

**RICHARD THOMAS**   **GEORGE WENDT** in



Photography: JOAN MARCUS

**THE  
GREATEST  
COURTROOM  
DRAMA  
OF  
ALL  
TIME!**

**TWELVE**   A Play by **REGINALD ROSE**  
Directed by **SCOTT ELLIS**  
**ANGRY MEN**

**A ROUNDABOUTTHEATRECOMPANY PRODUCTION**

**DIRECT  
FROM  
BROADWAY!**



# Character Witness

## UPSTAGE GETS THE FACTS FROM DIRECTOR, SCOTT ELLIS

**UPSTAGE:** So, why did you choose to direct *Twelve Angry Men*?

**SCOTT ELLIS:** I'm always attracted to characters. I've always joked that if you give me four people trapped in an elevator, that's interesting to me. So, now it's twelve guys trapped in a room. I really like the characters a lot. They're really a great group of people to be with and explore. I've always said that the courthouse is second best to anything on stage. It is theatre.

**UPSTAGE:** Did you wrestle with the idea of updating it...like Bill Freidkin did in the late nineties?

**ELLIS:** Well, the thing is, yes, I looked at that adaptation and I talked to playwright, Reginald Rose's widow. The Freidkin piece started with a woman judge, and the jurors now, they're black and Hispanic and a whole mix, but they're still twelve men. So, I immediately don't buy it, because you don't have twelve men on a jury anymore. So, we may have changed it to twelve angry jurors, which could work, but that's ultimately not what we decided to do. It's a period piece. I find pieces in period are interesting to see how they still relate to today. Do you still connect with it today? So updating it was discussed; it was looked at, but the decision was no. And ultimately I think it was the right decision.

**UPSTAGE:** When I read the play, the two things that jumped out were the palpable prejudice and the way this kid is assumed to be Hispanic.

**ELLIS:** You don't really know. It is never specifically stated in the text.

**UPSTAGE:** His guilt was sort of cut and dry with most of the men, probably because they just had a preconceived notion of how this kid might act. Did you bring that into the piece?

**ELLIS:** What I think is interesting is that one walks into a room with history. All twelve men are going to have a history of how they deal with the world, how they deal with individuals: their prejudices. Everybody is prejudiced, everybody. On one level or another we have prejudices we deal with. I don't just mean prejudices against black, Hispanic, white, gay or straight...it's not about that. Prejudice can be as general as someone feeling like, "I shouldn't be there, I'm above this," or "I don't have time for this." There are those types of feelings, too. Some deal with it better than others. What we bring to the table is so much of what our lives have been up to that point. I think the interesting part is when those things have to be changed or looked at differently. How do you change your perceptions? How

**UPSTAGE CONTRIBUTORS** MARGARET SALVANTE-McCANN *Director of Education*; RENÉE FLEMINGS *Director of Instruction and Curriculum*; TED SOD *Education Dramaturg*;

DAVID A. MILLER *Education Program Manager*; JENNIFER DEBRUIN *Education Associate*; ALISON BAUCOM *Education Assistant*;

GEORGE KEVESON, CHRISTINA NEUBRAND, JEREMY THOMAS *Education Interns*; **COVER:** Artwork for the Roundabout Theatre Company production of *Twelve Angry Men*

ROUNABOUT THEATRE COMPANY 231 West 39th Street, Suite 1200, New York, NY 10018 Telephone: 212.719.9393 Fax: 212.869.8817 [www.roundabouttheatre.org](http://www.roundabouttheatre.org)

do you change a prejudice that is deep-rooted, that has been with you, even if you don't know it's there? And there's nobody on a jury that doesn't come with that. It's human nature. So, how do you take it to the next level and get out of that and yourself and your history and really be able to look at it clearly?

**UPSTAGE:** Do you find that because the characters don't have names it's hard to deal with casting? It feels like the playwright has separated these people, but they don't actually have names. Do you think that will be a challenge in terms of portraying it with the actors?

