser. Walter, on the other hand, had a great deal of ambition. He wanted to feel free to make his own choices, and he wanted to be free from responsibility for his father and brother. Everything in that part of Walter's nature aided him until he broke down. After his breakdown, he continues to struggle with his old nature and has a great deal of anxiety because of it.

TS: I also want to ask about the marriage between Esther and Victor. Do you think that it's a healthy marriage?

TK: I think it's a complicated marriage as so many marriages are. It's been a long-term marriage with not a lot of money, and you know how that is. Esther has wanted enough money to feel comfortable and happy, the way she imagines others feel. She thinks that money will fix things, and she's turned to alcohol to assuage her disappointments. They love each other a lot, and they don't communicate very effectively anymore because they see the world quite differently. They put a lot of energy into their son, Richard, but now that he's gone out of the house, what Esther would love is to reform Victor into someone that he had the potential to be before he turned to the police force. Victor thinks it's just too late. Do I think they are in deep trouble as a married couple? I can't say. I think the actors will have a better idea of that. I think the way we want to play this relationship is that there is a great deal of love between them and they still wow each other when they look at each other. They still are very attracted to each other.

TS: What about the character of Solomon—do you think he's in the play to remind the Franz brothers and Esther of where they came from?

TK: That's very interesting. I hadn't thought of it that way. I think that what Miller's doing with Solomon—and his name is no mistake—is to bring into the conflict a person who's seen it all, who has survived it all, who keeps going, and who sees both sides. When you see both sides of an argument, you realize there is absolutely no right or no wrong. It's all a gray area. I think Solomon knows that. I'm excited about what Danny DeVito will bring to the role.

TS: What type of actors did you need for the rest of this cast?

TK: With Victor, I wanted someone with a quiet intensity who was compelling even when he wasn't saying anything. A man who makes you want to know what he is thinking. I wanted a good listener and someone with gravitas. I wanted a man who understands personal pain and cost. That's a tall order, and we are so lucky to have Mark Ruffalo in the role. Walter is a character who walks in and the audience has heard so much about him that they are prepared to dislike him. Well, that's not the way Miller saw it—he wanted both arguments to



Mark Ruffalo and Tony Shalhoub

be given equal weight. I needed someone who is charming and who can access a deep well of feelings. A person who is gentle and can explain why we choose the life we choose. Tony Shalhoub has all of that depth of feeling. The character of Esther, which sometimes gets short shrift in the analysis of the play, is a woman who is patient and understanding, and yet she bristles against all the misogyny in her world. She is angered by the

men in society who parse out wealth to the few that they feel deserve it. She's a loving woman and yet very frustrated by her plight, and it requires an actress with a great deal of heart and skill. That's why I've asked Jessica Hecht to play it.

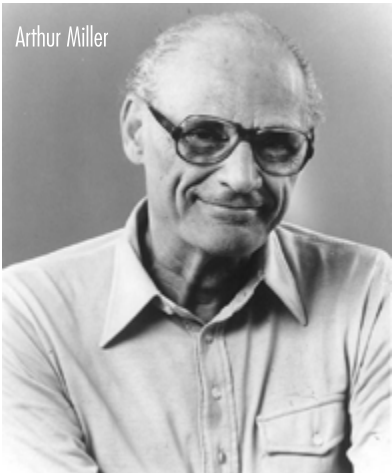
TS: Do you have any advice for young people who say they want to direct for the theatre?

TK: My advice is don't let anybody talk you out of it. Hopefully, you are aware that you aren't going to make money. Making money is not why you should be doing theatre to begin with. If you want to direct, go out and find friends and a room to do it in and direct. Nobody can really stop you from doing that. That's how Steppenwolf Theatre was born. What we wanted was to just make art together. We were in the church basement, and nobody gave a shit.

TS: What keeps you inspired as an artist?

TK: I like truth. I like things that take me unaware, things that don't reflect my daily life but shed light on it through metaphor and image. I'm inspired by music all the time, and I listen to a lot of it. When I work on a play, I listen to music constantly. There's a musicality to language that's essential to every play that I direct, and I like to find that musicality in the music I listen to. I'm inspired by everybody who is brave enough to make art because I think it requires a great deal of bravery. Every time I go to see something—whether it be theatre, opera, or the Philharmonic—I constantly find myself filled with the same wonder that I had the first time I ever saw any kind of art. I'm in awe of how they do it. I'm not the least bit jaded when I go to theatre. I'm not overly critical. I am a perpetual amateur. It serves me well to retain that status because I still find wonder in each moment that we build together as artists. When you build something and it works and everybody in the room knows it's working—that's just an incredible feeling. •

ABOUT ARTHUR MILLER



Arthur Miller

©The Inge Morath Foundation/Magnum Photos

A CHILDHOOD DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Arthur Miller was born in October 1915, on West 110th Street, to parents of Polish Jewish descent. His father Isidore was a prosperous coat manufacturer, and his mother Augusta was an avid reader and educator. Prior to 1929, the family lived

comfortably in a large apartment, and young Arthur was driven in a chauffeured car. However, the stock market crash and the Great Depression changed everything. The Millers moved to Brooklyn, living in drastically reduced circumstances, experiences that would influence young Arthur Miller and inform many of his plays.

Miller attended James Madison High School and graduated from Abraham Lincoln High School in 1932. By the time he was 16, Miller knew he had a talent for storytelling and entertaining his friends and wanted to become a writer. Miller worked odd jobs, including carpenter, delivery boy, and clerk for an auto parts warehouse, to save for college. He attended the University of Michigan, where he wrote for the student paper and majored in English. There Miller was mentored by playwright and professor Kenneth Rowe, who taught classic plays and their dramatic structure. In 1936, Miller won the school's Avery Hopwood Award for his first play, *No Villain*. The \$250 prize helped him pay for school and encouraged him to pursue playwriting.

BROADWAY BOUND

After graduating in 1938, Miller returned to New York to write radio plays for the short-lived Federal Theater Project. He married Mary Slattery, his college sweetheart, in 1940. They soon had two children, and Miller worked in the Brooklyn Navy Yard to support his family while continuing to write.

Although Miller's 1944 Broadway debut, *The Man Who Had All the Luck*, closed after four performances, he hit in 1947 with *All My Sons*. This moral tragedy, about a manufacturer who sells faulty parts to the military, resonated

with audiences who had endured the Depression and World War II. It ran almost a year and earned Miller his first Tony Award® for Best Author.

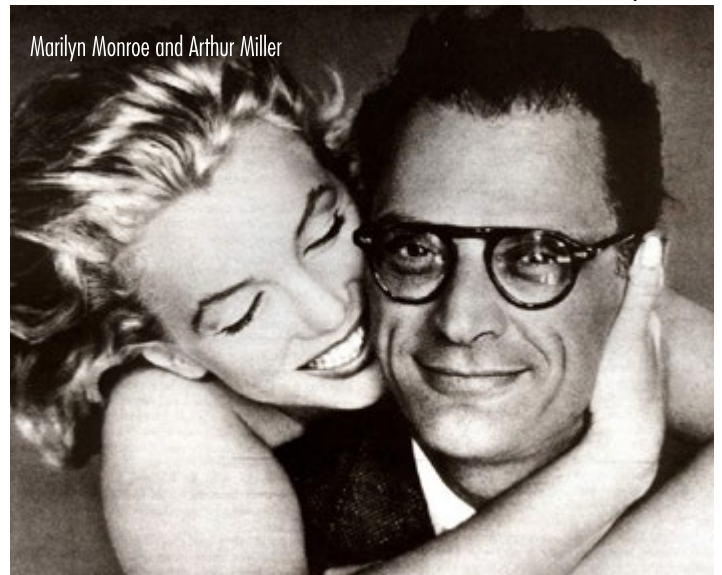
Miller built a small studio in Roxbury, Connecticut, where he wrote the first act of *Death of Salesman* in less than a day (completing the play in the next six weeks). His creation of Willy Loman, an aging salesman confronting his own failure, resulted in an American masterpiece. Under the direction of Elia Kazan, *Salesman* premiered on Broadway in February 1949 and won the Pulitzer Prize, the Tony Award, and the Drama Critics' Circle Award.

