

ALL MY SONS AT THE OLD VIC

A teal-tinted photograph of a man and a woman embracing. The man is on the right, wearing a dark jacket, and the woman is on the left, wearing a patterned dress. They are in a close embrace, with the man's arms around the woman. The background is slightly out of focus, showing what appears to be a stage or a room with curtains.

**TEACHING
RESOURCES**

APR—JUN 2019

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All information is correct at the time of going to press, but may be subject to change

Teaching resources

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An Old Vic & Headlong co-production

Headlong

Further details of this production can be found at oldvictheatre.com

Front cover: Jenna Coleman and Colin Morgan



Sally Field, Jenna Coleman, Colin Morgan and Bill Pullman

CHARACTERS

SPOILER ALERT!

The below information contains plot info and spoilers

JOE KELLER

Husband to Kate and father to Chris and Larry. He is nearing 60 years old. Joe is a successful self-made businessman. He has little formal education, but he has a fascination and curiosity about the world. During the Second World War, Joe's factory built aeroplane parts for the military. Joe and his business partner Steve were arrested for intentionally shipping faulty aeroplane parts which caused 21 aeroplanes to crash, killing the pilots. Joe was acquitted but his partner Steve was sent to prison. It is revealed during the course of the play that Joe is in fact guilty. He is referred to as Keller in the play text.

KATE KELLER

Wife to Joe and mother to Chris and Larry. Kate is in her early 50s. Kate is a loving and devoted mother. She is steadfast in her belief that her son Larry is still alive, despite the fact that he has been missing in action for several years. Kate holds a great deal of anxiety and guilt over her husband's past crime. She is referred to as Mother in the play text.

CHRIS KELLER

Son to Joe and Kate and brother to Larry. Chris is 32. He is loyal, affectionate and an idealist. Chris fought in the Second World War and now works with his father. Chris is in love with Ann, despite the fact that she used to be in a relationship with his brother Larry. Chris hasn't seen Ann for five years but has been writing to her during that time.

LARRY KELLER

Son to Joe and Kate and brother to Chris. Had he lived he would have been 27 years old at the start of the play. Larry's plane disappeared during the Second World War and he is missing, presumed dead. He was in a relationship with Ann. Larry never appears in the play but his memory haunts his family. At the end of the play it is revealed that Larry killed himself as a result of his father's crimes.



Bill Pullman

ANN DEEVER

Daughter to Steve and sister to George. Ann is 26. Ann is kind-hearted but strong-minded. She used to be in a relationship with Larry but has now come to visit Chris, whom she plans to marry. Ann hasn't spoken to her father, Steve, for years after he was arrested for shipping faulty aeroplane parts. It is revealed at the end of the play that Ann has known for years that Larry killed himself as a result of Joe's crimes, but she held that information to herself to protect the Kellers.

GEORGE DEEVER

Son to Steve and brother to Ann. George is 32. George fought during the War and now works as a lawyer. George hadn't spoken to his father for years prior to the play, but decided to visit him to let him know that Ann was planning to marry Chris. Now, convinced of his father's innocence, he flies to the Keller household to stop the wedding. George's conviction is swayed when confronted with his father's faults and because of his affection for the Keller family.

STEVE DEEVER

Father to Ann and George. When Steve was arrested his wife almost left him but decided in the end to stay married to him. He is serving a prison sentence for shipping faulty aeroplane parts which caused the death of 21 pilots, a crime he claims Joe is actually responsible for. Steve is described by other characters as a cowardly man who struggles to accept his own wrongdoings. Whilst this character is important, he does not appear in the play.

DR. JIM BAYLISS

Husband to Sue. Jim is nearing 40 years old. He lives in the house that used to belong to the Deever family. Jim is a doctor but dreams of becoming a medical researcher, a job which pays less money. Jim does not enjoy being a doctor. It is revealed that he left Sue at one point and ran away to New Orleans to take part in medical research but ultimately came back home when Sue came to find him. Jim is aware of Keller's guilt but keeps this knowledge to himself.

SUE BAYLISS

Wife to Jim. Sue is nearing 40 years old. Money is a big motivator for Sue. She put her husband through medical school. Sue is resentful of Chris and his idealism. She blames him for her husband's desire to take up medical research, a less well paid position. Sue believes that Chris holds others to a standard he himself does not subscribe to as he lives off his father's money, which she believes is tainted by Joe's crimes.

FRANK LUBEY

Husband to Lydia. Frank is 32 years old and starting to go bald. Frank is a friendly and well-meaning neighbour but sometimes speaks without thinking. Frank is writing a horoscope for Larry at Kate's request to find out if the day he went missing was a favourable day. Frank was able to avoid being drafted during the War as he was slightly too old.

LYDIA LUBEY

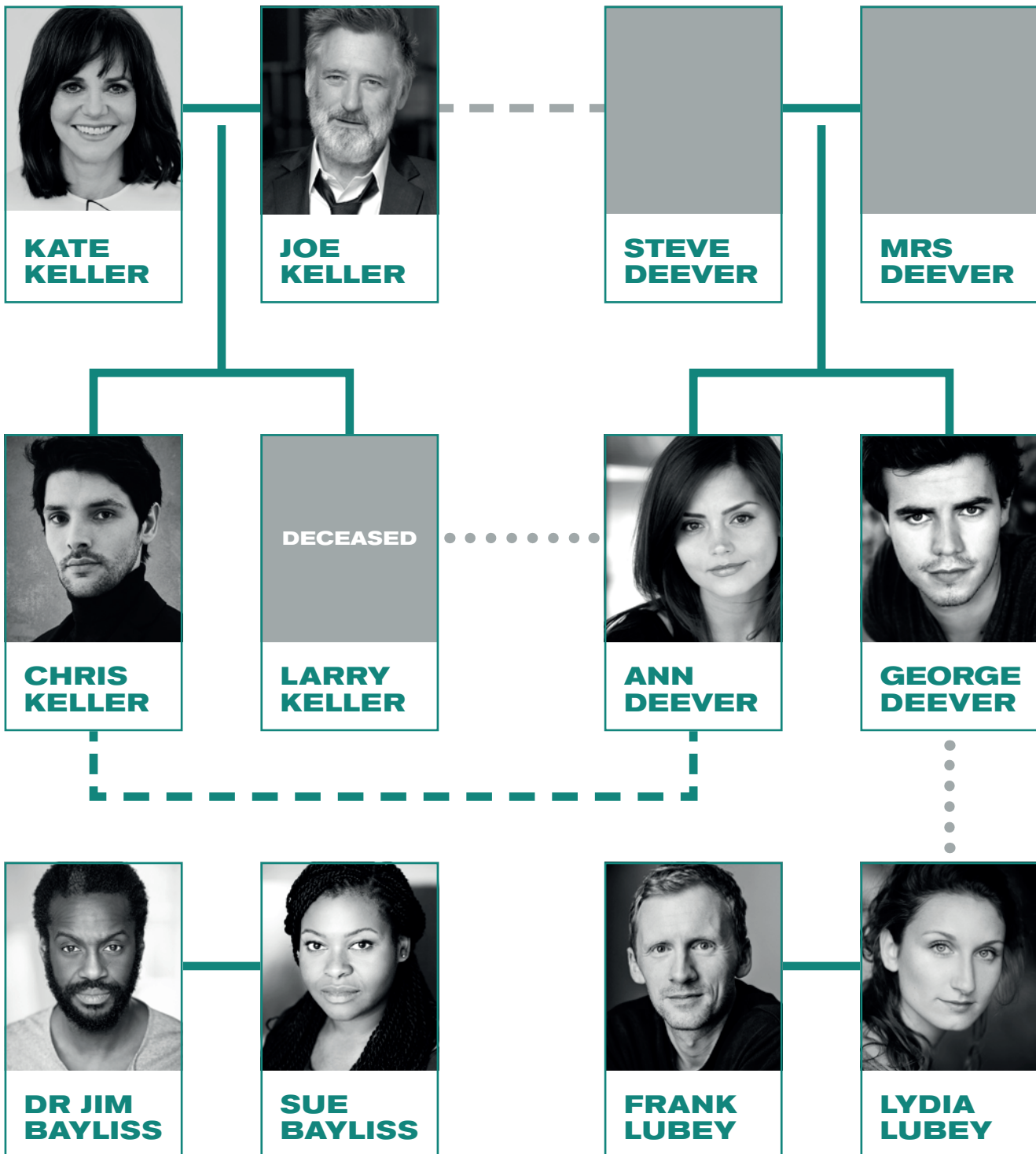
Wife to Frank. Lydia is 27 years old. She used to be in a relationship with George but did not wait for him when he went to war.