**ELLIS:** These people don't know each other when the play begins. The information you're given once that door is shut is the only information you have to start making your decision in how to deal with the individuals and how to deal with your decision of guilty or not guilty. That's truthful. You go into a room; you're not there to get to know people. You're there to decide. The playwright said the reason why he kept the characters as numbers and not names is because when he served on a jury, the jurors were really labeled by numbers.

**UPSTAGE:** In casting the men, do you think that Juror #8 needed a certain personality?

**ELLIS:** I did. The most important thing with #8 is, it can't be a person who says or presents, "I know this is true, or I know this is the way." He's got to be as unsure as everybody else as the puzzle is being put together. He doesn't ultimately know and really all that he's asking for at the beginning is to talk about it. Just talk about it. And I think that you need a certain actor who has a real presence without that bulldoze strength of power. It's not that he says, "I'm going to make this right, because I know." It's about slowly getting people to start looking at the case in other ways. The actor has to have enough strength that someone else would think, "Ok, I will listen to you, even though I totally disagree."

**UPSTAGE:** What about the look of the production? How did you go about deciding with your design team what it will look like?

**ELLIS:** We talked about a lot of things, and asked a lot of questions: Should we go a little more abstract with this the look of this piece? Do you put it on an empty stage? A raked stage with an odd looking table? Something that starts small and widens? Are there walls? Is it just a door? I feel that it is a realistic piece. I'm not saying that it couldn't work the other way, but I felt that because of what they talk about, I wanted to get a feel-

ing of being trapped in a room when that door locks. I didn't want an open environment, which an abstract design might convey. They talk of the rain, they talk of the heat, they get a drink of water, they go to the bathroom, they throw a knife onto the table; they do these things that, to me, are real.

**UPSTAGE:** Many students read this piece in schools. Where do you see the value of it for our high school audiences?

**ELLIS:** Well, it's interesting to see how the system works. I think when you look at it, you sort of are in awe of the Declaration of Independence and what it says and how it still stands today. Also, the fact that 12 people get into a room and decide someone's fate is pretty remarkable. It's not 100% fair, but it reminds us of the idea that we're judged by our peers. I think this piece shows this process in a very realistic, honest way. You don't read this and think, "Oh this would never happen."

**UPSTAGE:** Would you ever have the desire to film it? Are you seeing it through a film director's eyes?

**ELLIS:** Not at all. I think the original film is pretty darn perfect. It is so brilliant how the camera can get in there and people can sit around the table. I can't have people sit around a table. They're going to have to be moving and there's got to be a reason to move. So, it's going to be a very different experience I think. ●

## *Twelve Angry Men – a timeline*

**1954** Reginald Rose's television play *Twelve Angry Men* airs on Studio One on CBS

**1957** Rose adapts his teleplay to create a film version, he co-produced the film with the star Henry Fonda

**1964** Rose's legit theatre version premieres on the West End of London

**1997** In response to questions about "reasonable doubt" raised during the OJ Simpson trial, William Freidkin directs a new movie version with a racially diverse cast for Showtime.

**2004** *Twelve Angry Men* premieres on Broadway



# Courtroom Drama

## UPSTAGE TALKS WITH ALLEN MOYER, SET DESIGNER

**UPSTAGE:** How did you go about researching this period, NYC 1953, and this play?

**ALLEN MOYER:** Well, I actually applied to the New York City Mayor's Office of Film, Theatre, and Broadcasting to see if I could actually get into the original courthouse building and into one of the rooms that was pictured in the movie in the very first scenes -- in the hallway and in the courtroom. I thought it would be irresponsible to not try to get in there. After a number of phone calls, I found out that there actually is someone in the city of New York with this agency who's in charge of the courthouses. That's what they do. So they gave me the name of the guy at 60 Center Street.

