Death and starvation in Boston theater

Arthur Miller's 'Death of a Salesman' at the People's Theatre now through Sunday, May 4. Tickets are $5 Saturdays, $4 other nights. People's Theatre is presenting the most moving, sensitive production possible of Arthur Miller's 'Death of a Salesman.' Director Grey Johnson subtly develops fantasy and reality, creating explosions at their confluence. For Homer Deitmeier's 'Salesman,' Willy Loman, the world as it is simply does not exist, only visions of what it should be and memories of a past that never was. The vision is blinding and Deitmeier's 'Salesman' does not want to see the light.

Dooms of impossible triumphs give him a high-key pace, a pace which nonetheless slows down progressively every time a glimmer of truth risks getting in the way. When Loman has to admit low sales with paper-thin excuses, when he has to borrow money from his neighbor Charley, when he has to make contact with his son Biff, his hope is smashed.

The second pace gains a grip on the play progresses, efforts at self-delusion greedily absorbing more and more lifeblood in combating it until a threshold of no return is passed and there is nothing left but the 'Death of a Salesman.'

The relationship between son Biff (Robert Shea) and father is carefully studied, flashbacks to youth and mutual joy being overshadowed by modern-day 'failure.' Failure, that is, in terms of the Dream, because it is success at 'being big' that counts. Success as a person does not. Although Shea's subliminal signals make it clear how much Biff loves his father, they cannot be acknowledged because Loman can only love a person in terms of the Dream.

And then the audience, must weep because this theatre is alive and human: truly a People's Theatre.

I have a problem. How can I dare write more than a few lines about Sam Shepard's magnificent Obie-award winning play, 'The Curse of the Starving Class'? I must.://

'Buchwald Tickets $9.50*

*That's what it costs us (assuming 750 attendance) but you, an MIT student, can get in for only $2.50. Don't pass up this incredible bargain.

ART BUCHWALD

Tuesday, April 22, 8 pm DuPont Gymnasium, MIT

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