

Actors Ensemble of Berkeley Presents

Death *of a* Salesman

by Arthur Miller



Directed by:

Michael R. Cohen

Nov 15 - Dec 1

Fri & Sat 7:30pm, Sun 2:00pm

LaVal's Subterranean Theater
Berkeley, California

www.aeofberkeley.org

ACTORS ENSEMBLE
OF

BERKELEY

About Actors Ensemble of Berkeley

Actors Ensemble (AE) has been around the block (and just around the corner from you) since 1957, making us the longest-running stage company in Berkeley. Recently we centered our season on summer shows at John Hinkel Park Amphitheatre, a wonderful outdoor space with a vast legacy of performance, and La Val's Subterranean Theatre in North Berkeley, currently the home of **Theatre Lunatico**, whom we thank for their assistance with this production, as well as the staff of La Val's Pizza.

As Berkeley's only true community theatre company, we depend on our volunteers to bring their energy and creative vision to each play we produce. If you would like to volunteer in our theatre, give us a call or send us an email! We'd love for you to play a part in our next show!

Actors Ensemble of Berkeley
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Thanks to Ruth Giron Wong, Kevin Karplus, Lisa Wang, Jeff Trescott, Martha Luehrmann, Jay Manley, Jerome Solberg, Matthew Campbell, Jennifer Halsing, Kathleen A Shiring, Eugene S. Bardach, Christine Sheppard, Charlotte von der Hude, Tom and Jan Vargo and all those who have supported Actors Ensemble.

Board of Directors

Michael R. Cohen[^], Victoria F. Siegel[^], Jeff Trescott[^], Jerome Solberg[^], Hannah Rachel Gerry, Jane Goodwin, Paulette Herring, Jay Manley, Gabriel Ross, Susannah Wood*, Robert Estes*, Martha Luehrmann*, Norah Foster*

*=alternate, [^]=officer.

Performance Schedule:

7:30 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays, 2 p.m. Sundays

November 15th – December 1st, 2024

La Val's Subterranean Theater

1834 Euclid Ave, Berkeley, CA 94709

The Performance is approx. 2 1/2 hours with an intermission

AE is supported in part by a grant A PROUD MEMBER OF
From The City of Berkeley
Civic Arts Commission



Death of a Salesman
by Arthur Miller

Cast

(in order of appearance)

Willy Loman..... Bruce Kaplan
Linda Loman..... Maya Rath
Happy..... Ryan Chu
Biff..... Joshua Roberts
The Woman/Jenny/Letta Missa Perron
Charley..... Carlos Rubinstein
Ben/Stanley..... Evan Mooney
Bernard..... Z. Hansen
Howard/Second Waiter..... Laszlo Horner
Miss Forsythe/Voices – Hotel Staff & Howard’s Family.....
..... Kara S. Poon

Staff

Director..... Michael R. Cohen
..... Michael Sally
Stage Manager..... Mary Tran
Costumer..... Lyre Alston
Set Designer..... Kirsten Yamaguchi
Original Music and Sound..... Jeff Dunn
Props..... Susan Dunn
Light Design..... Nate Bogner
Photography and Graphic Design..... Vicki Victoria
Intimacy & Fight Choreography Consultant..... Meryn MacDougall
Producer & Many Other Things..... Jerome Solberg

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For photos of the cast and more check our website or

@actorsensemble on FB or @aeofberkeley on Instagram or X

Special Thanks to Rachel Lee, Kent Leech and the CHRS for the Wire Recorder,
Shay Ogelsby-Smith and Masquers for costumes, Jack Prizmich for the use of
his Golf Clubs, Vicki Siegel and the AE Board for manning the house, Jeff
Trescott for AE finances, Temple Beth Hillel for rehearsal space, Shawn Oda and
Lauri Smith of Lunatico, and the management and staff of La Val’s Pizza.

A Note from the Director

Arthur Miller's working title for *Death of a Salesman* was "The Inside of His Head" which is central to my production concept, allowing the often-contradictory emotions surging through Willy Loman's head to flow from scene to scene, building to the inevitable end of the play.

In his essay, "Tragedy and the Common Man," Miller argues that Willy is indeed a tragic character - if not a hero - because he falls from a perceived if not real height. He certainly has his "tragic flaws". His self-deception, misogyny, and his failure to correctly measure success result from his faulty but all too common interpretation of American societal values. He destroys his sons and betrays his wife, but it is his desperate attempts to assert whatever dignity he may or may not have that make Miller's play compelling. He isn't much of a man, but he is a man and attention must be paid. I believe Miller's play is timeless and timely.

The group effort bringing all the elements together astounds me. Also, thanks to **Michael Sally** for assuming directing challenges while I was recovering from an illness. I want to thank the cast for breathing life into these very complex characters and to the crew for all the creative details. In addition, I am very grateful to Mary Tran for all her hard work and problem-solving skills. Of course, Jerome Solberg, the heart and soul of Actors Ensemble, deserves all my gratitude for this show and ALL the previous productions.