I went to the courthouse with the director Scott Ellis, and Paul Palazzo, the lighting designer, so they could see what these places looked like. It was a really interesting experience, because we saw a number of jury rooms. They all are slightly different shapes, because of the way they have to fit into that building's architecture. There also are these radiating hallways where the courtrooms branch off into a weird system of stairways and entrances to the jury rooms. I think they managed to squeeze two jury rooms in the height of a single courtroom. I was struck by how faceless and ill kept the rooms are, with a broken chair or horrible shelf to put your hat. The rooms were so small they created a feeling of claustrophobia. Being in that room with these 11 other people for any length of time would



Oposite page and above: Research photos taken by Allen Moyer for the set design of *Twelve Angry Men*

be particularly unpleasant, I think. And then imagining it without air conditioning or even a fan that worked made it even worse. And you'd go into the bathrooms and there would be a stall or a urinal or toilet with tape over it that would say "Do not use."

The biggest impression that I had coming out of the site tour that day was how it seemed that no one placed much importance on where people need to sit, decide and discuss someone's fate. I thought to myself, "What does this tell us about our culture...that we would put people in here?"

**UPSTAGE:** How will you translate those ideas onto the stage?

**MOYER:** It's important to me to do a room that's basically factual, in other words, that's a real room that doesn't look like it's been theatricalized. Now, that's a little hard to do, because when you're putting a room on stage in a theatre with wide sightlines, there are all sorts of compromises you have to make to do that.

**UPSTAGE:** So would you say you were doing a realistic set?

**MOYER:** I would say it's more naturalistic than realistic, and there's a fine line between those two. What I always learned was that realism is selective and naturalism is not. Now, of course you ask, how can something be non selective...and the truth is it can't be,



Research photo for the set design of *Twelve Angry Men*



Research photo for the set design of *Twelve Angry Men*

especially when you're putting it on stage. I suppose if you're making a movie or taking photographs, you can't really be naturalistic. Even the person with the camera is focusing on a certain thing and is basically selecting an image. So I would say that this is trying to be naturalistic, as much as one can on the stage.

**UPSTAGE:** So, how will you do the rain?

**MOYER:** Doing rain on stage is not one of the hardest things in the world. There are windows, and outside the windows, hanging above them, are pipes with holes drilled in them. Then water is run through those with a pump that takes the fallen rain from a trough on the ground back up to the pipe hanging above. You can actually do it in a low-tech way; however, in this case, because it has to rain for so long, a special effects shop has been hired to do the rain mechanism. When it has to rain this long there is a lot of water to contend with and a lot could go wrong as water can cause damage very quickly.

**UPSTAGE:** It has to be a certain intensity for a long time.

**MOYER:** Yeah, it's a summer storm. We think this is probably in September at some time. There are a lot of clues in the play. You get a lot of clues from the juror who wants to go to the baseball playoffs. In this year, the World Series wasn't as late as it currently is, so we can sort of figure out that it's in September. And we all know that in September in New York, it can be incredi-

bly hot. So, I think it's a late summer storm, where it may not rain for six hours at a strong intensity, but when the sky opens up, it's a deluge.

**UPSTAGE:** Are there moments where you can use the intensity to coincide with the action on stage?

**MOYER:** The setting is often used as part of the story. And I think in this case, it's not only that it storms during one of the most stormy, tumultuous parts of the plot, but it also adds to the atmosphere. When you're in a room like that, when you're tired of being there, and you have the windows open because it's really, really hot, when it rains, it's even worse. It gets so humid that you just want to scream. And so you're in this room for this long period of time, it's hot, you don't want to be there anyway even in the best of weather, and then it starts to rain and thunder on top of it. You can't even really have the windows open, because it's raining in. So you close them and it gets hotter and it gets so horribly humid. So, I think it's also part of that feeling, "What else can happen now?" They're in there a lot longer than they planned. When we first meet them, they're thinking, "In and out. We can do this fast. Hang the guy." So, the storm just makes it more unpleasant.

