

**GREATER MANCHESTER DRAMA FEDERATION  
3 ACT PLAY FESTIVAL 2018/19**

<b>Society</b>	<b>CHADS THEATRE COMPANY</b>
<b>Title</b>	<b>A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE</b>
<b>Author</b>	<b>ARTHUR MILLER</b>
<b>Date &amp; Time</b>	<b>Wednesday 13/03/19 7.45pm</b>
<b>Venue</b>	<b>Chads Theatre, Cheadle Hulme</b>
<b>Contact/host name</b>	<b>Hamish Lawson</b>
<b>Contact on the night</b>	<b>Hamish Lawson</b>
<b>Young actors in cast?</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Licence available</b>	<b>Yes</b>

**Production highlights:** Strong ensemble playing with convincing accents and direction that encouraged fluidity in movement, positioning and dialogue.

**To think about for the future:** Just the occasional move seemed a little contrived – Rodolpho perching briefly on the table, for instance, but this is massive nit-picking.

**THE PRODUCTION**

Born in New York, Arthur Miller was shaped by the Great Depression, which brought financial ruin onto his father, a small manufacturer, and demonstrated to the young Miller the insecurity of modern existence. 'A View from the Bridge', one of his best known works, was first performed in its present format in 1956, at a time when the United States was entering a period of great prosperity after the hardships of the Second World War. Many immigrants were arriving, having decided to leave the problems of war-torn Europe behind them. It was seen as a time when hard work and ambition could lead anybody with a strong enough desire to achieve the American Dream. The play is set in the 1950s, and is based on an apparently true story told to Miller by a lawyer who worked with longshoremen. It echoes the format of a Greek tragedy, where the main protagonist is propelled helplessly towards his fate, and nothing can be done to alter it. Eddie Carbone causes his own downfall through his weakness. This is a wonderful play, offering a variety of strong, emotive roles. Convincing accents are essential, as is a convincing setting and tone.

**TECHNICAL**

**Set and props**  
*A set which shows creativity and innovation and addresses the style of the production. Is well*

You made wise use of a lovely open plan stage with the Carbone apartment placed CS, nicely beige with weathered walls, a brown patterned rug, suitable wooden table with table cloth and chairs centre, two doorways (one with an actual door, the other making use of a curtain), and

<p><i>constructed. Props which are in period, authentic in appearance and placed strategically e.g. furniture.</i></p>	<p>considerable religious bric-a-brac including a cross on the wall. A doorframe (self-standing) led off SR to a square acting area surrounded by black flats, a wall mounted public telephone and stairs leading to the next level of the tenement block. SL was an impressive depiction of the Brooklyn Bridge and beyond with a railed walkway providing an added level and further entrance/exit. It was totally successful in evoking time and place.</p>
<p><b>Lighting and Sound</b> <i>Lighting and sound effects which contribute towards the dramatic potential, etc.</i></p>	<p>Owing to the open plan nature of the set and the coming and going of Alfieri as a narrator/chorus type character the lighting had to be slick, offering spotlights and sudden yet smooth changes from scene to scene, providing both interior and exterior illumination. This was done to perfection. I particularly liked the cold blue spot that held Eddie as he telephoned Immigration and the same stark highlighting of the jailhouse scene with the gobo produced impression of cell bars. There were also good musical choices that clearly set proceedings in Fifties America and enhanced the drama. These were well cued at just the right level. Catherine playing a record sounded right too. The coda, dramatic already, was effectively embellished by the use of a movie-style musical sting. All very effective.</p>
<p><b>Costumes</b> <i>Costumes which are in of the period, well fitting, colour co-ordinated and enhance characterisation.</i></p>	<p>Costume further cemented a strong sense of place and time from the outset and throughout: Alfieri's Homburg hat and overcoat, Eddie's brown leather jacket, shirt, braces (sorry, suspenders, to use the Americanism) and cap, Catherine's innocently youthful white blouse and grey skirt which was, of course, thoroughly proper despite Eddie's protestations and Bea's stereotypical housewife's apparel. The cousins arrived looking great in suits, caps and with cases, their very look telling the audience as much as they really needed to know. The smaller roles also looked appropriate, including the overcoats and brimmed hats of the Immigration Officers. Changes of costume were also effective in helping to move the story on: Catherine becoming more mature and beautiful rather than pretty in her red and white dress, Rodolpho looking cool in his grey leather and later, with Marco, looking every inch the working man in checked shirt. I also thought that the wedding attire for both Catherine and Bea was perfect. They wore hats and looked very nicely presented but simply so, highlighting the fact that money would be tight. It was all very impressive, showing great thought and doing far more than simply dressing the cast – it developed the story.</p>
<p><b>Makeup and hair</b> <i>Make hair and wigs which are in period and appropriate to the production (including size of venue) and assist in developing the character.</i></p>	<p>Make-up and hair was effective, not standing out as erroneous in any way. The Carbones looked proud and well presented without being overly made-up.</p>

## **DIRECTION**

*Detailed study/knowledge and interpretation of the text; progressing the author's intent with creativity and sensitivity.*