BERT

A local neighbourhood kid. He is eight years old. Bert and the other neighbourhood children have gotten Joe's arrest confused and now believe that he is a detective and that he has a jail in his basement. This is a story Joe encourages, much to Kate's annoyance.

KELLER FAMILY TREE

TRACK HOW EACH FAMILY MEMBER CONNECTS TO THE OTHER PEOPLE IN THEIR NEIGHBOURHOOD



KEY



Married



In a relationship



Used to be in a relationship



Used to be business partners

SYNOPSIS

ACT ONE

Early Sunday morning, August 1946. The action takes place in the backyard of the Keller home which is located on the outskirts of an American town. The Keller home is a well kept two storey home. In the garden there is an apple tree which has broken in half as a result of a storm.

Joe Keller is reading the newspaper with his neighbour, Doctor Jim Bayliss. They are joined by another neighbour, Frank Lubey. Joe explains he no longer reads the news section of the paper as he prefers to read the 'wanted' ads. Joe is amazed at the things people ask for and the new types of jobs people can do. He explains, 'In my day, either you were a lawyer, a doctor or you worked in a shop'. Frank notices that the Kellers' apple tree has been snapped in half by high winds. Frank comments that Joe's son Larry would have turned 27 years old this month and that it's funny that the tree was blown down so close to his birthday. Frank reveals that he is working on Larry's horoscope to find out if the day Larry went missing, 25 November, was a favourable day. Frank believes it would be impossible for someone to die on their favourable day and that this could prove that Larry is in fact alive. Jim asks if anyone has seen his son, as he has taken his doctor's thermometer. Frank comments that he thinks Jim's son will grow up to be a doctor but Jim rejects that idea, saying that he hopes his son will do something else.

Jim asks where Ann is and Joe tells him that she is upstairs sleeping, as they collected her from the train station at one am. Joe says that Ann has grown into a beautiful woman. It is revealed that when Ann was a child she used to live in the house Jim now owns. They are interrupted by Jim's wife Sue who tells Jim that one of his patients, Mrs Adams, is on the phone. Sue tells Jim he should visit another patient, Mr Hubbard, but Jim tells his wife that Mr Hubbard isn't sick and doesn't require his attention. Sue tells her husband that he should see him anyway as he could make ten dollars. Jim and Sue exit.

Frank's wife Lydia enters and asks Frank to fix the toaster, which he reluctantly agrees to do. Lydia also notices the fallen tree and asks if Ann has arrived as they knew each other as children. Lydia asks if Ann is due to marry or if she is seeing anyone. Lydia is surprised that Ann is unmarried while she is married with three children. She always thought it would be the other way around. Joe tells her that's what war does; he used to have two sons now he has one.



Sule Rimi and Bill Pullman

Joe's son, Chris, enters and Lydia exits. Joe asks his son if he has seen the apple tree. Joe is worried about what his wife, Kate, is going to make of it. They are interrupted by Bert, a neighbourhood kid. Joe pretends that Bert is working for him as a policeman. This is a game they regularly play. Bert believes Joe has a jail in his basement and asks if he can see it. Joe refuses and sends Bert back to the street to keep an eye on the neighbourhood.

Chris and Joe return to their conversation about the tree. Chris reveals that his mother, Kate, has already seen the fallen tree as he saw her in the garden at 4am. He also says that he could hear his mother crying in the kitchen. Chris believes they have made a mistake in letting Kate believe that Larry is still alive, as no one else believes it. Joe is frightened about confronting Kate and challenges Chris to prove that Larry is dead. Instead Chris reveals that the reason he asked Ann to come back is so he can ask her to marry him. Joe tells Chris that he doesn't know how Kate will react to this news, as Ann was supposed to marry Larry. Chris laments that he has held back in life because he was always thinking about other people's feelings. Joe asks why he has to marry Ann as they haven't seen each other since Chris went away to war five years ago. He tells his son that if he marries Ann he is sending a message to his mother that Larry is dead. Chris is resolute however and tells his father that he will leave town and the family business if he has to. This shocks Joe who tells Chris that the business is all for him.

Kate enters complaining that she has a pain in her head. She comments that everything seems to be happening at the same time: Larry's birthday, the fallen apple tree and Ann's arrival. Kate says she is unsure why Ann has come back, but it is suggested from the way she reacts to Chris that she has her suspicions. Kate says she loves Ann for holding out hope that Larry is alive and not marrying someone else. Kate relates a dream she had the previous night of Larry crashing his plane and calling out to her. When she woke up she walked out to the garden and found the tree broken. We discover that the tree was planted in Larry's memory. Chris tries to suggest it's time to forget Larry, but Kate is unmoved. Chris suggests the family and Ann go out dancing that evening, to which everyone agrees. Chris exits.

Kate immediately begins interrogating Joe as to why Chris invited Ann. Kate reveals her suspicions that she thinks Chris is planning to propose. Joe dances around the subject but Kate is against the idea. She is convinced Larry is alive and will return and that Joe, above all, must believe that. Joe asks her what she means but Kate will not elaborate. They are interrupted by the return of Bert who has come to report on another child that he would like Joe to arrest. Kate is furious and tells Bert there is no jail and that he should go home. She tells her husband to stop talking about jail.

Ann and Chris appear. Ann is wearing an expensive dress and they all comment on how beautiful she is. Jim appears briefly and introduces himself to Ann, who comments on how odd it is to see a stranger in her childhood home. Kate turns the conversation to Larry and Ann is embarrassed to discover she slept in Larry's room without realising it was his. She is surprised that Kate has kept all of Larry's clothes and shoes in such good condition. Kate asks Ann if her parents are going to get divorced but Ann says that her mother has forgiven her father. Kate gently tries to find out if Ann is dating anyone but Ann bluntly tells her that she is not waiting for Larry. Kate refuses to accept this.