Michael R. Cohen
Richmond, CA, November 2024

Cast and Staff Biographies

In Alphabetical Order

Lyre Alston (he/him/she/her) (*Costumes*) is a designer working in and around the bay area in both Costume design and Wig/Makeup design/artistry. Some recent shows include *The Tutor* with New Conservatory Theatre Company, *The Red Shades* at ZSpace, *in the Panto* at The Presidio, and *Much Ado About Nothing* and *The Imaginary Invalid* with **AE** earlier this summer. Please enjoy the show!

Nate Bogner (Light Design) studied Technical Theater at Diablo Valley College and then Acting and Playwriting at Berkeley Repertory School of Theater. Some of his favorite roles as an actor include *Dr. Hermann Einstein* (Arsenic and Old Lace, Jewish Community Center, Walnut Creek), Pfc Loudon Downey (*A Few Good Men*, Diablo Actors Ensemble) and Ned Weeks (*The Normal Heart*, Pittsburg Community Theater) for which he was nominated for a Shellie award for Best Actor. As a lighting designer his favorite design is *Tender Napalm* (Anton's Well), although other shows he enjoyed designing for include *Picasso at the Lapin Agile* (**AE**), *Driving Miss Daisy* (DAE/MTC), and *The Gin Game* (Diablo Actors Ensemble) which also garnered him a Shellie nomination for Best Lighting.

Ryan Chu (*Happy*) is a Bay Area native who's new to the world of acting. He's ecstatic that his first foray into theatre allows him to realize one of his favorite plays. He's thankful to **AE** and Michael Cohen for granting him the space to play and explore new facets of himself. Ryan would also like to thank his loving parents and friends -- particularly Jake and Kat McGlue -- for their support. In his free time, Ryan spends his time reading, working out, and serving his cat overlords as a makeshift bed/space heater

Michael R. Cohen (*Director*) I was first overwhelmed by a production of *Death of a Salesman* as a high school freshman in 1971. Willy Loman's primal scream for attention transported me to Arthur Miller's world where even the most flawed of us deserve attention. I have directed over sixty productions, and I am grateful for the opportunity to direct the play that ignited my love of theater.

Susan Dunn (*Props*) Is privileged to be working on this fifth show for **AE**. A dedicated theater professional, administrator and Bay Area theater critic, she is on staff at Altarena Playhouse and writes for Theatrius, Aisle Seat Review and Reviews Bay Area. Susan is wowed by the amazing talent and great vibes from this cast and crew and is thankful to be part of the team.

Jeff Dunn (*Original Music/Sound*) is a lifetime member of the National Association of Composers, USA. His musical *Castle Happy* was showcased at Altarena Playhouse in 2017. This year, he completed *Finding Medusa*, an operetta with librettist Madeline Puccioni.

Z Hansen (*Bernard*) is thrilled to be making his **AE** debut in *Death of a Salesman*. Previously seen in *Legally Blonde* at Ray of Light in SF, he is ecstatic to be back in the bay and working again! Thank you to the cast and crew for making his first play in five years truly special. Thank you, Michael R. Cohen, for casting me in this play you've wanted to do for so long.

Laszlo Horner (*Howard/Second Waiter*). Actors Ensemble devotees will know Laszlo Horner from *Faeries in the Moonlight* and staged readings of *A Dybbuk*, *Rosmersholm*, and *The Lady from the Sea*. He has also appeared in CCT's productions of *To Master the Art*, *All the Way*, and *All Is Calm*, as well as Altarena Playhouse's revival of *Come Back, Little Sheba*. He is honored to rejoin Michael and the Ensemble for a project that holds such special significance.

Bruce Kaplan (*Willy Loman*) is honored and humbled to be performing this "bucket list" role with such a great cast and team. He most recently appeared as Argan in *The Imaginary Invalid* with **AE** at John Hinkel Park. Other recent favorite roles include Mayor Shinn in *The Music Man* and Mr. Mushnik in *Little Shop of Horrors* (Pinole Community Players), Gloucester in *King Lear* (Berkeley Shakespeare Company), Doolittle in *Pygmalion* (Orinda SVP), and the Wizard in *Wizard of Oz* (Tri-Valley Theater). Thanks for supporting community theater!

Evan Mooney (*Ben/Stanley*) is excited to be making his first appearance with **AE**. Recently he was in *King Lear* with Foodbank Players, *Murder On the Orient Express* with the San Leandro Players and *Clybourne Park* with Masquers in Point Richmond.