**UPSTAGE:** There are many elements that add to the atmosphere. You chose to use florescent lights in the design. Why?

**MOYER:** In the script, in the stage directions, someone flips on the light switch and the florescent lights come on. I felt strongly that the florescent lights are something that we still do think as institutional and I didn't want to romanticize the lighting fixtures. And I would imagine, certainly those rooms now have florescent lights. They probably didn't always, because when the building was built, I don't think florescent lights existed. But they do now, and they probably did in the 50's as well. So, we decided to go with florescent lights.

**UPSTAGE:** Was there ever any talk of updating the play to the present day?

**MOYER:** We did talk about updating it. But, ultimately, none of us came to the project feeling there was really any compelling reason to update it. I think it's very

hard to update this play. It's a wonderful piece of writing. These plays that are written in a style that we don't write plays in now and are somewhat fragile, in a way. I think that if you update them, you have to ask yourself the question, "Am I serving this play?"

Another reason not to update it is because I think it's really informative to see something from another era. We have this kind of reaction to it, like, "Oh I can't believe these people would be saying that kind of racist statement or that people have these values." And then you somehow connect it to your own time. I'm a big fan of history and what it has to offer to all of us as human beings. I think it's always good to look back at something in order to evaluate where we are now -- how far we've gotten or how little we've achieved. And in many ways I think that's what this play means. ●



Research photo for the set design of *Twelve Angry Men*





# Fashion Police

## UPSTAGE SPEAKS WITH MICHAEL KRASS, COSTUME DESIGNER

**UPSTAGE:** What kind of research do you have to do for *Twelve Angry Men*?

**MICHAEL KRASS:** First of all, we agreed that this particular play would be best served by being real people in a real place, in the time when the play was written, 1953. We research then, because we want to make it as accurate as it can possibly be. The more specific we can get with every single detail, the better story we can tell. Just like acting, if you can make a specific choice about why the actor feels that way, why the character feels that way, why the character sits down, it makes the story more real for the audience. Then we research the characters. Where is each character coming from? Where are they going? For what purpose do they get dressed this morning? And in this case, for this play, that's all very clear. They got dressed to come to court. They've been coming to court for several days. They're tired and they're hot. Sometimes the play tells you, and sometimes you have to make it up. In this case, the text contains the answers. We also go further into each character. How much money do they have? What do they do for a living? Do they care about what they look like? Those are questions you do every single time, and in this case, they matter a lot because they are the only questions. So you go through the script and see what these people do for a living- they don't even have names, but most characters state their occupation somewhere in the dialogue.

**UPSTAGE:** How are you going to specifically approach each juror's costume?

**KRASS:** Using all those questions I was talking about. Where does he come from? What does he do for a living? Does he care about what he looks like? Juror #8, for example, seems to be a fairly careful person, an architect, upper middle class, and more likely than not, he wears a suit. The difficult research lied in discovering what were the circumstances in being on a jury and going to court in the 50's. In the 30's everyone would wear a tie and most would wear a suit out of respect for the place where he's working. Every working man would own one good suit to wear to church, funerals, and they would wear it to court. So that was the hardest research I had to do, and the truth is, I looked at the movie to see what their rules were. And in fact their rules were some ties, and some not ties, some sports shirts, some not sports shirts, but everyone had a jacket. Most people had hats, everyone had long pants and white shirts.

**UPSTAGE:** Do you have access to clothes catalogues of the period?

**KRASS:** Yes, a lot of them are reprinted. I also have access to old LIFE magazines. I have a lot of books at home and I keep files. I rip out pictures from magazines, save post cards, and people send me things. There is an amazing resource in New York City called



the picture collection at the NY Public Library on 40th Street. It is a giant room full of images in folders. I go there and look through folders called anything at all: "New York City Life," "courtrooms," "costumes," "men 1950s," "architects." I find little bits of information and detail that make the costumes interesting and specific.