MCCARTHYISM AND THE CRUCIBLE

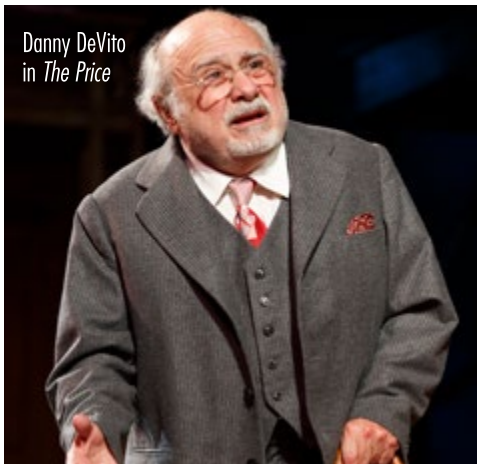
With *The Crucible* in 1953, Miller dramatized the 1692 Salem witch trials as an allegory for McCarthyism. Miller wrote the play as a rebuke against Kazan, who had betrayed mutual friends by naming them as Communists to the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). Although the original production was not as successful as his previous plays, it has since become one of Miller's most frequently produced plays around the world. When Miller himself was called before the HUAC in 1956, he refused to "name names" and was cited for contempt of Congress. The ruling was overturned two years later.

MARRIAGE TO MARILYN

Miller initially met Marilyn Monroe in 1951 through Kazan, who was dating her at the time. Their friendship turned into a romance, and in 1956, Miller divorced his first wife to wed Marilyn, hailed by Norman Mailer as the union of "the Great American Brain" and "the Great American Body."



Marilyn Monroe and Arthur Miller



Danny DeVito
in *The Price*

Throughout their high-profile marriage, Monroe worked steadily while struggling with addiction and personal problems, but Miller wrote very little. An exception was his screenplay for *The Misfits*,

penned for Monroe. The film, starring Monroe, Clark Gable, and Montgomery Clift, was directed by John Huston and released in 1961. Miller and Monroe divorced the same year, and she died of an overdose the following year.

LATER CAREER AND RESURGENCE

Although the next few decades did not yield the hits of the postwar years, Miller remained a presence in the theatre. His 1964 play *After the Fall* was thought by many to have been inspired by his marriage to Monroe; however, Miller denied this, stating, "The play is a work of fiction. No one is reported in this play." Miller reunited with longtime collaborator Elia Kazan for its premiere. Other works included *Incident at Vichy*, *The Price*, and *The American Clock* (inspired by his family's experiences during the Depression). He also scripted the 1980 TV movie *Playing for Time*, based on the true story of Jewish musicians in an Auschwitz orchestra during the Holocaust.

Outside of the theatre, Miller worked for the rights of international writers as president of PEN International.

MAJOR WORKS: PLAYS

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1944 - <i>The Man Who Had All The Luck</i> | 1950 - <i>An Enemy of the People</i> | 1964 - <i>After the Fall</i> |
| 1947 - <i>All My Sons</i> | 1953 - <i>The Crucible</i> | 1965 - <i>Incident at Vichy</i> |
| 1949 - <i>Death of a Salesman</i> | 1955 - <i>A View From The Bridge</i> | 1968 - <i>The Price</i> |

MAJOR WORKS: SCREENPLAYS

- 1961 - *The Misfits*
- 1985 - *Death of a Salesman*
- 1996 - *The Crucible*

MAJOR WORKS: NON-FICTION

- 1984 - *Salesman in Beijing*
- 1987 - *Timebends: A Life*

He spoke against the Vietnam War in 1965, participated locally in Connecticut politics, and served as a delegate to the Democratic National Convention in 1968. Miller married Austrian-born photographer Inge Morath in 1962, and the couple had two children, Rebecca and Daniel. He collaborated with Morath by writing the texts for three books: *In Russia*, *In the Country*, and *Chinese Encounters*. Miller's own memoirs include *Salesman in Beijing* (1984) and his autobiography, *Timebends* (1987). The marriage lasted until Morath's death in 2002.

In the 1990s, three new plays, *The Ride Down Mt. Morgan*, *The Last Yankee*, and *Broken Glass*, brought renewed attention. Miller's themes of success and failure continued to resonate and find a new audience for revivals of his earlier work, including a 1996 film of *The Crucible*, a 2005 Tony-winning production of *Death of a Salesman*, and, most recently, acclaimed reinterpretations of *A View from the Bridge* and *The Crucible* from director Ivo Van Hove.

DEATH AND LEGACY

By the time of his death at age 89, Miller's work was being performed somewhere around the world on any given day of the year. Miller died of heart failure on February 10, 2005, which coincided with the 56th anniversary of *Salesman's* original Broadway opening, surrounded by family and friends. The BBC obituary praised Miller as "a man of the highest integrity, both in his work and in his personal life, Arthur Miller was an old-fashioned liberal, who never accepted the American dream at face value." Besides his many plays, his legacy includes The Arthur Miller Foundation for Theater and Film Education, chaired by Rebecca Miller, which promotes access to theater and film education for NYC public school students. •

ROUNDOABOUT PRODUCTIONS OF ARTHUR MILLER WORKS INCLUDE:



WHY MILLER NOW?

ARTHUR MILLER, THE MORAL VOICE OF THE AMERICAN THEATRE

"I think now that the great thing is not so much the formulation of an answer for myself, for the theater, or the play—but rather the most accurate possible statement of the problem."— Arthur Miller, *National Observer* (January 20, 1964)

In Ancient Greece, theatre was presented both as a form of entertainment and as a mirror held up to society. It was used as a forum to provoke and debate, to ask important questions of where society was headed, but not necessarily to pose answers. Arthur Miller's own work was heavily influenced by Greek theatre, and as illustrated in the quote above, we can see that this need to call into question the very fabric of society is a recurring theme through all of Miller's plays.

What sets Miller apart from his contemporaries and has cemented him among America's great playwrights is his ability to tackle these grand philosophical or ideological questions within the context of a family drama. The social conscience found in his work was forged by his experience of the Great Depression, which for him was the most impactful event on American society since the Civil War. This event was a tangible marrying of the personal and political, as it changed everything for American civilization and, more intimately, his family. The impact of the Great Depression is quantifiable in all of his work, from *Death of a Salesman* to *The Price* and from *After the Fall* to *The American Clock*, to name but a few.

Elia Kazan, who directed many of Miller's plays, claimed that this commitment to holding society to account came from a tradition formed out of the Group Theater in the 1930s and '40s, that each play should "teach a lesson and make a thematic point." Writing, for Miller, was "like breathing"; he saw playwriting as worthy a cause as being a doctor because the playwright not only had the job of holding society to account, but also had the potential to change it entirely. And you can see this mark all over his work both inside and outside the theatre. For example, in 1965 he spoke out against the Vietnam War and became the president of PEN International, an organization set up to defend the unalienable rights of writers.

It seemed to Miller that the more potent the societal observation he was making, the more successful his play



Arthur Miller testifies before the House Un-American Activities Committee

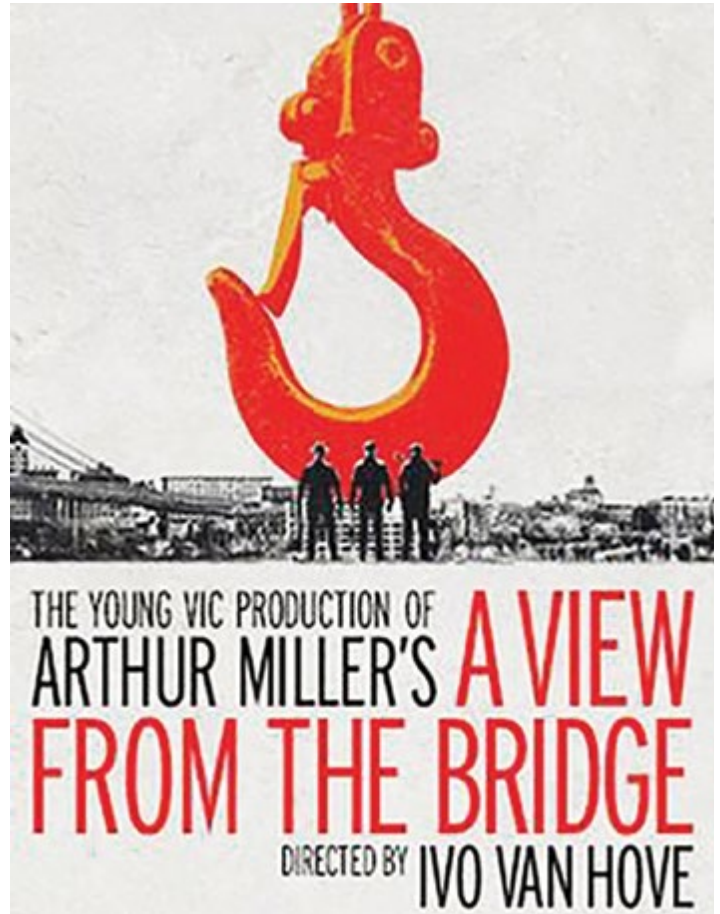
was, both critically and commercially. He probed at the flaws of the American dream in *Death of a Salesman* (1949), using one man's fall to question this country's obsession with the Horatio Alger myth. It immediately became a success and was hailed as an American classic upon its debut. *The Crucible* (1953) used the Salem Witch Trials and the plight of John Proctor as an allegorical response to McCarthyism, where the American government rounded up and prosecuted suspected Communists. Famously, Miller refused to name names at his trial at the House Un-American Activities Committee, but his action extends long before this. In the early days of the Communist witch hunt, he signed a petition urging the abolishment of HUAC entirely. From this evidence, you might expect *The Crucible* to be didactic. However, the quality of Miller's writing meant that it went beyond just being an allegory, extending into universal themes—adaptable to the fight against any tyranny. As a result, it has become his most frequently produced play. Reflecting on its success in 1987, Miller stated, "I can almost tell what the political situation



