



A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE REVIEW

GATE THEATRE

> CHRIS WASSER

IT'S a tricky one, this. On the one hand, Eddie Carbone, Arthur Miller's famously tortured Italian-American patriarch, is his usual self; devastatingly effective, in fact, in the hands of the captivating Scott Aiello. On the other hand, poor Peter Coonan looks well and truly lost as Marco, Eddie's strongman cousin from Italy. Dodgy accent, dodgy casting.

The set — a towering contraption that doubles up as both the interior and exterior of a 1950s Brooklyn apartment (and, to an extent, the New York docks) is an impressive sight, with its giant balconies and a cute backdrop of the bridge. But this is drama land we're in, not *West Side Story*.

And then there's the heavy-handed score (Marco and Eddie's melodramatic bust-up comes with its very own "dum, dum, dum"). It's a good thing, then, that someone remembers to keep things understated (a solid Niamh McCann as Eddie's wife, Beatrice). Up and down it goes, the Gate's overblown yet decidedly entertaining version of *A View from the Bridge*.

In his home (Joey Phillips as Rodolpho).

It doesn't help matters that Eddie's marriage is slowly falling apart. He only has eyes for Catherine, and he worries that Rodolpho "ain't right" (he believes the young fella is gay). So, Eddie intimidates and bullies Rodolpho. Our trusty narrator, Alfieri the lawyer (an enthused Bosco Hogan), warns us that the worst is yet to come.

It's a fascinating set-up — not nearly as significant a piece as Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, but a great deal better than *The Price*. See, no matter what way you go about staging the man's work, Arthur Miller's writing is still pretty neat. Here, it's a question of who can play it cooler; who can shout the loudest; who can do the best accent (Aiello, a New Yorker, wins that battle, obviously).

The dinner table scenes are naturalistic and compelling, but the final showdown is both anti-climactic and poorly executed (the actors should really stay on stage). At least we have Aiello. Seriously, he's that good. Heck, I'd watch the guy perform a one-man version of *A View from the Bridge*. Hmm, now there's an idea...

Ends October 24 ★★★★★



Review Betrayal and revenge find a moral compass

THEATRE

A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

GATE THEATRE, DUBLIN

Arthur Miller's 1955 play may seem very topical, dealing with the sheltering of illegal immigrants, but *A View from the Bridge* is principally a play about the meaning of integrity.

Marking the highly anticipated return to Irish stage of former director of the Abbey Theatre Joe Dowling, this new production is a most traditional celebration of Miller's themes of betrayal, revenge and unthinkable desire.

Against a black and white Brooklyn backdrop, designer Beowulf Boritt has brilliantly created the world of these immigrant longshoremen, all wooden scaffolding and ropes on pulleys, a set which remarkably transforms into the cramped apartment of the Carbone.

Eddie Carbone is a second-generation Italian immigrant making a life working on the piers, keeping a happy home with his wife Beatrice and her orphaned young niece Catherine, a beautiful girl on the cusp of womanhood.

But this contented hard-working world is ultimately fatally shattered by the arrival of Beatrice's two smuggled consins off the boat from Italy.

This is a play where the power lies in the detail, the small cracks of unease forming, and sometimes here these are slightly overdone, the subtlety of Miller too blatantly rendered, as we build towards the inescapable tragedy. But Dowling has created a strong and compelling production and one that is most beautifully designed.

Acting as one-man Greek chorus, narrator and the moral compass is Alfieri, Bosco Hogan is in one of the strongest performances. He is matched by Lauren Coe's

powerful performance as the blossoming Catherine.

But the lynchpin of this production is American actor Scott Aiello's wonderfully convincing Eddie Carbone, who transforms from bighearted family man to inflamed maniac desperately trying to keep hold of what matters, but not sure what that is any more beyond his good name.

Sophie Gorman



Reviews

Theatre

Vernon God Little

Town Hall Galway

★★★★

Eleven years after it won the Booker Prize, DBC Pierre's popular novel gets a welcome stage adaptation by Galway company Decadent. Using Tanya Ronder's script for the Young Vic's own very successful adaptation, the production distils all the mordant black humour of Pierre's incendiary satire while at the same time teasing out a wonderful pathos.

The show is distinguished by a talented and charismatic cast and is bolstered, too, by the presence of a wonderful three-piece band — The Lifebuoys — who play a set of pining country standards throughout, evoking the Texan scrub town in which the story takes place.