Frank arrives and welcomes Ann. He asks about her brother, George, who is now a lawyer, and if her father, Steve, is expecting to be paroled soon. Before she can answer Chris interrupts and Frank takes his cue and exits. Ann asks the Kellers if people still talk about her father, but they assure her he is forgotten. Joe says the only person who talks about the case is his wife. Joe explains that when he was let out of jail the local kids came round to ask him questions about it. They ended up getting confused and started to believe Joe was a detective. Ann remembers the neighbours accusing Joe and her father of being murderers, but Kate says it was different with Joe as he was exonerated. Joe relates his release and how he purposefully got dropped off on the corner so he could walk down the road in full view of his neighbours. He explains it was the only way to gain back people's respect. Ann admits that she hasn't been in touch with her father and neither has her brother George. It is revealed that Ann's father was sent to jail for shipping faulty aeroplane parts that caused 21 aeroplanes to crash. Ann says those faulty parts could have gone into Larry's plane at which point Kate asks her not to say that again. Kate exits. Joe tells Ann she should forgive his father and that he was guilty of being a coward not a criminal. He tells her that her father made a mistake in shipping the parts, but he wouldn't have done it if he'd known how dire the consequences would be. Joe also says he would have stopped him but unfortunately was not at work that day as he was unwell. Joe exits to book a table, leaving Chris and Ann alone.

Ann says she can't stay as she thinks Kate wants her to leave. Chris and Ann dance around why she has travelled to see him, but eventually Chris asks her to marry him. We discover that they have been writing to each other for some time. They kiss and Chris declares that finally they are both going to live. Chris explains that his experiences have changed his outlook on the world. During the War he saw men sacrifice everything, including their lives, for each other. When he came back from the War he was shocked to discover how little meaning that sacrifice seemed to have to everyone who was left behind. He feels people have a duty to be better in honour of those who gave their lives.

'I felt wrong to be a alive, to open the bank-book, to drive the new car, to see the new refrigerator... When you drive that car you've got to know that it came out of the love a man can have for a man, you've got to be a little better because of that. Otherwise what you really have is loot, and there's blood on it'

Ann tells him he shouldn't feel like that and that he has a right to all the things he has. She tells him that there is nothing wrong with his father's money and to remember the hundreds of aeroplanes his father put in the air. They kiss again but are interrupted by Joe returning.

Joe makes fun of the happy couple, who tell him they plan to get married. Joe tells Ann that her brother George is on the phone. He doesn't know why he is calling. Ann exits to take the call. Joe reveals that George has been to see his father in prison and asks if Ann knew. Chris doesn't think she does but Joe is worried that Ann may hold a grudge against him as Steve has always blamed Joe for what happened. Joe tells Chris he is going to sign the business over to him and build him a house. Joe is aware that Chris feels ashamed of the family money. He also tells Chris he is going to help him break the news about the engagement to Kate.

Ann returns with the news that George is on his way to the Keller household, although she is unsure why he is coming. Chris takes Ann for a drive round the park. Kate warns Joe that George is a lawyer now and that he has to be smart. Joe is angered by Kate's comment and exits, slamming the door behind him.



Jenna Coleman and Colin Morgan

ACT TWO

Twilight, that same evening. Chris is sawing at the broken apple tree. He carries the broken branches into the alley. Kate arrives with homemade grape juice, which she says is George's favourite. Chris asks why his father is sleeping and Kate tells him he always does that when he is worried about something. Kate thinks George might want to open his father's case again but Chris disagrees calling George 'a damn fool'.

Ann enters and Kate exits. Ann is desperate to tell Kate about the engagement but Chris wants to wait until the time is right. Chris exits and Sue enters looking for her husband. Ann tells her that Jim has gone to pick up her brother from the airport. Ann and Sue discuss marriage. Sue explains that her husband dreams of doing medical research which would make him much happier but would mean a cut in income for the family. Sue asks Ann to move away when she marries Chris because she worries about Chris's influence on Jim. 'Chris makes people want to be better than it's possible to be'. Sue doesn't idolise Chris in the same way her husband does, as he takes money from Joe's business, which she sees as corrupt. Ann defends Joe but Sue tells her she believes Joe pulled a fast one to get out of jail. Sue tells Ann none of the neighbours believe Joe is innocent.

Chris enters and asks Sue to check on his mother as she is worked up and Sue exits. Ann tells Chris what Sue has just said to her. Chris rejects the idea that his father could be guilty but Ann is starting to have doubts. Ann is starting to wonder if she shouldn't have turned her back on her father.

Joe enters and starts joking with Chris and Ann. He tells them that his factory is full of ex-army lieutenants, majors and colonels and that he's afraid to ask anyone to sweep the floor for fear of offending someone. Joe tells Ann he has a proposition for George but that he would like her to put it to him. He tells her he can set George up in town as he is friendly with some big lawyers in the area. He also offers to give Ann's father a job when he gets out of prison. Lydia arrives to do Kate's hair and Joe takes her inside.

Jim returns but without George, who he has asked to stay in the car. Jim warns Chris not to allow George to come into the house. Jim tells Chris not to let George say what he has to say in front of Kate. Chris rejects Jim's arguments and goes to retrieve George, who suddenly arrives around the corner. George is combative and can't stop moving. Ann asks how their father is doing and George tells her he has gotten smaller. George tells Ann that she cannot marry Chris because his father, Joe, destroyed their family.

George explains that he went to visit their father in prison to let him know that Ann was going to see Chris and they were probably going to get engaged. When he got to the prison he heard his father's side of the story. Steve called Joe as soon as he found out about the defects and Joe told him over the phone to ship them. Joe told Steve he would take responsibility for anything that happened but later denied the phone call had ever taken place. Ann and Chris don't believe George's story and Chris asks why after all these years George has changed his mind on Steve's innocence. George tells Chris he only ever believed Joe's story because Chris believed it but after hearing his father's version of events he now knows the truth. George accuses Chris of knowing the truth all along and challenges him on why Chris has never put his name on the family business.

Kate enters and her presence defuses the situation as George clearly has affection for Kate. Kate starts to fuss over George, commenting on his grey hair and how skinny he looks.

'Honest to God, it breaks my heart to see what happened to all the children. How we worked and planned for you, and you end up no better than us'

George insinuates that both Ann and he need to leave on the 8.30pm train. Lydia enters and is excited to see George, with whom she used to date. George is hurt to discover that Lydia is married now with three babies. Lydia asks if George would like to meet her children but he declines and she exits. Kate tells George he should move back and that Joe will set him up with work. George is taken aback that Joe would want him back in the neighbourhood. Kate starts discussing a girl she would like to set George up with and he almost seems convinced, until Joe enters. George tells Joe that his father is unwell and that he has a lot of anger towards Joe. Joe brings up some of Steve's past failings and reminds George that his father always struggled to accept blame. Ann and Kate convince George to get a later train and stay for dinner.

George tells them that he has never felt at home anywhere but his old neighbourhood and he remarks that nothing seems to have changed and that the Kellers don't seem to have aged at all. Kate slips up and tells George that Joe hasn't been sick in the last 15 years, forgetting for a moment that he called in sick the day Steve shipped the faulty aeroplane parts. Kate and Joe try to backtrack but George won't let it go.

Frank enters proclaiming that he has finished Larry's horoscope and that as a result he believes Larry is still alive. 25 November was in fact Larry's favourable day. Chris won't believe it and Frank exits. A car horn is heard signalling that the Keller's car has arrived to take them to dinner. Chris tells George he should leave but Kate tells Ann to go with him, saying that she is Larry's girl and shouldn't be here. Ann refuses to leave and George exits. Ann follows to see him off.