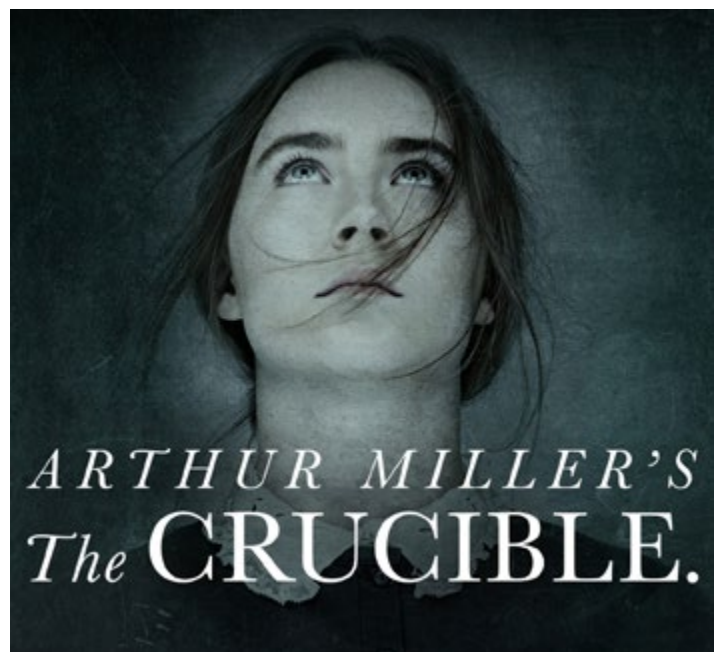
Arthur Miller and Elia Kazan

in a country is when the play is suddenly a hit there—it is either a warning of tyranny on the way or a reminder of tyranny just past.”

Right up until his death in 2005, Miller continued to be a moral voice for the American society. In fact, after Miller’s death his close friend Studs Terkel said of him, “He was a gifted man of the theater, but something else. He always spoke out. He spoke out for what he believed in, not only when it was unfashionable to speak out, but unsafe. Giftedness, and guts: Those are the words for this man.” Outside of his plays, he wrote essays, short stories, and an autobiography; his writing remained politically engaged in his later life. In 2002, Miller delivered a lecture after accepting the Chicago Tribune Literary Prize for Lifetime Achievement. In this lecture, he was highly critical of President George W. Bush’s style as a leader, commenting that “the truculent image is exactly the wrong one, if what you want to convey is that you are not only a strong leader but a mature man of reason.” He never stopped probing deeper into the conscience of the United States, which is why his work stays hauntingly relevant to this day. The quote leaves you thinking what he would make of the current political situation and, more importantly, what he would be writing about it. •



Artwork for the 2015 Broadway production of *A View from the Bridge*



Artwork for the 2016 Broadway production of *The Crucible*

THE GREAT DEPRESSION

"I had the usual American upbringing. Everything was going to be better every year. An endless boom. I thought the system was foolproof because it was advertised as such. The bursting of the bubble was devastating because it had been blown up so big. What disintegrated with the Depression was any faith in government." —Arthur Miller

Although written in 1968, *The Price* portrays a family coping with the legacy of the Great Depression. Long after the 1930s, Americans were still haunted by memories of breadlines, closed factories, rural poverty, and shantytowns. Arthur Miller once stated that there were only two true national events in the history of the U.S.: The Civil War and the Great Depression, and the latter looms heavily in much of his work.

THE GREAT DEPRESSION: AN OVERVIEW

The Great Depression began as an ordinary recession in the summer of 1929. The stock market crash of October 1929 foreshadowed the economic collapse in the U.S. and around the world, but it was only one of multiple causes, followed by four years of bank failures, steady decline in manufacturing and production, and rising unemployment. Until 1933, the federal government did little to stimulate the contracting economy, and Americans faced the harshest adversity since the Civil War.

The Depression eroded confidence in the economic system and hope for the future. Nearly everyone experienced a lowered standard of living; the well-to-do slid into the middle class, while the middle class lived hand-to-mouth. Semi-skilled and unskilled workers were hurt the worst, many lowered to destitution. Rural Americans were hit hard in 1934 when the worst drought in modern American history struck the Great Plains, allowing windstorms to blow dirt across millions of acres and kill livestock and crops.

The U.S. government was in no position to take action, due to its reduced size and scope throughout the 1920s. President Calvin Coolidge had declared in 1926, "if the federal government should go out of existence, the common run of people would not detect the difference in the affairs of their daily life for a considerable length of time." President Hoover, elected in 1928 with a campaign of "rugged individualism," did not see government as the solution; his policies were driven by the belief that the economy would rebound through a free market and efforts by individuals.

American voters demanded a different approach in 1932 by electing Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Roosevelt's New

Deal increased government support for massive programs, providing jobs, reliefs, and reforms. While living conditions began to improve by the mid-'30s, most Americans did not experience full recovery until the early 1940s with the beginning of World War II. The New Deal created programs like Social Security that still exist today, and it changed American expectations about the role of the government in our daily lives.

"I remember where I was living, in Brooklyn, a stunned air all over the neighborhood. You'd see a lot of perfectly able-bodied men in the middle of the day. They had aged enormously. You'd sit in a room with these guys, many of them fathers of my friends, and you'd sense a premature senility... They were young men, in their forties. They blamed themselves." —Arthur Miller

NEW YORK ON THE SKIDS

Miller and his family were among millions of New Yorkers impacted by the Depression. Although moving to a small Brooklyn apartment was a step down from the Millers' spacious Harlem residence, many families lost their homes entirely and went to shelters, hotels, shantytowns,



Schoolchildren line up for free soup and bread during the Great Depression

or previously uninhabited cellars and unheated garages. Others moved in with relatives and families—sometimes 6 people shared a single room. Unable to provide, some parents sent their children away.

New York's homeless population doubled from 1929 to 1930. The city, along with charity organizations, tried to provide lodging for single men and women and meals to the hungry. One city shelter slept 1,500 men in the "largest bedroom in the world."

"When a man loses his job, he loses his identity. This is not simply an economic question. He's sore. It's like he's got beat with a stick. Especially if he's in his middle age and he's put his inventiveness, his time, his hopes, everything into his job, and suddenly he's nowhere."—Arthur Miller

THE PERSONAL PRICE OF THE DEPRESSION

Financial hardship—especially the epidemic unemployment—damaged families and communities, both in the short and long term. Most men in this time had been socialized to be "breadwinners," solely responsible for taking care of their families. The inability to provide led to a feeling of personal failure. When they lost their jobs, men might use their savings or borrow money. Some couldn't face their families, so they spent their days wandering the



Men at breadline in New York City

NEW YORK BY THE NUMBERS

- **23,000** New York children were put in institutional or foster-home care in 1932
- **2 MILLION** New Yorkers sought public shelter in 1934
- **15%** of the city's population received public relief in 1935
- **4,800 MEALS** were served by the Salvation Army to NYC homeless in 1934

streets or hanging out in pool halls or speakeasies, returning only at bedtime. In extreme cases, some men abandoned their families entirely.