Vernon God Little: on tour nationally.

The narrative centres on 15-year-old Vernon Little (Jarlath Tivnan), a modern-day Huck Finn who finds himself at the eye of a media-storm following a high-school shooting in which he is unfairly implicated.

A heartbreaking figure, Vernon is a squirming, bottled up ball of rage and confusion, and he is played with tremendous delicacy by Tivnan, who finds both the spirit and the sadness that engulfs the character.

In his midst are a cacophony of vivid characters, including Vernon's sad-eyed mother (Kate Murray), who

Justice done to Miller in the docks

A View From the Bridge

By Arthur Miller

Gate Theatre until October 24th

Rating ****

Reviewed by Joanne Hayden

Almost 60 years since it premiered, *A View from the Bridge* seems eerily contemporary, concerned as it is with illegal immigration and conflicts between morality and the law.

Set in a dockland community in Brooklyn, the play charts the downfall of Eddie Carbone, a longshoreman with an unhealthy attachment to his adopted niece, Catherine. When his wife's two cousins arrive illegally from Sicily, Eddie allows them to stay.

The men have been starving back home and to be able to work illegally in the US is a triumph, a lifeline for them. But one of the cousins, Rodolpho, falls in love with Catherine, fuelling Eddie's jealousy and driving him to behave in a way that will alienate him from his tribe.

Directed by Joe Dowling, the Gate production safely and sensibly locates the play in its original time and place. The costumes are pure 1950s.

Beowulf Boritt's atmospheric set includes a large image of the bridge and the stage is flanked by wooden scaffolds so that the docks are ever-present, and even the scenes inside the Carbone house take place in the shadow of the piers.

A telephone affixed to a post remains visible for much of the performance, functioning as a reminder of one of the play's most unforgettable lines: "You can quicker get back a million dollars that you stole than a word that you give away."

Scott Aiello is excellent as Eddie — tortured, impotent, controlling, unable to acknowledge his own complicated desire.

So is Bosco Hogan as Alfieri, the Italian-American lawyer who functions like a Greek chorus, and can understand both the insider's

and outsider's points of view.

But there are no weak performances. Joey Phillips' Rodolpho is aptly carefree and unselfconsciousness, providing a perfect counterbalance to Eddie's darkness. Niamh McCann's version of Beatrice — Eddie's sidelined wife — is as subtle as it is powerful.

With a pause or a look she can convey her character's unease at the incestuous undercurrents within the house, doing justice, along with the rest of the cast, to Miller's classic and timely work.



Niamh McCann and Peter Coonan in *A View From The Bridge*

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So is Bosco Hogan as Alfieri, the Italian-American lawyer who functions like a Greek chorus, and can understand both the insider's

actors onstage and very vividly come to life. The second act is no less absorbing but the pacing does suffer slightly from the brisk episodic nature of the scenes as Vernon first hightails it to Mexico before eventually finding himself on trial and facing the death sentence in a reality TV penitentiary.

This satire of American culture is perhaps a little broad, as it was in Pierre's novel, but the idiomatic Texan dialogue and the cast's comic delivery is simply hilarious. All told, it's great craic, but — more impressive still — it's full of heart.

Padraic Killeen

■ Touring nationwide, including dates at The Everyman, Cork, September 21-26; Siamsa Tíre, Tralee, September 30; Gíor, Ennis, October 1

Theatre

A View from the Bridge

Gate Theatre, Dublin

★★★★

With its plot driven by the housing of undocumented immigrants, there's plenty in *A View from the Bridge* to tempt a director into the pursuit of topical relevance — not always a successful tactic.

In his return to Irish theatre, however, former Abbey director Joe Dowling lets the play speak for itself, giving a reverent and traditional reading to Arthur Miller's Greek tragedy-inspired classic.

Our tragic hero is Eddie Carbone, a Brooklyn longshoreman: the strutting, assured male in a household comprised of his wife, Beatrice (Niamh McCann), and her orphan niece, Catherine (Lauren Coe), whom the couple have raised.

Scott Aiello, himself an Italian-American, is perfectly cast as Eddie, giving an assured, authentic centre to the drama. He manages to pitch perfectly the manner and voice of his character, while hinting at Eddie's inner turbulence, his self-delusion and his unresolved sexuality.



