

PROSCENIUM

A View from the Bridge

By Arthur Miller

A View from the Bridge

Wednesday 30th January to Saturday 2nd February 2019
Compass Theatre, Ickenham

A View from the Bridge

The Cast

Louis	Richard Kessel
Mike	Mark Sutherland
Alfieri.....	Neville Price
Eddie	Anton Jungreuthmayer
Catherine	Hannah Matthews
Beatrice	Angie Sutherland
Marco	Charles Anthony
Tony/Mr Lipari	Alan Glover
Rodolpho	Nadir Shah
1st Immigration Officer	Ben Morris
2nd Immigration Officer	Meera Sarin
Mrs Lipari.....	Caroline Bronne-Shanbury

Directed by.....	Duncan Sykes
Stage Manager & Assistant Director.....	Crystal Anthony
Assistant Stage Manager	Anne Gerrard
Assistant Stage Manager	Shirley Wootten
Costume Supervisor	Toni Price
Lighting and Sound Operation	Izzie Cartwright
Set Design	Mike Williams, Janet Harrison

The action takes place in Red Hook, Brooklyn, New York

There will be one interval of fifteen minutes.

Our thanks to East Lane Theatre Club,

Rickmansworth Players and Ruislip Operatic Society

“A Single Vision”

In the notebook in which he was developing ideas and dialogue for the drama that was to become *Death of a Salesman*, Arthur Miller scrawled down a memo to write “an Italian play [about] X, who ratted on the two immigrants”. Half a dozen years later “the Italian play” surfaced as *A View from the Bridge*.

It was not the first work he had chosen to set in Red Hook, on the Brooklyn waterfront (where he himself worked for several years). In 1951 he withdrew a screenplay written for Columbia Pictures when the Studio, fearing a McCarthyite backlash, called in the FBI to advise on script changes.

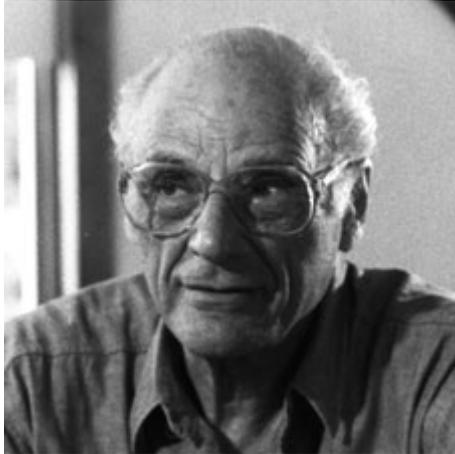
It is tempting to see *A View from the Bridge* as responding to that same corruption. Miller had, after all, seen close friends testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee (one of these, Elia Kazan, director of *Death of a Salesman*, subsequently making a film, also set, as its title implies, *On the Waterfront*, in which the informer stands justified). Certainly writing *A View from the Bridge* in 1955 was not without its political implications. But it is no narrowly political play.

Nor was this the first time that betrayal had been a central concern to Miller. It was a major theme in the plays he had written as a student twenty years before and it has remained a fundamental motif throughout his career. It is, after all, an action which focuses to a sharp point the meaning of an individual life and the values of a society. That may lead in the direction of social drama; it may move towards tragedy.

Indeed in that early notebook entry, written in the 1940s, he had reminded himself that “The secret of the Greek drama is the vendetta, the family ties incomprehensible to Englishmen and Americans. But not,” he pointedly added, “to Jews. Much that has been interpreted in lofty terms, fate, religion, etc., is only blood and the tribal survival within the family. Red Hook,” he insisted, “is full of Greek tragedies.” And Eddie Carbone does, after all, share with Oedipus an obsession which leads towards self-destruction. He, too, comes to the edge of a kind of madness and is tempted by that same sin against nature. The first version of the play – a one-act drama – was even written in verse. But what is finally compelling about Eddie Carbone is not his fitness or otherwise to be regarded as a tragic hero; it is his total commitment to a single vision, no matter how tainted that vision may be. In that sense he is distant kin to Melville’s Ahab and Fitzgerald’s Gatsby. As Miller himself has said: “however one might dislike this man, who does all sorts of frightful things, he possesses and exemplifies the wondrous and humane fact that he too can be driven to what in the last analysis is a sacrifice of himself for his conception, of right, dignity and justice.”