Women were affected differently. Their domestic responsibilities often increased as they struggled to maintain their homes and feed their children with fewer resources. Unlike men, women tended to cope alone, quietly, rather than occupying public spaces like the streets and breadlines. An additional problem for women who sought relief or employment was facing public contempt for supposedly taking jobs and relief money away from "more deserving" men.

Children living in the Depression had to grow up quickly, often working at a young age to support their families. Many teenagers left their homes to fend for themselves or become drifters. Couples delayed marrying, and birth rates declined. The generations who were either born during or lived through the Depression became accustomed to hardship and disappointments. The tendency to be wary and extremely conservative about spending was a legacy that lingered decades after the Great Depression itself. •

INTERVIEW WITH ACTOR JESSICA HECHT

Education Dramaturg Ted Sod spoke to actor Jessica Hecht about her role in Arthur Miller's *The Price*.

Ted Sod: Where were you born and educated? When did you decide to become an actress? Did you have any great teachers who influenced you?

Jessica Hecht: I was born in Princeton, New Jersey, and educated at NYU. I grew up in a town called Bloomfield, Connecticut. I was very affected by all the productions I saw at The Hartford Stage Company when I was a kid. I didn't really decide to be an actress until I met the great actor Morris Carnovsky in 1984. I went to Connecticut College for about a year-and-a-half before I went to NYU and took a Shakespeare course with Mr. Carnovsky. His understanding of Shakespeare's language just opened up a door for me. I was depressed at Connecticut College for a multitude of teenage reasons, so I asked him what he thought about conservatories, and he said, "Go to New York and study with Stella Adler." I said, "My parents will never let me go to New York!" And then he told me about NYU. I auditioned and got in, and I also got to study at Stella Adler, and that was my real entry into this world.

TS: Why did you choose to play the role of Esther Franz in Arthur Miller's *The Price*? Does the play have personal resonance for you? How do you understand the relationship between Esther and her husband, Victor?

JH: I read the play last year. I hadn't read it before. I chose to do the play because, for me, the kind of struggle that Esther's experiencing as a middle-aged woman—thinking that her life would be different than it is—is so beautifully articulated that I couldn't say no. At the moment, I can't think of another great American play that has a character whose feelings line up with the issues I grapple with personally. The ideas of the play are things that I think about a lot: the idea of family and your obligation to it. For me, that's one of the primary things that makes me feel good about myself, but what is the real value? What is the real thing that you are doing when you order your life so that you're devoted to your family? I think Arthur's interest in that idea, in terms of his female characters, is fascinating. My experiences acting in *A View from the Bridge* and *After the Fall* were thrilling. It's funny because his women are often in marriages in which the husband isn't as demonstrative as the wife is with love and affection. But it's not true in this play. I love Arthur's stage note in the very beginning of the play where he says, "Their relationship is quite balanced." You see that throughout the script. Victor and Esther are really into each other and want to make life good for one another. Their marriage is built on a deep connection with a shared commitment that their lives would turn out a certain way. That hasn't happened, but Esther's holding on to hope. Partially, I feel that their present dynamic is built on guilt. She says, "I wasn't a very good wife—I should have pushed you more." She believes enormously in him. I think he in turn feels guilt that he hasn't given her the life she wanted. She expresses early on that she can't have a regular job. She says: "I could never go to the same place every day." She also intimates that she wanted more kids, but they didn't have the money. They talk about these things—they're certainly not repressed. I think it's a very honest depiction of a marriage where a couple is flawed and stuck but they are able to talk to one another. That's one of the reasons they stay together.



TS: You were nominated for a Tony Award® for your work in *A View from the Bridge*, and I was curious if working on Beatrice in that play would inform your work on Esther. It seems like they're quite different women.

JH: I do think they're different. Without giving too much away, Esther has her own demons. The text articulates the fact that she might struggle with alcoholism and sadness. Beatrice has to be the strongest person in the room. And she does that at the expense of her own needs. There's no romance in that character. That's been beaten out of her by experience. There's a deep love, but there's no romance. I think there is a decided bit of romance between Esther and Victor in this play. That's what interests me. Not that it's at all delicate, but there's a kind of vitality in what is going on with those two characters in *The Price*. They don't want to succumb to whatever "middle-aged" means to them, and that is interesting to me because I haven't seen that in Miller's other women as much.

TS: How have you been preparing to do this role? Have you done any research about the period? Did you read Miller's biography, *Timebends*?

JH: I read *Timebends* when we did *After the Fall* at Roundabout, and I read it again before rehearsing *A View from the Bridge*—so that's been very helpful. Arthur denies autobiographical elements in his plays for the most part, but it's always interesting to see what was going on around him at the time he wrote the plays. I love listening to him talk in interviews. I love listening to the way he describes things. He has this

meat-and-potatoes way of looking at really complex situations. I don't in any way want to profess to know him deeply. I only worked with him once. He was still alive when we worked on *After the Fall*, and that was such a gift. When I listen to him talk about things, it makes me realize that there's a centeredness about how you have to approach his plays. You can't approach them in an intellectual way. Basically, the way I prepare is by reading the play over and over again, and I try to get the psychology and history of the character—it is so beneficial—and to hear the way Arthur organized the voices of his characters. He is very practical.

TS: Do you have a sense of what this play is about?

JH: It's about the deep distance within families and how we have a really hard time coming to terms with that distance. It's a very human thing to be lonely within your family, and even more profound is being singularly disconnected in a way that's painful and difficult to overcome. That is the pain that Miller's trying to grapple with in *The Price*, I think. I lost my father almost two years ago. The need to be with your parent as they're dying is something I recognize. Why does one person feel that profoundly while another person doesn't? It's a kind of isolation. Miller wrestles with that in *The Price*.

TS: There's a stranger named Solomon in the play who forces Victor and Esther to think differently about their situation. Do you agree?

JH: Yes. He's a magnificent creation because Arthur gives him his own personal pain. He is someone who could have escaped Auschwitz. He has a thick Yiddish accent and he comes from that part of the world. He also carries the pain of his daughter who died as a teenager. Even though he has this tremendous humor and is very irreverent, he has this gravitas by virtue of what he experienced in life. And in the end, he owns it with such dignity. It's fascinating. It's a very funny part. Danny DeVito will be amazing in it.

TS: How do you think Esther views her brother-in-law, Walter?

JH: I think she's now fascinated by him and was previously very infatuated. It's that kind of infatuation you have with someone who is very smart or very talented, but they do something to reveal their narcissism and you are now embarrassed. When Walter walks into the attic, she has this resentment about him not picking up the phone and treating Victor like crap. It pains her. But she's also a little thrilled and senses that he's changed.

TS: What do you look for from your collaboration with a director?

JH: I look for a way to access the emotions of the play. I think that's what's most vital, and I sense that's exactly the way Terry Kinney, our director, works. He's also an excellent actor, and I see that he wants to open these doors for us.

TS: I read in *The New York Times* that you keep watch from your apartment windows, and I was wondering if that is how you keep yourself inspired as an artist?

JH: I do feel inspired by the fact that everybody seems to experience the same routines and the same pathos. I saw this man across the

way from us, and he seemed to be really yelling at his wife. He was screaming at her, and I felt mortified that I was watching them. I looked away, and then I looked back and he was hugging her. He was really embracing her. I thought how beautiful that they had this fight and then they made up. I saw all of it. In a way, that's better than watching any movie. The dynamics that people go through are so universal. I find it very touching that we're all in this together. To tell the truth, I think that's why our neighbors don't have any window treatments either.

TS: Public school students will read this and will want to know what it takes to be a successful actor. Do you have any advice?

JH: In terms of crafting a career, my only advice is to never say no. You're too young to have judgment, so the idea is to keep working and keep opening yourself up to people who are as interested in creating art as you are. That is the most important thing. You're not going to act on your own, and you never actually know who is going to help you fulfill your goals. It's really important that you open your mind to as many people as possible and become part of a community. The whole point is to create a community. That's what worked for me. I work with the same people all the time, and I think that's the only reason I've ever grown as an actress. •



AMERICAN CONSUMERISM

In *The Price*, the Franz family is forced to deal with the practical and emotional results of financial decisions made during the Great Depression. The play takes place in 1968, and money dominates the conversation. But the value of money changes over time. Today, the \$1200 that Solomon offers Victor for the family's old furniture isn't worth what it was in 1968. And in 1968, that \$1200 wasn't worth what it was in the 1920s, when the furniture was new.