Chris blurts out that he is going to marry Ann. Kate demands Joe say something but Joe doesn't take her side. Chris tells his mother to let Larry go but she says she can't because if he's dead then Joe is responsible and she cannot accept that. Chris is shocked to discover that his father was in fact guilty and demands an explanation. Joe tells his son that he had no choice. If he hadn't shipped those parts he would have lost his factory. Joe tells his son that he hoped the army would notice the defects by which point he would have corrected the problem. When that didn't happen he was planning to confess but at that point it was too late and 21 planes had crashed.

'Chris, I did it for you, it was a chance and I took it for you. I'm sixty one years old, when would I have another chance to make something for you?'

Chris is furious at his father for what he did to those twenty one pilots. He calls him lower than an animal and challenges him asking him, 'Don't you have a country? Don't you live in the world?'. Chris exits.



Sally Field, Jenna Coleman and Oliver Johnstone; Kayla Meikle

ACT THREE

It is two in the morning. Kate is rocking ceaselessly in her rocking chair. Jim enters, returning from a house call. Kate tells him she is waiting up for Chris who has not yet returned. Ann is upstairs and has not emerged since her brother left. Jim confesses that he has always known that Joe was guilty. Kate tells him she always thought Chris must have known on some level and that the truth wouldn't be that big a shock to him. Jim comforts her and tells her that Chris will come back eventually and that he will learn to live with it. Jim tells Kate that he once ran off and lived in New Orleans for two months doing medical research. He was happy but when Sue found him he ended up coming back home. Joe enters and Jim exits to look for Chris. Joe is angry at Jim for sticking his nose in but Kate tells him Jim has always known Joe's secret. Joe asks if Ann knows and Kate tells him she must have figured it out after Chris left. Kate tells her husband that when Chris returns he should offer to turn himself in. She tells Joe that Chris would never make him go to jail but if Joe shows contrition his son will forgive him. Kate tells Joe that to Chris there is something bigger than family but Joe doesn't understand what she is saying.

'I'm his father and he's my son, and if there is something bigger than that I'll put a bullet in my head!'

Ann enters. She tells the Kellers that she won't do anything about Joe but Kate must tell Chris that she knows Larry is dead so that Chris and Ann can be free to get married. Kate refuses. Ann asks Joe to go inside which he does. Ann tells Kate that she knows Larry is dead. She tells Kate that when she came she had no idea that Joe was guilty: that she just came to get married. Ann produces a letter written by Larry just before he died. She tells Kate she didn't want to share the letter but feels Kate has forced her hand. Kate reads the letter and is shocked by its contents.

Chris enters, exhausted. Chris tells his mother that he is going to leave town. He admits he had his suspicions about his father's guilt but he couldn't bring himself to face the truth. He thinks his father should be in jail but he tells his mother that she has made him practical. Ann tells Chris that she will go with him but Chris tells her she can't. He believes that she will always want him to do something about Joe.

Joe enters and tells Chris they have to talk. He challenges Chris asking if his family's wealth bothers him, which Chris admits it does. Joe tells him that all the money belongs to Chris and he can give it away or throw it in the sewer if he wants to. Joe says if he goes to jail half the country should go with him for making money off the War. Ann gives Chris his brother's letter. Chris reads the contents out loud. He reveals that Larry read about his father being arrested and was so horrified by his crime that as a result he planned to purposefully crash his plane, killing himself. Joe is devastated by this revelation and seems to gain a deeper understanding of his crime.

'I think to him they were all my sons. And I guess they were, I guess they were'

Joe says he's going for a drive and goes inside to get his jacket. A gunshot is heard inside the house. Ann runs to find Jim and Chris runs into the house. Chris returns and runs into his mother's arms. He blames himself for Joe's suicide but Kate tells him to forget and to live his life. Kate quietly enters the house.

THEMES

FAMILY AND FAMILIAL OBLIGATION

The play centres on the Keller family and their neighbours. Joe Keller cares primarily about the happiness of his wife Kate and his son Chris. However, Miller presents a paradox of family obligation in how Joe's attempt in caring for his family ends up harming them, jeopardising their future and leading to fatal consequences.

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

An ongoing conflict between personal and social responsibility slowly boils to the surface throughout the play. Joe is a practical businessman who believes his sole duty is to protect and provide for his family. Joe believes his criminal actions are justified because he did it all for his sons. Chris and Larry however believe they have a greater responsibility to society, an opinion shaped by their experiences during the War. Chris is haunted by his idealism and struggles to correlate it with his day to day reality. Larry's conviction is so strong that he takes his own life as a result of his father's crimes.

WEALTH

There was a belief in American society after the Second World War that wealth and material possession were a source of power. Jim is trapped in a job he hates but feels he must perform in order to make enough money for his family. Joe is a 'self-made' man who was uneducated but worked hard for the benefit of his family. Despite his crime Joe doesn't believe he deserves to be in prison, as he claims they would have to lock up everyone who made money during the War alongside him. Chris is ashamed of his family's money because it is tied up with the death of the pilots, but never-the-less he still lives off it.

GUILT

Joe is guilty of the death of 21 airmen because of his negligence. He shifts responsibility onto his business partner Steve and defends his innocence. Joe tries to ally his feelings of guilt for indirectly causing his son Larry's death by repeatedly mentioning that Larry doesn't fly P-40s. In the end however, confronted with what he has done, Joe's guilt causes him to commit suicide. Kate's guilt manifests in a steadfast belief that Larry must be alive because if not then his own father has killed him. Chris takes a job in his father's company but feels guilt about his family's money. When George arrives in the play he has been physically transformed by the sudden guilt of discovering that his father was innocent all this time.