Christopher Bigsby, National Theatre programme (1987)

Arthur Miller (1915 – 2005)



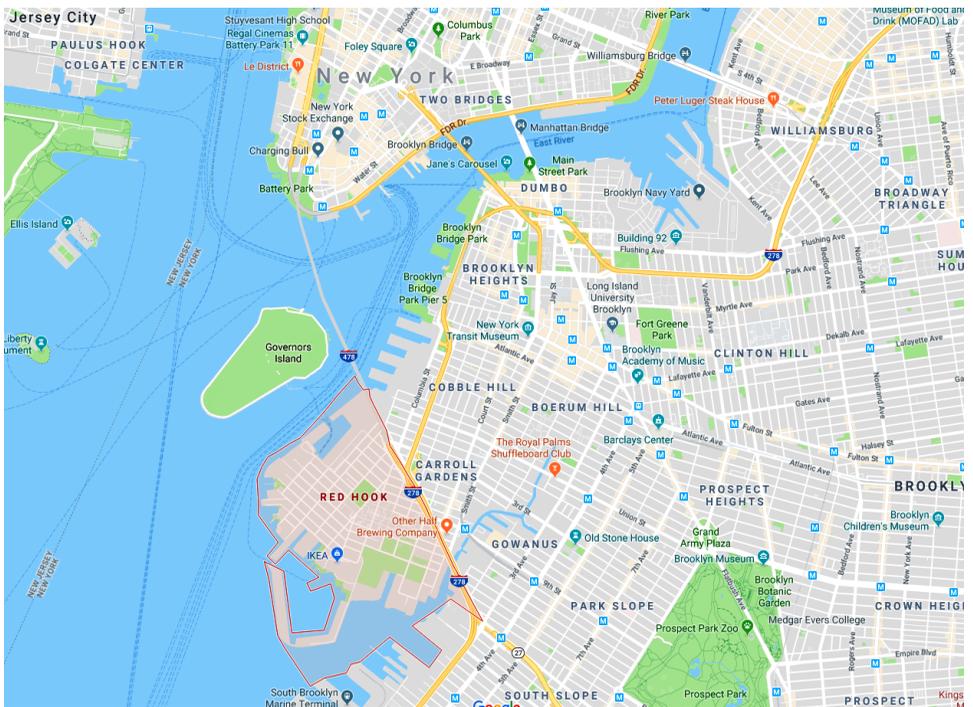
Principal Plays

1944	The Man Who Had all the Luck	1979	The American Clock
1947	All My Sons	1986	The Archbishop's Ceiling
1949	Death of a Salesman	1987	Danger: Memory
1950	An Enemy of the People (Adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's play)	1992	The Ride Down Mount Morgan
1953	The Crucible	1993	The Last Yankee
1955	A View from the Bridge	1995	Broken Glass
1955	A Memory of Two Mondays	1998	Mr Peters' Connections
1964	After the Fall	2002	Resurrection Blues
1964	Incident at Vichy	2004	Finishing the Picture
1968	The Price		
1972	The Creation of the World and Other Business		

Red Hook, Brooklyn, New York

A View from the Bridge takes place in Red Hook, Brooklyn, a neighbourhood near the New York Harbor, south of the Brooklyn Bridge. In the 1950s, Red Hook was a poor, working-class neighborhood. It was generally dirty, smelly and gritty, by industrial gas tanks, shipbuilding yards and wharves. The best part of the wharves and the docks was their source of employment to many of the men in Red Hook, as longshoremen or dockworkers. Most of the longshoremen left their houses and walked five minutes to the pier. They often waited for days or weeks for ships to come in, and when they did, they worked 24, 36 or 48 hours at a clip.

The living conditions in Red Hook varied from nice to very crowded. Many people lived in brownstones, or four or five family storey buildings, some floors of which did not have a bathroom. The community was familial and warm as well as tough. Loyalty and respect for the family and extended family was considered very important. The men could be very macho, occasionally violent, but violence was acceptable and sometimes even encouraged, to display one's masculinity and show who was boss...The Mafia, or the Mob, had an unspoken but very real presence in Red Hook. It was said that Al Capone hung out here and acquired the scar that gave him his name "Scarface".