Let's break down the relative value of some important numbers in the play:

THE PRICES

1934 vs. 1968 vs. 2017

\$1 in 1934 would have the purchasing power of \$2.60 in 1968, and \$17.70 today.

1921 vs. 2017

The Franz dining room table cost \$1200 or \$1300 in 1921. That's the equivalent of spending about \$15,900 to \$17,200 today. The family was well off back then!

1938 vs. 2017

Victor asked Walter for \$500 to finish his college degree in 1938. In today's dollars that's equivalent to \$7,100.

1968 vs. 2017

Solomon offers Victor \$1200 for the family's old furniture. Today, that's equivalent to \$8,170.

Walter tells Victor they should donate the furniture, and he'll write it off on his taxes, then they'll split the tax savings. That savings—\$6000 in 1968—is equivalent to \$40,900 today.

The relative value of money isn't the only thing that has changed in the past 80 years. What Americans spend money on has also changed dramatically. The amount of money available for discretionary spending increased markedly during the twentieth century, both across the nation and in New York City specifically. This opened the door for the rise in consumerism, which helped shift how we, as human beings, assess our purpose and value in society.

The United States' early economic system was agrarian, or farm-based. Most of what was consumed—food, cloth, furniture, tools, etc.—was produced on the farm or acquired from other locals through a bartering system. Unnecessary purchases weren't an option. Thrift, frugality, and efficiency were valued. Religion also played a role in shaping American ideas about consumption: Puritans, Quakers, and others believed that emphasis on luxury or material goods distracted from the proper focus on God, and some even regulated what congregation members could purchase or wear.

Three important things happened in the late nineteenth century that changed American consumer behavior.

- Factories, in which goods could be mass produced, were developed.
- Millions of people immigrated, creating a large pool of low-cost labor for those factories.
- The government invested in transportation infrastructure like railroads, making it easier to move goods across the nation.

Suddenly, there were inexpensive goods available for purchase, and wage-earners, no matter where they came from or their social class, could aspire to own them. Everyone could work towards a lifestyle of security, comfort, and beauty. In many ways mass production was a democratizing force. It also created the current definition of a healthy economy: in order to sustain production and employment, more consumer demand for goods had to be created.

Newspapers and magazines, which became cheap and widely available in the late nineteenth century, put advertisements in front of the American public. The number of advertisements produced annually quadrupled between 1914 and 1929, the years Victor and Walter were growing up. Beginning in 1922, many of these ads ran on the radio, a new invention.

WHAT IS THE KEY WORD TODAY?

DISPOSABLE!

THE MORE YOU CAN THROW IT AWAY THE MORE IT'S BEAUTIFUL. THE CAR, THE FURNITURE, THE WIFE, THE CHILDREN—EVERYTHING HAS TO BE DISPOSABLE. BECAUSE YOU SEE THE MAIN THING TODAY IS—SHOPPING. YEARS AGO A PERSON, HE WAS UNHAPPY, DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH HIMSELF—HE'D GO TO CHURCH, START A REVOLUTION, SOMETHING. TODAY YOU'RE UNHAPPY?

CAN'T FIGURE IT OUT?

WHAT IS THE SALVATION? **GO SHOPPING.**

—SOLOMON GREGORY in *THE PRICE*

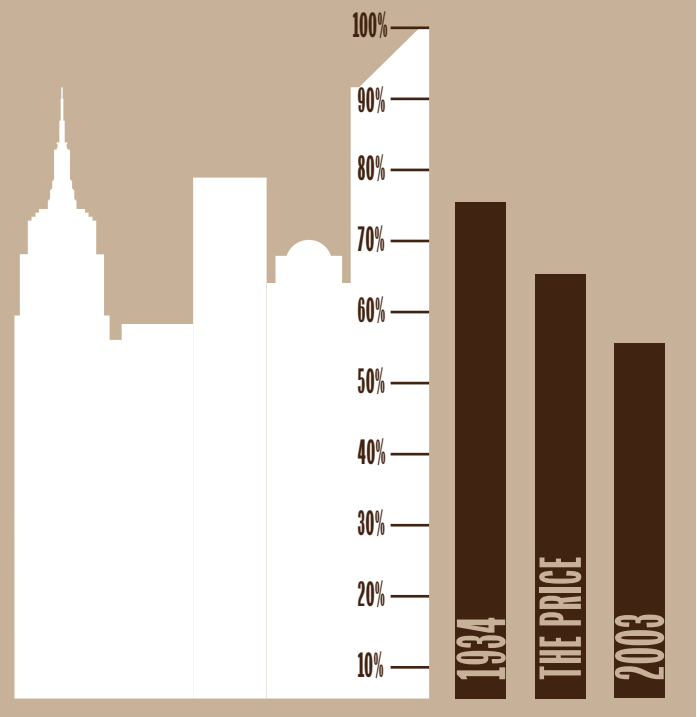
The U.S. became a nation of boundless acquisition of things. People began to measure success through acquisition of material goods, rather than through educational, creative, or professional achievement, civic contributions, or family or community engagement.

The Great Depression and WWII shifted the U.S. away from a focus on economic growth. But after the war U.S. citizens went on a production and consumption binge, eager to shake off years of depression and wartime rationing. Consumer spending, which helped the economy, was considered patriotic. The rise of suburbia, fueled by the G.I. Bill's home loan program, encouraged the purchase of cars and household appliances.

In order to keep the need for consumer goods high, products became, as Solomon puts it, "disposable," through planned obsolescence or change in fashion. Television became popular in the 1950s, exposing American families to more advertising than ever before—advertising that encouraged them to keep up with changing fashions and new conveniences. By 1968, the United States was the most materially-rich society in world history. •

BASIC NECESSITIES

Back in 1934, the average NYC family spent 76.2% of their household income on basic necessities: food, clothing, and shelter. Around the time the play takes place, in NYC only 64.2% of income was spent on the basics. In 2003, that number had dropped to 56.7%.



YOU WANTED A REAL LIFE,
THAT'S AN EXPENSIVE THING, **THAT COSTS.**

—WALTER FRANZ
in *THE PRICE*

MILLER ON MILLER

"People have forgotten that, thank God, that Willie Loman isn't talking street talk; Willie Loman's talk is very formed and formal, very often. It's almost Victorian. That was the decision I made: to lift him into the area where one could deal with his ideas and his feelings and make them applicable to the whole human race. I'm using slang in the play and different kinds of speech, but it is basically a formed, very aware use of the English language." —ARTHUR MILLER

Miller, to give his characters—and his plays—a universality, wrote dialogue that stretched beyond the bounds of inarticulate naturalism. However, "inarticulate naturalism" is a bit of a misnomer when applied to Miller's real-life language. He was an incredibly well-spoken man; excerpts from his interviews tend to transcend the bumbling inconsistencies of everyday speech. Below, some quotable gems from decades of interviews and writings.

You need a certain amount of confidence to watch tragedy. If you yourself are about to die, you're not going to see that play. I've always thought that the Americans had, almost inborn, a primordial fear of falling, being declassified—you get it with your driver's license, if not earlier.

ON THE AMERICAN OBSESSION WITH SUCCESS:

There's no country I've been to where people, when you come into a room and sit down with them, so often ask you, "What do you do?" And, being American, many's the time I've almost asked that question, then realized it's good for my soul not to know. For a while! Just to let the evening wear on and see what I think of this person without knowing what he does and how successful he is, or what a failure. We're ranking everybody every minute of the day.

"Arthur Miller, *The Art of Theater No. 2*" Interviewed by Olga Carlisle and Rose Styron
The Paris Review Issue 38, Summer 1966

Christopher Bigby: *The Price*, which was your most successful play since *Death of a Salesman*, premiered in 1968. It doesn't feel like a 1968 play. It's about two brothers who come together to dispose of their father's estate, symbolized by a room full of furniture, so they spend a lot of their time looking back to the past, and this in a decade, the sixties, when the past tended to be dismissed as an irrelevance. Did you feel that?

Arthur Miller,: That's why I wrote about it. I wanted to tell them that the past counted, that they were creatures of the past just as we all were. They had affected to negate the past, cut themselves off from it, and throw it in a wastebasket. As it turned out, they were as much affected by their fathers and grandfathers. There was no way to escape it, anymore than you could escape the beat of your own heart.