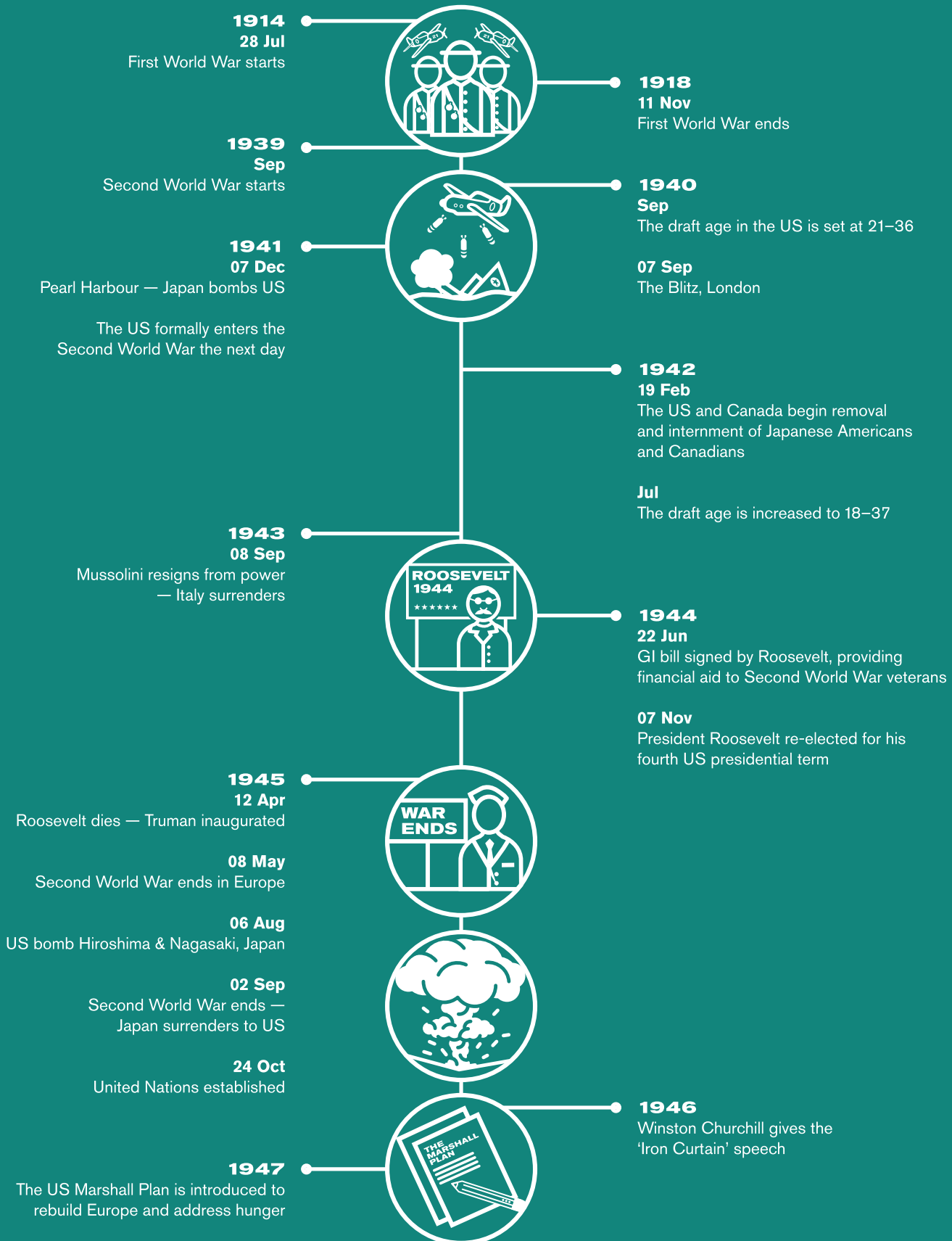
LOSS AND MEMORY

Characters in *All My Sons* struggle to suppress memories of the past. The death of Larry is inextricably linked to a terrible crime that no one, except George, wants to acknowledge. The memory and death of Larry also threatens Chris' pursuit of happiness with Ann. Kate, the sentimental mother, keeps an ideal image of her dead son and plants a tree to signify her son's life. She has retreated into a world of superstition and horoscopes. George has lost his chance with Lydia because he couldn't escape the draft like Frank.

CRITICISM OF THE AMERICAN DREAM

Chris criticises the capitalist system that emphasises profit and greed and which does not acknowledge the sacrifice made by soldiers to defend those values. The pursuit of wealth leads Joe to lie to the military in fear of having his factory shut down, resulting in the death of 21 pilots and the incarceration of his business partner and neighbour. The pursuit of money leads Jim to give up his dream of medical research to work as a doctor, a job that makes him unhappy. George abandons his hometown in search of work as a lawyer in the city.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS



AN INTERVIEW

WITH JEREMY HERRIN, DIRECTOR

Describe *All My Sons* in three words.

Intense, emotional, political.

What do you think makes this play important?

Miller's craft. This play has been solidly built from the ground up, and Miller has created a world that will irresistibly pull an audience into its orbit and let them engage with the grave realities of our condition, whilst making it captivating and touching in the familiar form of a realistic family drama. It's a classic for good reason.

What is your vision for bringing this production to the stage?

Arthur Miller seems to be writing about the bigger economic picture and how the capitalist system works. He lays out a dog-eat-dog vision of the world where people think of themselves as individuals rather than as members of a wider community. The individual and his family is at the heart of the American Dream. Our production will gently play with this construct in a way that I hope will encourage audiences to consider the political questions Miller is asking — without getting in the play's way. *All My Sons* has only become more urgent in the 72 years since Miller first laboured over it. Apart from a simple framing device, I hope the production will offer up as nuanced acting work as our talents and dedication and collaboration allows.

What are the unique challenges of directing this play and how will you approach this?

The complexity and subtlety of the characters and how their truths collide will require some psychological insight and theatrically. The play will need a rhythmic and dynamic control that I'm looking forward to learning and, crucially, I'm hoping that that should remain unseen. I want the audience to get swept into an intense and immersive experience. The biggest challenge is casting it and I'm delighted that we've got such an exciting ensemble: great actors in each and every role.

Can you tell us a little bit about what it's like to direct a play by Arthur Miller?

I've never done a play like this before. I have mainly directed new plays so the idea that the script is unchanging is really refreshing. I guess the process will be a case of trusting the text and allowing it to reveal its relevance as we go, in ways I can't quite predict. It'll be an exciting and demanding journey. I can't wait. Lee is that kid who watches the world disintegrate around him and then has to adapt to it. He's a creature of circumstance and he has to take whatever action needed in order to survive.



Jeremy Herrin

AN INTERVIEW

WITH MAX JONES, SET DESIGNER

What was your design process for *All My Sons*?

With any production it always starts with three things, the play, the venue and myself. By which I mean, what I want to explore in terms of my own artwork. *All My Sons* is very prescriptive in its naturalism, so I have had to facilitate quite a number of set requirements, such as the house, the arbour, the apple tree and so on. These things are real in the play and directly referred to so require being facilitated through design. That doesn't mean they need to be super naturalistic but they need to be present in some way, maybe even in an expressionistic sense.

Then you have the venue. The Old Vic is great, it's a beautiful venue. I like to see what opportunities a venue might present for a show. I have developed that way of working throughout my career by working in a lot of studio spaces. Studio theatres are often the most versatile spaces as you can reconfigure the audience seating. Often they are not purpose built and they might be an adapted space which has become a studio. Subsequently they might have an interesting architectural identity and you can always take a lead from those things to generate a set design that junctions with the space in interesting ways.

One of the things in The Old Vic I was drawn to straight away was the scene dock. It's one of the venues most unique assets I think. The theatre is beautiful but as a

footprint it's not that dissimilar to other proscenium arch theatres. What it does have is a big, wide, deep, dock which is open and accessible to the stage. That's not as common. I had wanted to find ways of interpreting the design of this show slightly differently to a straight naturalistic piece. One of my early thoughts was related to the end of the production. I thought it would be great to have Kate Keller at the end of the play left alone in the space. In order to do that I had to figure out a way to hide the Keller's enormous home. Luckily The Old Vic has a big dock. Most of my design period was spent designing a house that could fit into the dock in its entirety but which would also truck across the stage and fit perfectly into the garden, to complete our image of The American Dream.

The Director Jeremy Herrin really wanted to apply this idea to the beginning of the play as well. For me a lot of the story is about a shared complicity. It's easy to point the finger at Joe Keller and his choices, but there isn't one person on that stage that isn't complicit in sustaining his lie. The idea that The American Dream is this artifice that has to be protected at all costs is really interesting. We wanted to offer that up at the beginning of the play by bringing the house on stage as a visual gesture that the audience carries with them as they watch the rest of the play.