**UPSTAGE:** How do the actors contribute to the costume design process?

**KRASS:** That's my favorite part. I can only do so much. The actor needs to make it their own. However, there are certain things within the big picture that I'm responsible for. One responsibility is to make everybody look different, so the audience can differentiate one character from another. For example, if twelve people ask for glasses, and white shirts, and bow ties, we are all in terrible trouble. And they need to understand that. I'm going to assume that everyone in this play is going to want glasses because they are going to want whatever they can in order to have a prop to play with. There is one person who must have glasses because it's in the script, and beyond that, I'm thinking maybe four others might have glasses. And what do I do with that? I'll give the glasses to everyone who wants them in rehearsal. Then, bit by bit, I'll take them from the people who don't use them. But, one could have a pocket watch, if he is the kind of guy who has a pocket watch. Is he old-world? Is it his father's? Is it from Germany? I love that stuff. It makes the actor an individual and I am really happy to do that.

I think Juror #8 is more important that he be simple, slightly different. Because it's the summer time in the 50's, I think he's going to wind up in some kind of very simple khaki suit, like a summer suit, which would be light colored and slightly wrinkly. I like that idea because it's a kind of an upper middle class thing because they tend to get dirty.

**UPSTAGE:** What about the business man?

**KRASS:** The broker has plenty of money and is probably old time WASP. I was talking to the actor who plays the broker, he said "I was thinking sear-sucker." Wonderful idea. I have twelve people to clothe and I want to make them each different, so someone needs to have sear-sucker and that's the one to have it.

**UPSTAGE:** In your craft, you have to deal with an actor's psychology and their body, I mean, right down to their underwear. Obviously you have to listen and be passionate. What is your process?

**KRASS:** I like to sit down with an actor after a couple of days of rehearsal and just let them talk at me. They can say anything they want to and I try to be as accessible as I can. I will ask what colors they hate, what colors they love, etc. If I have choices to work with, I'm happy to do it. Honestly, most actors are not personally demanding. Most actors are extremely willing to do whatever the play requires, but they want to keep track of themselves. And so do I. I don't want them to be uncomfortable or feel stupid.





**UPSTAGE:** What does it take to be a professional costume designer?

**KRASS:** I never took a class in costumes. I never went to grad school. So, I would not say necessarily that one needs to plunge into school after school after school. I went to William and Mary in Virginia. I studied everything other than costumes. I studied acting and directing and I did lighting design and a lot of scenery. I had to write plays. And that broad education has served me better than anything would, because I understand the playwright, I understand the actor. A lot of people who are interested in costumes think that if they just study fashion and read fashion magazines, they'll be fine. No, that's the easy part. That's just research. You have to know what a play's about. When I went into my first meeting to design a play, someone said, "What do you think of the play?" I was stunned that anybody wanted me to think about the play. I thought they wanted me to go get costumes. Any kind of training that's about reading plays, how to read a play or how to think about it and have your own reactions to it will prepare you for this field. The research is not hard, but what do you do with all of the research, all of the pictures? How do you choose which one? It depends what the play is about, how you feel about it and who the audience is. So, the broadest training in literature and the historical culture and art is the most important thing.

So, there are more paths than simply jumping into grad school and loving clothing. There is a whole other set of skills that we use and clothing is a tool, in the same way that lumber or music is the tool to tell the story. And that's what we're doing, we're telling a story.

## Activities

### BEFORE YOU GO

Think about how you define justice as an ideal, and how you perceive it in the real world.

- ◆ How do you see justice being demonstrated in your world? Look through magazines and newspapers for examples.
- ◆ Was there ever a situation where you were wrongly accused of something?
  - ◆ How did you feel?
  - ◆ How did you prove your innocence?

### AT THE THEATRE

Listen for information that tells you more about the individual jurors

- ◆ How do the jurors' personal experiences affect their votes?
- ◆ Take note of your own perspective of the case throughout the play. Does it change? Why?

### AFTER THE SHOW

Write a monologue from the perspective of the accused boy

- ◆ How is he feeling?
- ◆ What are the things that are affecting his emotions?
- ◆ Do you think he is guilty?