"Arthur Miller, *The Art of Theater No. 2, Part 2*" Interviewed by Christopher Bigby
The Paris Review Issue 152, Fall 1999

ON THE GREAT DEPRESSION:

Fundamentally, it left me with the feeling that the economic system is subject to instant collapse at any particular moment—I still think so—and that security is an illusion which some people are fortunate enough not to outlive.

"Awards & Honors: 2001 Jefferson Lecturer, Arthur Miller Interview"
Interviewed by NEH Chairman William R. Ferris *Humanities Magazine*, March-April 2001

THE PRICE grew out of a need to reconfirm the power of the past, the seedbed of current reality, and the way to possibly reaffirm cause and effect in an insane world. It seemed to me that if, through the mists of denial, the bow of the ancient ship of reality could emerge, the spectacle might once again hold some beauty for an audience. "The Past and Its Power: Why I Wrote *The Price*" by Arthur Miller
New York Times, November 14, 1999

The American Dream is the largely unacknowledged screen in front of which all American writing plays itself out—the screen of the perfectibility of man. Whoever is writing in the United States is using the American Dream as an ironical pole of his story. Early on we all drink up certain claims to self perfection that are absent in a large part of the world. People elsewhere tend to accept, to a far greater degree anyway, that the conditions of life are hostile to man's pretensions. The American idea is different in the sense that we think that if we could only touch it, and live by it, there's a natural order in favor of us; and that the object of a good life is to get connected with that live and abundant order.

A play has to make an instantaneous connection with an audience made up of all sorts of people—some of them a little dumber than others. Some are smarter but less astute about the feelings they have. It's a mixed audience. That they should all be brought to the same feeling by looking at one play is really remarkable. It's almost too much to ask, but it happens all the time. A play's an arrangement by which the author speaks for himself and for his audience at the same moment.

"An Interview with Arthur Miller" Interviewed by Matthew C. Roudané
Michigan Quarterly Review, November 7, 1983

"TRAGEDY AND THE COMMON MAN" BY ARTHUR MILLER

As a general rule, to which there may be exceptions unknown to me, I think the tragic feeling is evoked in us when we are in the presence of a character who is ready to lay down his life, if need be, to secure one thing—his sense of personal dignity. From Orestes to Hamlet, Medea to Macbeth, the underlying struggle is that of the individual attempting to gain his "rightful" position in his society.

THE YEAR OF 1968

"If you look at the whole year as theater, as the real acts of tragedy, there's an almost poetic feeling to it. 1968 was one Goddamn thing after another."

—Lance Morrow, Essayist, *Time Magazine*

1968, when *The Price* is set, was the year that man first orbited the moon in Apollo 8 and the year that the 747 plane took its first flight. However, it was also a year of massive upheaval, where tragedy trumped the few triumphs there were. American culture was shaken to its core and, as the year drew to a close, nothing would ever be the same again.

THE TET OFFENSIVE

At the start of the year, President Johnson hoped to finish the Vietnam War, win a second full term in office and then continue on with his series of domestic policies known as the Great Society. However, his popularity had begun to wane as elements of the American population felt disillusioned with the protracted Vietnam War. Then, on January 30, 1968, the Tet Offensive began. It was an organized attack by around 85,000 North Vietnamese troops on more than 100 towns and cities throughout South Vietnam. The actual success of the attacks was muted—the American and South Vietnamese armies only temporarily lost control over several cities and very quickly recovered and inflicted heavy casualties—but the psychological damage was shocking. The American population was stunned by the attack, and protests continued to flare up as Johnson's popularity sank even lower. Monumentally, CBS news icon Walter Cronkite reported that he believed the war to be unwinnable and that any further fighting was futile. Johnson's position as the Democratic nominee for President was challenged by Eugene McCarthy who, although he did not beat Johnson in the New Hampshire primary, polled at 42 percent, showing how weak Johnson now was. And, most importantly, it made room for a new and very popular contender to step forward and throw his hat in the ring—Robert Kennedy. On March 31st, Johnson addressed the American population on the subject of finding a lasting and sustainable peace in Vietnam. Unexpectedly, he closed this speech by saying that he would not run for another term as President.

THE ASSASSINATION OF MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

As social unrest over the Vietnam War began to swell, Kennedy positioned himself not only as the anti-War candidate, but as the candidate who would represent ignored minorities. Then, the unthinkable happened. On April 4th at 6:01 pm, the vital civil rights campaigner Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. was hit by a bullet as he stood on the second floor balcony of his motel room in Memphis, Tennessee. He was pronounced dead at the hospital. In reaction, there was an explosion of protests across the whole country. Although many closest to King

attempted to convince people to have peaceful protests in response, riots broke out in more than 100 cities in what was the largest civil disorder in the U.S. since the Civil War. King believed that direct engagement with the political system was how to enact change, and his death caused an outpouring of anger, as suddenly it seemed that violence was the only resistance to racism. But Robert Kennedy was emerging as a figure for many Americans who could represent possible change. On the night that King was assassinated, Kennedy was campaigning in Indianapolis and made an impromptu speech that called for all races in America to come together in unity. Although rioting occurred across the country (though apparently not in Indianapolis, which some historians attribute to Kennedy's speech), Kennedy was still emerging as a voice of hope in a year riddled with turmoil.

THE ASSASSINATION OF ROBERT KENNEDY

Despite an impressive following, Kennedy lost the Oregon primary on May 28th and was in need of a big victory. It came when he won the California primary on June 5th, making it more and more likely that he would secure the Democratic nomination. The victory was short-lived: just after midnight, he was assassinated while addressing his supporters. With Kennedy's death, a void opened up in the Democratic Party, and for the American public they became a party that seemed incapable of governing the country. All the protesting and turmoil of the year came to a head at the Democratic Convention in Chicago, where a protest of around 10,000 demonstrators was disrupted by over 20,000 police officers and National Guardsman. It turned from a protest into a police riot, with the police unrestrained in their violence. The mass media's presence was heavy. As the pictures of demonstrators being savagely beaten were beamed into millions of homes around the country, the protesters famously chanted "the whole world is watching." Hubert Humphreys, who was Vice President under Johnson, won the Democratic nomination and secured in many people's mind the idea that change would not come from the Democrats. As a result, Republican Richard Nixon slid into office to become President by a very slim margin. The events of this tumultuous year allowed him to run a successful campaign based around "law and order."

1968 was a brutal end to a decade brimming with optimism and the potential for change. *The Price* was first performed in February of 1968; perhaps if Miller had written *The Price* later on in the year, it would have had an even louder political bent to it. •

DESIGNER STATEMENTS

Set model for Arthur Miller's *The Price*



DEREK McLANE—SET DESIGN

The Price takes place in the late 1960s and, interestingly, Arthur Miller said that this play was his response to the Vietnam War. The setting is an attic apartment in an Upper West Side brownstone that is going to be torn down so that new high rises can be built. It is where the father of Victor and Walter used to live. The house now contains an enormous furniture collection. The furniture collection comes from the early 1900s, and the story of the play centers around the value of this furniture collection, so we have to see it. Victor wants to sell the furniture, and a big chunk of the play is the negotiation for the price of this furniture. What's interesting about the furniture collection is what the furniture dealer, Solomon, says about it—that it's out of date. It's actually not worth that much. Victor and his wife, Esther, think the furniture is worth a huge amount of money, but in fact it's outdated because of its scale. It's too big for most modern apartments. The value of the furniture also speaks to the feeling of an end of an era in this play. I wanted to give the audience the sense of the attic being at the very top of the house and how that relates to the surrounding skyline of an older New York City neighborhood. There are no walls to this attic. There's a roof and a floor and the roof floats over the floor. The audience sees other rooftops from the surrounding buildings as well as the sky. I tried to create an exaggerated sense of height, so the audience will get the feeling of a precipice. I wanted the audience to be aware subliminally that things are about to change. It's not a literal set at all, but it has all the things that are called for in the text. It has stairs coming up from below, and it has the

furniture that's referred to in the story, but it's opened up in a way that gives it a larger—and perhaps more poetic—meaning.