Costume Sketches

What does a Designer do day to day on a project?

I have to deliver a scale model of the set, a full set of costume drawings and technical drawings for the production, usually a couple of weeks in advance of rehearsals. Once rehearsals start a designer's role should, but in fact doesn't, become more part time! Your role becomes more about managing the implementation of the concept and the visual design, overseeing the build quality and all aspects of the visual design. For designers in the UK that covers set, costume, props and hair and make-up as well. So you have a broad spectrum of things you are responsible for. You have to ensure these things are created true to your designs but also to a standard that you're happy with. You are also a bridge between that entire visual language of the production and the rehearsal room. You have to check in with the director to ensure that any journeys they are taking in the rehearsal room are still consistent with the design process you and the director have been on up until that point. Interestingly once it goes into rehearsals the director is working with a new set of collaborators, the cast, and sometimes they push and pull in a different direction. All of that has to be negotiated on a daily basis to ensure that the production concept is still valid and consistent until the very end.

So I am doing a mixture of things during the rehearsal process. I'm going to builders, which could be all over the country. I'm going to costume houses for hires and fittings, which can be all over London. I am in fittings with actors working with Fiona Parker, who is the Costume Supervisor. I am in rehearsals watching short sequences, to tune into the performances and to ensure that any new developments are consistent with my vision.

I am also working with Sharon Foley, who is the prop supervisor, and is responsible for sourcing all the furniture and set dressing details. That's an interesting process and can be quite high maintenance. Her role is answerable to the design and the visual requirements I have given her but also to the rehearsal process and all the new things that come up. For example handheld props that the actors require or issues with furniture that doesn't quite work the way it needs too. It's a constant negotiation to get the right things and satisfy everyone's needs. That can be difficult because that process can take a long time to happen by which point you don't have very long to order the perfect thing. That's a big management task but luckily Sharon is fantastic.

Then by week three or four you start to get higher frequency fittings so I am on site a lot more. By week four and five you are into the beginning of rehearsal run-throughs and the production team will start to fit up the set. At that point I am on first call to a venue and I am here then for a full time period of about a fortnight. That covers the set fit up, the technical rehearsal, previews and then the opening night. Typically that would be the last night on the project for the designer and the production is then handed over to the team and away it goes.

Were there any particular challenges in designing for The Old Vic stage?

There wasn't actually. It's a beautiful venue. On a technical level you always have sight line requirements in these old houses. So you have to try and make sure everyone in the audience can see everything, or close to everything, at all times. So while you might have a wide stage area your visible area might actually just be a wide triangle in the middle of the space. To find that you have to draw a line from your most extreme seat on the left and right all the way to the the proscenium arch. Once you've done that you discover your actual playing area is actually quite small, despite the fact that the stage is so big.

This is a consistent issue across all venues. You have to land any production gestures or any big scenic moments into the visual area. So when you have a show like *All My Sons* with big visual requirements, they are all vying for the visible hot spot — alongside the cast! So your composition choices are all based around trying to maximise sight line potential and impact and landing performers in what you would consider the sweet spots on stage. For example, we have made a compositional choice that the way the house is orientated, anyone coming out the door, as they come down the stairs; they end up on the centre line of the stage. That position is one of the strongest on stage. So your set can usher your cast into strong staging positions.

The other thing is that like all venues, there is a generous amount of space on stage and none in the building. So my job is scattered across the land. Costume and builds are done outside the venue by freelancers so most of my team aren't based at the venue. Again, that's not unique to The Old Vic. So the designer's role is UK based, even when the job is fixed at one location. Those things are tricky to negotiate in terms of timing and getting it all to land at the same time, on the same day and in the right venue!

Do you work independently or do you work collaboratively with the other members of the creative team?

Theatre is collaborative by its nature. I don't think there really is an independent version of it. Whilst I will often have a strong vision for a show, that is always developed through an enormous amount of collaboration with everyone involved, including heads of departments, the creative team, the cast, the space and the text. It's a fascinating profession and that aspect is the thing I love the most. I never really watched theatre that much as a child. I got into it at school by putting it on, so I have always been more tuned into the communal effort of making a piece of work. And you get to work with an amazing range of people with different personalities, backgrounds, from different places of the world. It's a fascinating job in that sense.

Who or what inspires your work?

Anything and everything. When I start on a new job I always read the play and then visit the venue. I'm not a massive theatregoer so I will take inspiration from things I see in the street or conversations I have with people. My drive is not to do the same thing twice. I am always trying to challenge my art. I'm always looking to have a go at something new. That's where the thrill is.

Any tips for aspiring designers?

It's a hard profession but enormously rewarding and I love it. One of the difficulties with design is that it is quite hard to sustain as it is not a well-paid profession. Your expenses are high in comparison to other creatives because of the stuff you have to physically produce yourself. So, what I've had to do over the years is do lots of other jobs as well. I have assisted other designers in studios on a daily basis, I have done smaller shows on a fringe level, I have worked in costume departments in film, and whatever else pays the bills. Even last week I was doing a couple of days on film to pay the bills. That hasn't changed at my level.

My advice is to hold on tight. It might not be easy but don't worry if you're not always designing. The design journey is a long one and you will have to do lots of other things at the same time to pay the bills. That's OK. Those other jobs can actually be really helpful because they can inform your work in ways you haven't imagined. Even if you don't feel it at the time they all add value to your live experience. Hold on tight and trust that you will still love it in twenty years' time, because it's a great job.

For more information: maxjonesdesign.com



Gunnar Cauthery, Bill Pullman and Sule Rimi

MODEL BOX IMAGES

At the beginning of the play the Keller house does not appear on stage. It is revealed in the opening moments of the production behind gauze and then moved into position during the opening scenes of the play. Below you can see images of the design at different stages of this process. You can compare these images to the ground plan for the design.