The combination of poverty, lack of education, and a strong hold on tradition resulted in a community that was resistant to change and afraid of things foreign, new or different: a sentiment that prevailed over much of the country in the early 1950s due to the anti-communist wave in the post-war United States. In general anything that could be considered undermining democratic values was looked upon unfavourably, and at the same time, everything slightly different was thought to be weird or wrong.

Eddie Carbone and his family are seated right in the middle of these culturally topically based opinions. The Red Hook community in *A View from the Bridge* constitutes a significant reflection and measure of the force of judgement during this time. People worked hard and struggled to find and maintain their positions in this small Brooklyn society. Neither their socio-economic positions nor their cultural identities were fixed so their opinions sufficed as a stronghold – grounded in tradition and focused on heritage.

A View from the Bridge Study Guide, Roundabout Theatre Co (1998)

“I had known the story of *A View from the Bridge* for a long time. A water-front worker who had known Eddie’s prototype told it to me. I had never thought to make a play of it because it was too complete; there was nothing I could add.” In *Timebends*, his autobiography, Miller speaks at length of his interest in the Brooklyn waterfront and of his relationship with Vincent James “Vinny” Longhi, whom he describes as “a new member of the bar with political ambitions.” Longhi and Longhi’s friend, Mitch Berenson, sought out Miller to help them make known and keep alive the work of Pete Panto, a young longshoreman who had earned a gangland execution for attempting to foment a revolt against the union leadership of Joseph Ryan, the corrupt and probably Mafia-affiliated then head of the International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA). With Longhi and Berenson as his cicerones, Miller entered the dark, dangerous, corrupt world of Red Hook, the largely Italian, Brooklyn waterfront neighborhood. From this experience and from a Longhi anecdote the story and atmosphere of *A View from the Bridge* seem to have been born:

“In the course of time Longhi mentioned a story he’d recently heard of a longshoreman who had ratted to the Immigration Bureau on two brothers, his own relatives, who were living illegally in his very home, in order to break an engagement between one of them and his niece. The squealer was disgraced, and no one knew where he had gone off to, and some whispered that he had been murdered by one of

the brothers. But the story went past me; I was still searching for a handle on Pete Panto.” (From Arthur Miller’s *Timebends: A Life* (1989))

Albert Wertheim, Cambridge Companion to Arthur Miller (2010)

These plays in one sense...are one man’s way of saying to his fellow men, “This is what you see every day, or think or feel; now I will show you what you really have known but have not had the time or the disinterestedness, or the insight, or the information to understand consciously.” Each of these plays, in various degrees, was begun in the belief that it as unveiling a truth already known but recognised as such. My concept of the audience is of a public, each member of which is carrying about with him what he thinks is an anxiety, or hope, or a preoccupation which is his alone and isolates him from mankind; and in this respect at least the function of the play is to reveal him to himself so that he may touch others by virtue of the revelation of his mutuality with them. If only for this reason I regard the theatre as a serious business, one that makes or should make men more human, which is to say, less alone.

Arthur Miller, Introduction to Collected Plays (1957)

Our Next Production

Skylight

By David Hare

On a bitterly cold London evening, schoolteacher Kyra Hollis receives an unexpected visit from her former lover, Tom Sergeant, a successful and charismatic restaurateur whose wife has recently died. As the evening progresses, the two attempt to rekindle their once passionate relationship only to find themselves locked in a dangerous battle of opposing ideologies and mutual desires.

"There are times in the theatre when you suddenly find yourself in the grip of silence. There is no fidgeting or coughing, no shifting about in seats: the audience's attention is so tense it is almost palpable." (*Sunday Times*)

Directed by Mark Sutherland

May 1st to 4th 2019

7:45 pm, Compass Theatre, Ickenham
Box Office : 01895 250 615

About Proscenium

Proscenium was founded in 1924. Since then, the aim of this experienced group has been to present classic and contemporary plays to as wide an audience as possible. Since 1990, performances have taken place at the Harrow Arts Centre and, more recently, at the Compass Theatre, Ickenham.

The company meets three times a week in Harrow for rehearsals, so that four plays are presented in each season. Social, fund raising activities and play readings take place throughout the year.

Secretary : Ben Morris

Chair : David Pearson

Contact us at www.proscenium.org.uk