SARAH HOLDEN—COSTUME DESIGN

When I first read *The Price*, I was struck by the deep and complicated relationships among these four people. Although the play takes place over just a few hours on one day, it is infused with a much larger history—the history between two brothers and between a husband and wife combined with the literal history of a lifetime accumulation of furniture, possessions, and memories. The history that gets in the way of them being able to talk honestly and openly with each other. Even Solomon, the one character who is unknown to the other three, comes in with his own messy and tangled human story. Designing costumes for *The Price* began with getting to know these four characters. Talking with director Terry Kinney about who they are, how they relate to each other, and what the stakes are for each of them on this day. The next step was diving into the research. Finding their world by reading plenty of magazines from the late '60s, searching through catalogues and learning everything I could about the NYPD uniforms circa 1968. For me, the most interesting challenge was making sure these characters onstage simply look like real people wearing real clothes. This involved talking to each actor and beginning that collaboration, which continues through the fitting process and all the way to the costumes onstage. If I did my job well, the audience will forget about the costumes and just see Victor, Esther, Walter, and Solomon, who have met

up in an attic apartment on this day, bringing with them both their histories and their hopes.

DAVID WEINER—LIGHTING DESIGN

I am completely thrilled to be designing the lighting for Arthur Miller's *The Price*. What makes this opportunity so compelling for me is how Miller masterfully renders a landscape of memory within the literal landscape of Victor and Walter's familial past—their childhood attic, littered with relics that bring painful memories into sharp focus. My challenge is to use the lighting to render a visual world that enhances Miller's writing with the same sense of dramatic poetry. Derek McLane has designed a stunning deconstructed attic in which the outside world bleeds into the inside. They are both separate and one. We are surrounded by the skyline of late 1960s New York, where the play takes place over a couple of continuous hours one fall evening. By using time of day as a mechanism for delivering light into the space—a giant sculpture comprised of assembled furniture pieces—I hope to illustrate and sharpen the emotional journey that the two brothers make during their reunion after being long estranged. As Miller unravels their relationship in front of us, we will descend through sunset into night, penetrating the attic with the light of waning sun and moonlight. Shafts of light will carve up Derek's attic sculpture, bringing specific relics of Victor and Walter's past into focus to help illustrate their emotional journey—a harp, their father's chair, an armoire filled with their mother's gowns, an old Victrola. The trick will be for the lighting to enhance the storytelling in a subliminal way, so that the audience is never aware that their attention is being directed by the light even though it is.

JESSE TABISH—ORIGINAL MUSIC

I was familiar with other Arthur Miller plays, but, to be honest, I had never heard of *The Price*. I was immediately engaged and found it deeply human. It's deceiving at first because of the simple, plain talk and domestic setting—but, as the play unfolds, the characters start to unearth themselves as they recall their own versions of the past. A creeping tension builds and builds. There's no big bam ending, which I loved. Real life stuff. The research I did in

order to compose music was looking up old interviews of Arthur Miller where he talks about life and his work. I even tried sneaking some of that audio into the music! Not sure if it will make the cut though. Initially I had written several pieces that in retrospect came off as too gloomy/dramatic/sad. After talking with Terry Kinney, the director, we realized that there was much more love and lightness in the play. So, for me the challenge composing this score became balancing tension and human fragility without coming across too epic or sad. I hope I have achieved this. I'm so honored to be a small part of this production with its amazing cast, crew, and director.

ROB MILBURN AND MICHAEL BODEEN—SOUND DESIGN

During discussions with our director, Terry Kinney, he described the aural landscape of *The Price* as subtle, spare, super real, and dreamlike. The play embraces both the joy and unreliability of memory. There are also two key aural moments in it that are written in the stage directions by Miller and are the first sounds we hear in the play, even before we hear an actor speak. The first one is the plucking of a single harp string by Victor, creating a heavenly, light sound that resonates against all the large old furniture stacked in a dark attic. The second thing we hear is a record on a wind-up Victrola. The needle is dropped onto a slightly scratchy record. The song is an upbeat and happy vaudevillian tune sung in a back and forth manner by two male singers. We immediately have a sense of nostalgia of a happier time. It connects to this attic of memory again in a contrasting way—light and upbeat versus dark and solemn—but now there are two voices. The first record is almost immediately replaced by a second, where we hear a trumpet, then a woman laughing, then a man laughing. They laugh hysterically. It's a cacophonous trio. It is a surreal moment, as if in a dream, a memory of past good times but skewed by the strangeness of the voices we hear from the Victrola. Derek McLane's beautiful set includes a skyline of the Upper West Side in the late 1960s that surrounds the attic. The spare sounds of the outside world will reinforce David Weiner's lighting gestures, and the subtle use of composed music by Jesse Tabish will float through the space like a distant memory.*



Costume renderings for Arthur Miller's *The Price*

PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

HOW DOES A COSTUME DESIGNER ESTABLISH TIME PERIOD AND CONVEY A CHARACTER'S PERSONALITY THROUGH CLOTHING CHOICES?

(Common Core Code: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7)

While *The Price* takes place in 1968, much of the play deals with events that happened thirty years earlier, during the Great Depression. The intervening years were a time of great change in the United States.

ANALYZE Facilitate formation of small groups of students, and give each group a family portrait (download [HERE](#)) from either the 1930s or the late 1960s. Groups should discuss and answer the following questions about their portrait: Who is in this photo? What are their relationships? What does the photo tell you about the era in which this family lives? What does it reveal about the family's socioeconomic status?

CREATE Ask each student to choose one person in the family portrait and write a detailed description of that character, connecting his or her age, personality, occupation, etc., to specific clothing choices and other details in the photograph.

SHARE Have students take turns presenting their images and character descriptions, either to the whole class or in small groups. Facilitate a short discussion: Why is it important for a costume designer to research the era of a play? What is one way in which a designer can express a character's personality through clothing? Based on these photos, how did the United States change between the 1930s and the 1960s?

HOW DOES AN ENSEMBLE DEVISE A SCENE ABOUT A FAMILY'S STRUGGLE WITH FINANCIAL ISSUES?

(Common Core Code: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1)

The Price explores the long-term results of Walter and Victor Franz's choices during the Great Depression.

SET THE SCENE Generate a list of possible conflicts between a member of the student's generation and a member of an older generation.

- **Parent #1** is a wealthy businessperson who has furnished the home with the best imports and takes care of all of the family's needs. His or her identity is deeply connected to the family company and to its success.
- **Parent #2** is a stay-at-home parent, caring for the two children and enjoying a comfortable lifestyle.
- **The Older Child** is away at college with plans to be a doctor. She/he is a strong student and ambitious.
- **The Younger Child** is a star science student and gifted athlete, competing in fencing. He/she will begin college next year.

IMPROVISE It's winter break, and the **Older Child** is home from school. Improvise a dinner at the family's home, where each character asks the others at least one question.

Change the scenario. It's now early summer, and the economy has plunged into a depression. **Parent #1** has lost his or her company, plunged into a deep depression, and is having trouble paying the mortgage on the family's home and other bills. **Parent #2** feels helpless and unqualified to enter the job market. Both children are trying to figure out what to do next: how can they afford college? How can they help their parents? Should they help their parents? Improvise another family dinner, then a private conversation between the siblings outside after the meal.

REFLECT After each group has improvised, compare and contrast characters' reactions to the family's economic troubles. What could the children do? What should they do? What are children's economic responsibilities to their parents?

POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

FOR
EDUCATORS

HOW DOES A PLAYWRIGHT EXPLORE THE CHARACTERS' CHOICES IN *THE PRICE*?

(Common Core Code: CCSS ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3)

After seeing *The Price*, students reflect on choices they saw the characters make throughout the play and write a new monologue for these characters to articulate their choices.

DISCUSS Facilitate an on-your-feet human barometer activity (Agree/Disagree) to spark a discussion. For each prompt, ask a few students to articulate **why** they agree/disagree with these statements:

1. Victor makes the right choice (refusing Walter's money and making the sale to Solomon)
2. Walter is honest and can be trusted.
3. Esther should support Victor's choices.

WRITE Choose one of the 3 characters (Victor/Walter/Esther) and write a monologue in which they speak to Richard (the son of Victor and Esther). In the voice of your character, the objective is to explain to Richard what just happened (during the play), what choices you made, why you made them, and how you feel about them.

SHARE AND REFLECT Allow a few students to read their monologues to the class. Why do these characters have such different perspectives at the end of the play? Can you imagine alternative endings that might have worked out better for everyone? How would they each have to change in order to have a better result?

.....

HOW DOES A PLAYWRIGHT DEVISE DRAMATIC CONFLICT, BASED ON EMOTIONAL CONNECTIONS TO MONEY?

(Common Code: CCSS ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3)

Students explore playwright Arthur Miller's personal experiences during the Great Depression and its influence on his work, then reflect on their own relationship to money to write dialogue.