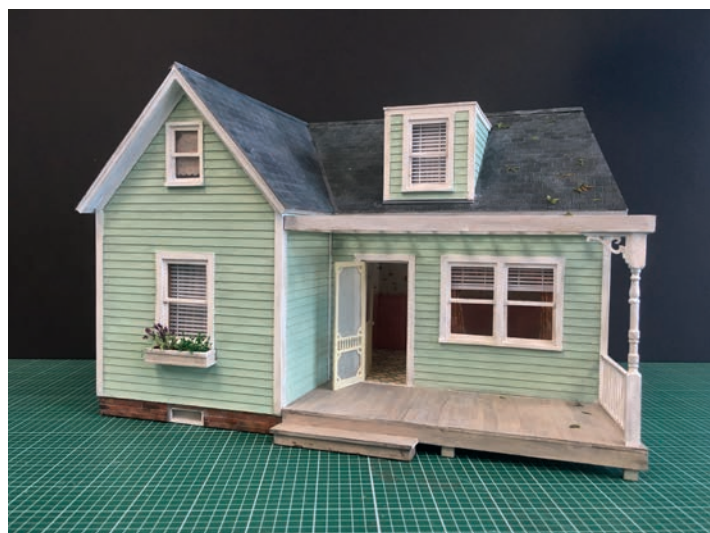
Prologue



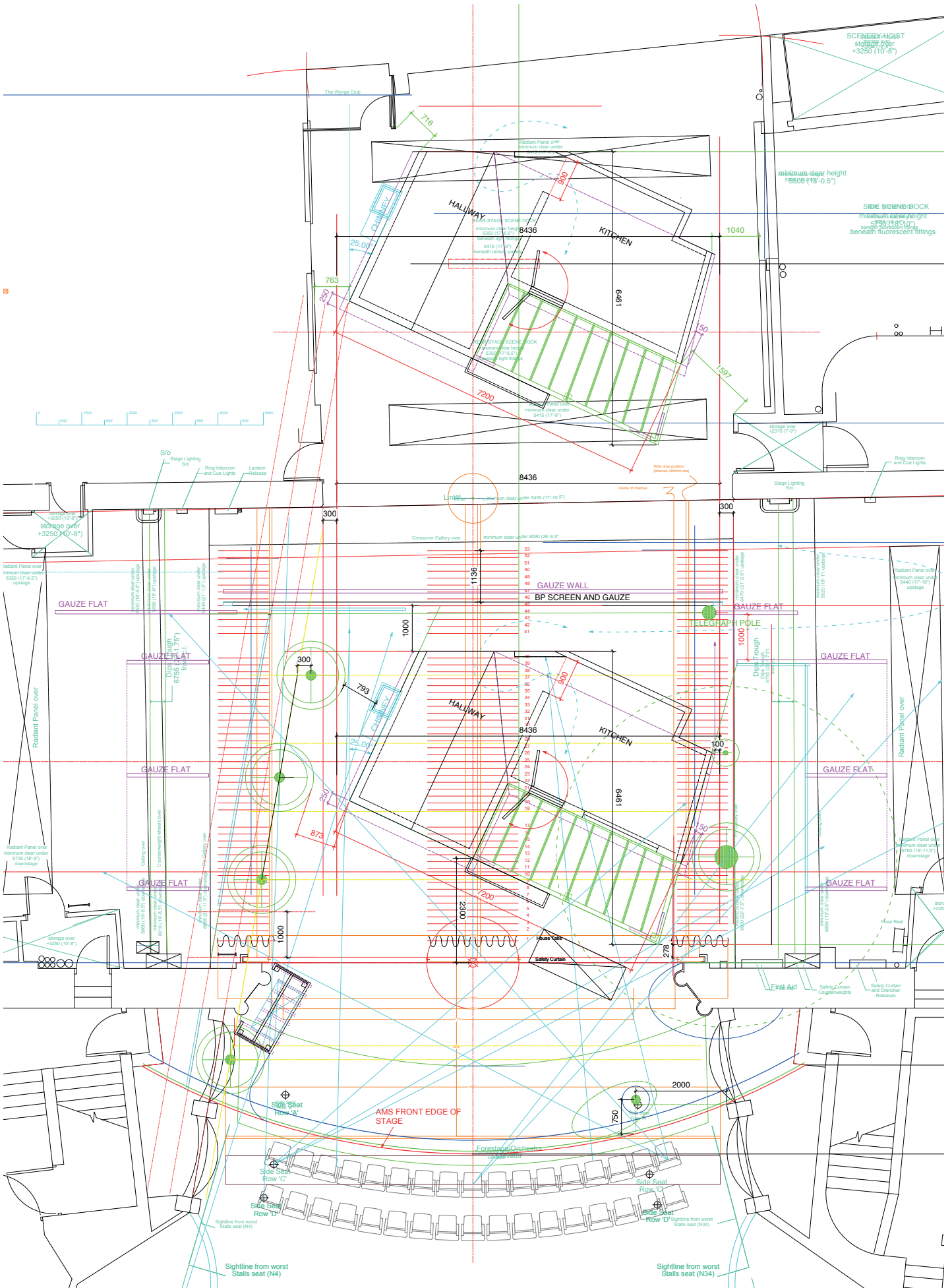
Gauze Reveal



Day



House Detail



Ground Plan

AN INTERVIEW

WITH CAROLYN DOWNING, SOUND DESIGNER

What was your design process for *All My Sons*?

I am currently mid-way through the design process. I have confirmed the speaker system design which is necessary to complete fairly early in the process to ensure all technical equipment is set up and ready for the start of the technical rehearsals when all the elements come together in the theatre. I have chosen positions for speakers after meetings with the design team to establish our design aesthetic and the practicalities involved. This takes a fair amount of collaboration and negotiation between departments to complete.

The stage I am currently at is the development of the content — soundscape, music and sound effects. I have been visiting rehearsals to understand how the action of the play is unfolding and the choices that are being made in the storytelling from a directorial and acting perspective. This then informs the sounds that I am developing, in collaboration with ideas from the director. I will now work with all the sound textures we have discussed and create the necessary sequences of the piece. The director and I have been sharing music that we think might be suitable or will give us inspiration for the major scene change sequences and soundscapes involved. I will share my work with the director for discussion before creating the sequences we will then go into tech with. In the meantime, I am delivering essential sound cues to the rehearsal room to help the director and actors work on the timings of particular events in the text. These include cars arriving and phone rings.

Were there particular elements of the play you were drawn to or wanted to highlight?

Yes indeed. The play is very evocative and conjures a wealth of sound textures in my mind from which to draw. These include, planes passing over head, planes crashing/exploding, wind and thunder storm, factory and mechanical sounds. These reference various elements of the story, memories, dreams and imaginings.

I am interested in Kate's experience of the storm the night before the play opens and the significance of Larry's tree been cracked and blown down, as well as her dream and how dreams and reality can become confused and blended when one is in a state of trauma, distress or mourning, as she is. That also applies to the rest of the family and other characters in relation to their memories of what happened at the factory leading to the court case and incarceration of Mr Deever. Truth and lies, misremembering, memory playing tricks on the mind. All fascinating and gives the soundscape a wealth of textures on which to draw and help support and express these elements of the emotional journey of the story.

Do you work independently or do you work collaboratively with the other members of the creative team?

I work both independent and in collaboration with members of the creative and technical teams involved. I work collaboratively with the creative teams when developing the initial design and aesthetic of the sound and then independently when creating the content. I will then work collaboratively with the technical team (production engineer and operator) to implement the sound system design and content delivery.

Who or what inspires your work?

Composers of the early-mid 20th century have had a great influence on how I consider sound within a theatre context — its composition and experience by audience in a space. These composers include John Cage and Pierre Schaffer and their passionate beliefs that composition encompasses all sounds. It seems very appropriate actually in relation to the period of this particular play!

Any tips for aspiring sound designers?

Listen. Be curious. To fail is to learn and develop and therefore create.

For more information: carolyndowning.co.uk

AN INTERVIEW

WITH RICHARD HOWELL, LIGHTING DESIGNER

What was your design process for *All My Sons*?

Using the script as a starting point for thoughts and ideas, I met with Jeremy Herrin (the Director) and Max Jones (the Designer) who had already begun work on the initial set design. We talked about the look and feel of each act and about the meta-theatrical framing device that we're using for this production. These conversations continued through rehearsals whilst I put together my lighting plan; this is when I decide what lights to use and where. The bulk of my process happens during the technical rehearsal in the theatre. We work on stage with the full design, actors, and the rest of the team. We all see the lighting for the first time and work together to craft it.

Were there particular elements of the play you were drawn to or wanted to highlight?

The fracturing of the main character's lives and relationships as the play develops immediately seemed like a good arc to follow with the lighting. As their world falls apart we can shift into a more expressionistic visual language.

