

British Theatre Guide

News, reviews, features and podcast on theatre across the UK

A View from the Bridge

Arthur Miller

Birmingham Rep

(2003)

The Birmingham Rep continues to go from strength to strength under the artistic leadership of Jonathan Church with a fine co-production, with the West Yorkshire Playhouse, of Arthur Millers 1955 play, *A View from the Bridge*, which is running in Leeds from Tuesday October 22 to November 22.

Clocking in at around two-and-a-half hours, with one interval, the play, directed by Toby Frow, who assisted on the recent, much-acclaimed David Hare trilogy at the Rep, explores, as many of Millers plays do, the underside of the American Dream, the fate of the many people who do not succeed in making it big, even though they apply themselves, the cost of pursuing the myth that still holds sway, in the face of all the evidence, and the question of identity and name.

Eddie Carbone, the flawed central character, as Millers central protagonists often are, is a longshoreman who exemplifies the feminist Camilia Paglias dictum that men are "exiles from the world of intimacy." His is a hard life, physically, unloading and loading cargoes from ships, and tough in the sense that he has to fight hard to grab himself the chance to earn that living.

The beautiful set, by Simon Higlett, magnificently brings home the poverty, deprivation and claustrophobic nature of the community Eddie lives in, consisting as it does of two sides of a dilapidated brownstone, open to inspection by the people walking past, fire escapes, an alleyway littered with an oil drum, scraps of rubbish, dark; closely-packed and unlovely.

Eddie has brought up his niece Catherine at the house which he shares with his wife Beatrice, since she was a baby until now, as she nears 18. But something "aint right", as Eddie himself says of another character; his love has become distorted, dangerous. When two illegal immigrants Marco, Beatrices cousin, and Rodolpho, arrive from Italy in search of work, the seeds of tragedy are sown as Catherine falls for Rodolpho. Eddies mounting rage and jealousy is that of Prospero when the peace of his island kingdom is suddenly disturbed by intruders.

Corey Johnson, sporting a shiner, gives a very strong performance as Eddie, and his sheer incredulity, dismay and helplessness as he watches Catherine look admiringly and longingly at Rodolpho as he sings Paper Doll in a vice that Eddie insists, "aint tenor", is beautifully done.

As the lawyer/chorus/Alfierei, a fine performance by Richard Durden, notes, he is inexorably set on a path to destruction as sure as Oedipus. Abigail McKern gives terrific support as Eddies long-suffering wife, while Shauna Macdonald gives an increasingly assured performance as Catherine. Jonjo (COR) ONeills Rodolpho is perhaps a little overstated its unlikely Eddie would be the only one regarding him as more than a little odd, but its well-played nonetheless.

As always, accents slip a little, but the production is pacey, detailed, with many moments which linger in the mind. The sound of the stylus hitting at the end of the record following the first major

confrontation between Eddie and Rodolpho, grows and grows until it becomes a thunderous beat signalling the onset of disaster, is a lovely touch. With a revival of [The Price](#) in the West End, and *The Crucible* at the Clwyd Theatre Cymru, lets hope this is the start of more productions of Miller. For now though, this Bridge with a phew will do fine to be getting on with.

Reviewer: [Pete Wood](#)