DISCUSS Have students read Arthur Miller's biography on pages 6-7 and the Great Depression article on pages 10-11. Discuss what important financial event(s) had an impact on Arthur Miller. What financial conflicts did they observe in *The Price*? How do they think Miller's early life experiences impact his writing, based on *The Price* and, optionally, other works such as *Death of a Salesman* and *All My Sons*.

JOURNAL Have students journal personal responses to these prompts. It is recommended to let them know they can keep these confidential and not share their answers:

- My first memory of money is...
- Major financial events in my life have included...
- I would describe my parents' relationship with money as...
- If I were given \$20,000 tomorrow I would...
- Financial security is...

BRAINSTORM Ask students to generate a list of different kinds of money problems people have (e.g., paying college tuition, senior dues, rent payments, health care, etc.).

WRITE Alone or in pairs, have students imagine 2 characters in conflict about one of the financial issues on the list. Use dialogue format to write a conversation that expresses the conflict.

SHARE AND REFLECT After sharing the scenes, reflect on the different types of conflicts that can center around money. Why do we have emotional connections to money? How do plays like *The Price* help audiences to think about our relationship to money?

GLOSSARY AND RESOURCES

- APPRAISER:** a practitioner who has the knowledge and expertise necessary to estimate the value of an asset
Solomon is an experienced appraiser, valuing over 50 homes.
- ARBITRARY:** based on random choice or personal whim, rather than any reason or system.
Walter claims that are many arbitrary decisions that determine how successful a surgeon will be.
- BOURGEOIS:** of or characteristic of the middle class, typically with reference to its perceived materialistic values or conventional attitudes.
Victor's parents lived a bourgeois before the Great Depression came.
- FANATICISM:** the quality of being filled with excessive and single-minded zeal.
Walter had a great deal of fanaticism in order to pursue an ambitious career.
- FARCE:** a comic dramatic work using buffoonery and horseplay and typically including crude characterization and ludicrously improbable situations.
Esther believes that all the time Victor has been taking care of his father has been a farce.
- GALOSHES:** a waterproof overshoe, typically made of rubber.
When there was heavy rainfall Victor's mother insisted that he'd wear his galoshes.
- GAUNTLETS:** stout gloves with long loose wrists
Since Victor began fencing, his mother bought him French gauntlets for all of his matches.
- GOGGLE:** look with wide open eyes, typically in amazement or wonder.
Victor is still so handsome and young that Esther notices how other woman goggle at him.
- LIAISON:** a means of communication between two or more people
Victor received a job offer to serve as a liaison between the hospital's doctors and the board of directors.
- PENSION:** a regular payment made during a person's retirement from an investment fund to which that person or their employer has contributed during their working life.
Victor has saved up his pension from his time working as a police officer.
- SCROUNGE:** to seek to obtain (typically food or money) at the expense or through the generosity of others or by stealth.
Walter and his father scrounged off the leftovers from the Greek restaurant for many meals

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ABOUT ROUNDABOUT

ROUNDABOUT THEATRE COMPANY

Roundabout Theatre Company (Todd Haimes, Artistic Director) is 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 founded in 1965, 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. Roundabout presents this work on its five stages and across the country through national tours. Roundabout has been recognized with 36 Tonys®, 51 Drama Desks, 62 Outer Critics Circle, 12 Obie and 18 Lucille Lortel Awards. More information on Roundabout's mission, history and programs can be found by visiting roundabouttheatre.org.

2016-2017 SEASON



STAFF SPOTLIGHT: INTERVIEW WITH TED OSBORNE, AMERICAN AIRLINESSM BOX OFFICE MANAGER

Ted Sod: Where were you born and educated? How and when did you become Box Office Manager at the American Airlines Theatre?

Ted Osborne: I was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. My family moved to Boise, Idaho just before I started school, so I was raised mostly in the northwest. I went to Stanford University and studied Economics and Drama. I have been a part of the Roundabout family for many years (almost 30, in fact!), and have managed a number of box offices for the company. I began, however, in what was then known as the Subscriptions Department in our pre-Broadway days when we were located on Union Square. I would stay evenings and some weekends working the box office window for extra money. I found that dealing with people face-to-face was very much to my liking, and when the manager left I was asked to take over her job. The rest is history.

TS: Describe your job at RTC. What are your responsibilities?

TO: Primarily, I supervise the sale of tickets on site at the American Airlines TheatreSM. I and my four wonderful team members not only deal with the current production at our venue but are also tasked with selling and exchanging tickets to other Roundabout productions when the need arises. We field an enormous number of informational queries from the general public, and we help our subscribers navigate the season's offerings. As the curtain time nears each evening, we distribute all reservations being held at the theatre and solve any ticketing problems that are brought to our attention as our patrons enter. We work in conjunction with our Audience Services Department and our tremendous house staff to make the time leading up to a performance

as seamless as possible. At the end of the evening, I compile a few financial reports for company management and general management.

TS: What is the best part of your job? What is the hardest part?

TO: I love the sense of accomplishment we feel when a curtain goes up—on time, of course—to a full house of excited audience members. If the cast, the crew, the house staff, and the audience are all happy, we have done our jobs leading up to that moment perfectly. And it can happen eight times a week! The biggest challenge is the time pressure we work under. We often find ourselves facing multiple setbacks with only a few moments to make things right. We have to find the best possible solution to a problem in the shortest amount of time. There are a lot of people depending on us when a show is about to start!

TS: Why do you choose to work at Roundabout?

TO: I feel extremely fortunate to be able to be a part of New York's theatre community. More particularly, Roundabout has been my "home" since early adulthood. I feel blessed to be able to do work that I enjoy for a company that has continued to grow, adapt, and survive in what has always been a very competitive industry. I have met and worked with some of the most inspiring, talented, and downright decent people one could ever encounter. Finally, the work we do here continues to feel every bit as important, necessary, and essential to our culture as it did to me 30 years ago. •

Learn more at roundabouttheatre.org. Find us on:



WHEN YOU GET TO THE THEATRE

TICKET POLICY

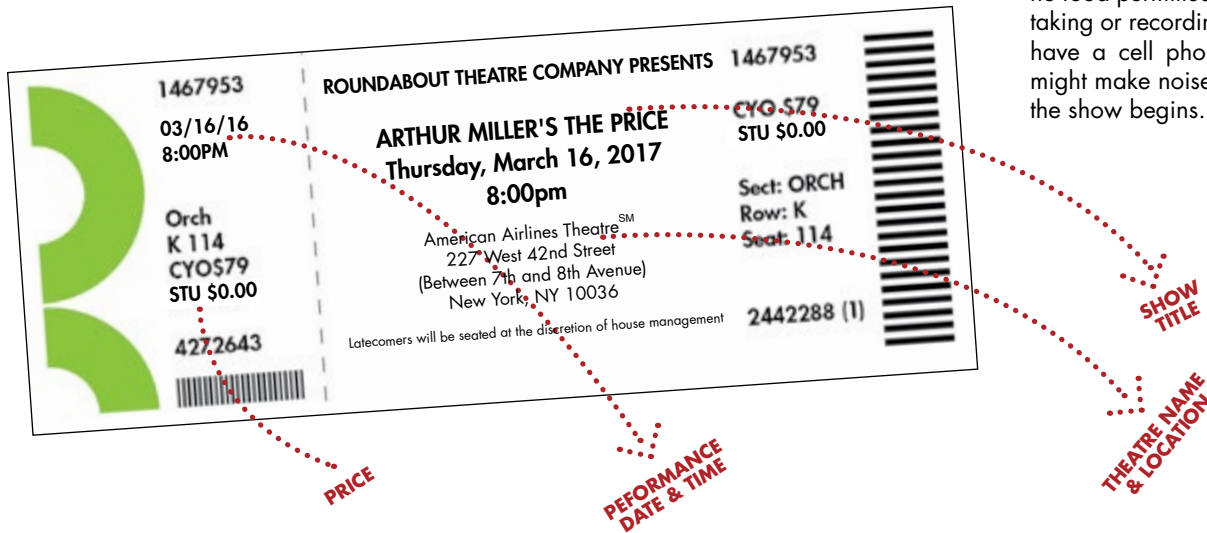
As a student, you will receive a discounted ticket to the show from your teacher on the day of the performance. You will notice that the ticket indicates the section, row, and number of your assigned seat. When you show your ticket to the usher inside the theatre, he or she will show you where your seat 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 restroom 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 or anything else that might make noise, please turn it off before the show begins.



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