Is it challenging designing lighting for a naturalistic play?

Although this play is rooted in naturalism it also has a great lyrical quality, so the lighting can gradually shift into a more expressionistic style as the piece continues. These more abstract lighting ideas are really exciting but the challenge is to give them a naturalistic starting point which allows the audience to accept them.

Do you work independently or do you work collaboratively with the other members of the creative team?

I like to work collaboratively. Certainly the technical rehearsal is a great act of collaboration, both creatively and technically. One of my favourite relationships is with the sound designer; what you hear can really affect what you see and visa-versa.

Who or what inspires your work?

The photographer Gregory Crewdson; he's been a big influence for all of us on this project. The lighting designer Paule Constable

Any tips for aspiring lighting designers?

Find out what excites you visually. That could be from the world around you or art, theatre and film.

Take every opportunity you can to design, even on the smallest of scales. Collaborate with others who are also starting out.

Assist people whose work you admire.

For more information: richardhowell.co.uk



Bessie Carter and Sule Rumi; Gunnar Cauthery



CLASSROOM EXERCISES

DIRECTING

CREATING YOUR TAGLINE

Divide the class into groups. Each group has to summarise the story of *All My Sons* in seven sentences. They don't need to be in the order that they happen — they can be whatever they think are the most important parts of the story. They must be full sentences and not phrases.

Next they must summarise those seven sentences into three sentences. They can combine elements or ideas but must be particular about the words they are using.

Finally, they must reduce the three sentences into a single sentence. This can be as abstract or poetic as they like. This is the tagline for their production: the heart of their idea for staging the play.

SPATIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Divide the class into pairs and give each person a copy of the text extract below. Each pair has to read through the text and decide how they would like to move. Students can step forward, step back, stay still or turn away. They can only make one movement per line.

Discuss what they discovered and if any of the movements could then be kept for staging the scene.

CHRIS

'You know why I asked Annie here, don't you?'

KELLER

'Why?'

CHRIS

'You know.'

KELLER

'Well, I got an idea, but — What's the story?'

CHRIS

'I'm going to ask her to marry me.'

KELLER

'Well, that's your own business, Chris.'

CHRIS

'You know it's not only my business.'

KELLER

'What do you want me to do? You're old enough to know your own mind.'

CHRIS

'Then it's all right, I'll go ahead with it?'

KELLER

'Well you want to be sure Mother isn't going to —'

CHRIS

'The it isn't just my business.'

KELLER

'I'm just sayin' —'

CHRIS

'Sometimes you infuriate me, you know that? Isn't it your business, too, if I tell this to Mother and she throws a fit about it? You have such a talent for ignoring things.'

KELLER

'I ignore what I gotta ignore. The girl is Larry's girl.'

CHRIS

'She's not Larry's girl.'

KELLER

'From Mother's point of view he is not dead and you have no right to take his girl. Now you can go on from there if you know where to go, but I'm tellin' you I don't know where to go. See? I don't know. Now what can I do for you?'

LIMITATIONS

Continue in pairs and using the text extract above, add in a limitation for the movement in the scene, for example one character can move but the other must stay still, or one must stay seated at all times. Swap the rule around so both characters get to have a go.

How does this affect the relationship between the characters? What might you choose to retain from these games and use in staging?

DESIGN

CREATING A MOOD BOARD

As a class read over the following description of the Keller household given by Arthur Miller.

'The back yard of the Keller home in the outskirts of an American town, August of our era. The stage is hedged on right and left by tall, closely planted poplars which lend the yard a secluded atmosphere. Upstage is filled with the back of the house and its open, unroofed porch which extends into the yard some six feet. The house is two storeys high and has seven rooms. It would have cost perhaps fifteen thousand in the early twenties when it was built. Now it is nicely painted, looks tight and comfortable, and the yard is green with sod, here and there plants whose season is gone. At the right, beside the house the entrance of the driveway can be seen, but the poplars cut off view of its continuation downstage. In the left corner, downstage, stands the four-foot-high stump of a slender apple tree whose upper trunk and branches lie toppled beside it, fruit still clinging to its branches. Downstage right is a small, trellised arbour, shaped like a sea shell, with a decorative bulb hanging from its forward-curving roof. Garden chairs and a table are scattered about. A garbage pail on the ground next to the porch steps, a wire leaf-burner near it.'

Divide the class into groups. Using the description above as a guide each group must create their own set design using collaged images. Although a lot of decisions on what the set looks like have already been made challenge each group to think about the gaps in the description. For example, what colour is the house? Can we see inside and if so which rooms can we see? What colour is the sky? Encourage them to make their own choices within the frame work provided.

FOUND OBJECTS

Divide the class into five groups and give each group a random object. Read the following description of the apple tree that Arthur Miller gives us.

'Downstage, stands the four-feet-high stump of a slender apple tree whose upper trunk and branches lie toppled beside it, fruit still clinging to its branches.'

Each group must use their object and themselves to create the broken apple tree. Share back what they have created and then swap the objects. See how many ideas the class can come up with from the same selection of objects.

CREATING COSTUME

Chose a character from the play and discuss their attributes. For example, Chris: devoted to his family, affectionate, idealistic but avoids conflict, socially aware, ex-soldier, etc.

Break the class into groups and challenge each group to create a costume for your chosen character using their attributes as inspiration. What can we tell about the character from the clothes they wear? What does their costume tell us about the time period they live in? What is the character's economic status? How do they see themselves or what image do they want to project to others? Challenge students to think about texture, colour and shape.

Students can draw their costume, use collage, or use real items of clothing depending on the resources you have available. Come back together and discuss what you have created and what story each group is telling with their choices.

SOUND

SOUNDSCAPE

Think about the storm that precedes the opening scene of the play. Create a list of sounds that might be heard, i.e. thunder, wind, rain, the sound of the tree breaking, Kate crying, etc.

Use this list to create a soundscape. Bring your students into a standing circle. Assign a different sound to each student. Use gesture to conduct the storm bringing in different sounds when needed and adjusting the volume of each sound effect as required. Ask a couple of students to stand in the middle of the centre with their eyes closed. What effect does the soundscape have on them? What emotions does it conjure up?

Read out the following text extract and apply the soundscape to it, adjusting the volume and intensity as required.

MOTHER

'I was fast asleep and — Remember the way he used to fly low past the house when he was training? When we used to see his face in the cockpit going by? That's the way I saw him. Only high up. Way, way up, where the clouds are. He was so real I could reach out and touch him. And suddenly he started to fall. And crying, crying to me...Mom, Mom! I could hear him like he was in the room. Mom!...it was his voice! If I could touch him I knew I could stop him, if I could only — I woke up and it was so funny — The wind...it was like the roaring of his engine. I came out here...I must've still been half asleep. I could hear that roaring like he was going by. The tree snapped right in front of me — and I like — came awake. See? We should never have planted that tree.'

As a class discuss how the addition of sound changes the way this speech is perceived.

SOUND-TRACKING

Ask students to research songs from the period the play is set, America 1946, which the characters may have listened to. Ask them to also bring in contemporary music that they feel sums up the play, one of the characters or a feeling the play evokes in them. Listen to tracks from the time period and today and discuss what effect each piece of music might have on an audience if it was used in a production of the play. What effect does a contemporary soundtrack have on a period piece?