Missa Perron (*The Woman/Jenny/Letta*) is delighted to return to perform with **Actors Ensemble**, although she still hasn't figured out if the theater's name is a singular possessive, plural or plural possessive noun. Recent theater performances include *Awesome High* (Awesome Theater), *Kudzu: A Gentrification Tale* (**AE**), and *A Nice Family Gathering* (Altarena). She has done commercial work in challenging roles including "woman laughing while eating salad in swimming pool" as well as "corporate shill leading the board meeting in a sad, stale office." She dances with the award-winning performance group led by choreographer Lydia Soto.

Kara S. Poon (*Miss Forsythe/Voices of Hotel Staff & Howard's Family*) is delighted to reunite with director Michael R. Cohen once again, after acting in *Fortinbras* (**AE**), *Reservations* (Ross Valley Players), and

collaborating on the music for *Faeries of the Moonlight* (also **AE**). She studied just down the street at UC Berkeley (class of 2020), double majoring in comparative literature, and theatre & performance studies; as well as overseas at the University of Cambridge for English dramaturgy. She is honoured and thankful to be a part of Michael's "bucket list" project. www.karapoon.com

Maya Rath (*Linda Loman*) Ever since she performed the role of The Woman in her high school production of *Death of a Salesman* in Woburn, Massachusetts, it has been Maya's dream to perform the role of Linda Loman. Maya has acted with other local companies including Pinole Community Players, The Foodbank Players, Clayton Theatre Company, Pittsburg Theatre Company, Orinda Starlight Village Players, Ross Valley Players and San Leandro Players. She retired as General Manager of the Oakland Symphony after 24 years. Maya lives in Piedmont with her husband and, like Linda Loman, has two grown sons.

Joshua Roberts (*Biff*) is thrilled to be performing his second show with **AE**. He was last seen this summer as Cléante in **AE's** *The Imaginary Invalid*. Other favorite roles include Edmund in *King Lear* at Berkeley Shakespeare Company and Mr. Darcy in *Miss Bennet: Christmas* at Pemberley at Altarena Playhouse. A special thanks to his mother, Donna, and his daughters, Eleanor and Florence.

Carlos Rubinstein (*Charley*) is having an amazing time giving everybody un-asked-for advice. We've done all we can to keep him off the stage when it's not his scene, but the guy just keeps showing up! Bringing Charley to life has been a signal honor and a highlight of his career. Carlos trained at the Lee Strasberg Institute and the Conservatory of Theater and Film at SUNY Purchase, and he's full-on psyched to be joining **AE** for this production.

Michael Sally (*Director*) is an accomplished playwright, actor and director, and the Managing Director of Masquers Playhouse in Point Richmond. He also is the creator and facilitator for EAST SIDE STORIES (Masquers Playhouse) and OUR TOWN STORIES (Chanticleers). Among many directing projects are *Our Town* (Pinole Players), *ROE* (Masquers Playhouse), *42nd Street* (Stage One), *Wait Until Dark* (Chanticleers), *The First Supper* (Altarena) and *The Odd Couple* (Hillbarn). Appearances as an actor include *To Master the Art* (CCCT), *The Moon for the Misbegotten* (Eugene O'Neill Festival), *American Buffalo* (Vallejo Stage), *Oslo* (Los Altos Stage) and many others. His original play, *Just My TYPE*, based on the work of Myers-Briggs had its World Premiere at the Ross Valley Players in 2018, and he has created solo shows *Parental Guidance Suggested*, *Confessions of a NuJu* and *I am not Done Yet*.

Mary Tran (*Stage Manager*) is a retired epidemiologist and long-time resident of the East Bay. She has served as stage manager for several plays with **AE** and Masquers and feels privileged to be part of the team for this production of *Salesman*.

Vicki Victoria (*Graphic Design & Photography*) enjoys photographing and graphic designing for **AE** behind the stage when she's not on stage in productions including *She Kills Monsters*, *The Skin of Their Teeth* and last summer's *Faeries of the Moonlight*.

Kirsten Yamaguchi (*Set Design*) This is the third **AE** production Kirsten has designed after *Much Ado About Nothing* and *The Imaginary Invalid* this past summer. As a youth in Los Angeles, Kirsten performed on stage in many musicals and with choirs.

Thanks Rachel Lee, Kent Leech and CHRS for the Wire Recorder:

The California Historical Radio Society (CHRS) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization founded in 1974, dedicated to preserving the rich history of radio, wireless communication, and broadcasting. Our mission includes restoration, research, and sharing the stories that shaped early electronic communication.

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Help us bring history to life—your support is invaluable as we fundraise to enhance our museum exhibits!

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Venmo: @Actors_Ensemble (underscore, not dash)

Don't miss our Fall 2024 Staged Reading

The Repossessed, by Greg Lam, Directed by Gabe Ross
8 p.m. Tues. Nov. 26th, Pay-What-You-Will (\$15 online)

Check back for updates on our 2025 Season at our website:

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