*Using theatrical dynamics to communicate with the audience.*

*Appropriate delivery of the text using timing and rhythm.*

*Settings with regard to focus, pace and groupings.*

*Movement which is appropriate to the period and style of production.*

*Creating atmosphere and mood to develop the full dramatic impact.*

### **DIRECTOR – NIGEL WESTBROOK**

This is such a well-written play, Nigel, that with the well cast actors at your disposal you were already well on the way to success. Your work lay in making good use of the set, creating a compelling mood and atmosphere and coaxing strong performances that allowed the script to do much of the work, avoiding melodrama but achieving an impact with element of the drama. You were very much successful in all areas, clearly understanding the play well and directing firmly whilst allowing nicely fluid movement and a brisk pace. Action and dialogue flowed beautifully. It was obvious to see that you had nurtured a positive atmosphere in rehearsals as the cast performed together as the strongest of ensembles, presenting themselves and each other as genuine family and friends. They bickered, laughed and cried uninhibitedly, creating a truthful aura that benefited the production no end. The movements were also very natural, the performers being well spaced and moving in a believable manner, always with good reason. Meanwhile, the slightly less naturalistic role of Alfieri, acting as narrator, was cleverly positioned at different places for each of his expository monologues, avoiding repetition and giving him that slightly omnipotent feel of a third person narrator. Alfieri was one of the characters that ensured each and every inch and corner of the stage was used, he on the platform SL, also used for various entrances and exits, just as SR was used for access to the next floor of the tenement and for Eddie on the telephone and the appearance of the Immigration Officers. I really liked the use of the DS apron for scenes outside the apartment and also the simple scene changes effected by one SM, placing two chairs in a spot DSL to create Alfieri's office. When Alfieri and Eddie sat so close to the audience it created a nice, intimate feel that was appropriate for the nature of the meeting between the two men.

Away from the visual aspects, you also created a powerful atmosphere, building up subtle tensions as Catherine and Rodolpho grew ever closer and Eddie's awkwardness grew. As you started this slowly and carefully it reached an eventual climax that was both powerful and believable, the escalation of anger between Eddie and Catherine feeling honest and hitting powerfully without being overplayed or appearing unconvincingly out of nowhere. You then used simple yet effective means of emphasising Eddie's drifting apart from his family. There was a lovely family feel just prior to the end of Act One as everyone interacted centre apart from Eddie who sat apart in the rocking chair. Sulking and segregating himself. There was also a strikingly tangible sense of dread as Eddie set up the sparring session with Rodolpho, nicely emphasised by Rodolpho's sweetness and enthusiastic innocence. This sequence had great impact and the stomach punch was convincing, leading to yet more subtle yet striking interplay as Marco weighed Eddie up and lifted the chair – a clear challenge requiring no words and a strong end to the first half.

The musical choice to open Act Two added yet more tension and led into a nicely tension loaded scene, full of strong, barely restrained emotion. The three-way argument between Eddie, Catherine and Rodolpho again built naturally to a head and finished on a very effective picture of Rodolpho and Catherine facing each other helplessly from across the room.

Gratifyingly, as events sped toward the frantic denouement, you ensured that things didn't get too hysterical and so Eddie's tears felt real and unforced, his tightly coiled posture convinced us of his flammable temperament without feeling at all pantomime and the whole theatre felt drenched with an escalating desperation and sinking feeling of dread. This worked properly as a tragedy, we the audience knowing that there was no way that this would end well. The finale brought everyone on-stage without masking or clumsiness and every move, despite being necessarily contrived, never felt anything other than true. The ending was such as the whole production deserved, with sublime performances from the whole cast, the powerful atmosphere that can only ever be experienced in live theatre and a cinematic use of a final musical sting. Top class, Nigel.

### **ACTORS**

*Characterisation which is believable shows flair, originality and understanding.*

*Vocal technique which is appropriate to the play and is delivered with understanding*

*and a good technique.*

*Movement which is in character and in period and incorporating movement to deliver pace.*

*Supporting ones fellow actor unselfishly and enhancing his performance.*

*Using all available theatrical skills to make a noticeable contribution to the play.*

*(Include individual adjudications for each actor.)*

### **EDDIE CARBONE – STEVE BERRINGTON**

I was pleased to see that you had landed the role of Eddie Carbone, Steve, I've enjoyed your previous work and this character needed a strong actor to bring out all the facets of an apparently simple man who is rather more complex than it first appears. Eddie needed to appear a strong family man and then the layers needed stripping away to reveal his insecurities and foibles needed to. We needed humour, affection, sadness, anger and fear and all delivered realistically without overplaying. Despite everything that Eddie does to destroy his own life and mark those of his family and friends, we needed to feel sympathy for him and you made it happen just as it should. Firstly, you looked the part in both costume and carriage. Then the New York accent was spot on also and you projected a very convincing working man of 50s America. The simplistic façade was well conveyed with emphatic gestures and much nodding of the head. It was clear that Eddie had a heart, there was a softness towards his wife and an awkwardness at seeing Catherine growing up but there was also a toughness. Eddie was a dominant family man who would dig his heels in and those around him could only hope to get him round to their way of thinking through the use of charm. This was projected within minutes and was cleverly done because we felt some affection for Eddie but were immediately aware of a sense of danger. Eddie's growing jealousy as Rodolpho appeared on the scene was palpable, and much of it was communicated through stance, gesture and expression. Your key relationships were well thought out and convincingly played. Truthful, compelling drama when talking to Bea about Rodolpho, trying to put convincing flesh on the bones of a dislike borne of jealousy. The conversation was quick, often sharp, sometimes pained - full of that warts and all familiarity known only to longstanding married couples. You showed Eddie's discomfort at Bea's complaints of a dead sex life, being suitably flustered and embarrassed, shuffling and twitching like a caged animal, poised like a coiled spring; unhappy, trapped yet unable to articulate your thoughts and feelings. Likewise, your emotional journey regarding Catherine was well played, the affection turning to jealousy, then to awkwardness and finally an anger anger that was stubbornly held onto. Your temper flared naturally and believably. You convinced us that you were explosive, just waiting to blow and unable to explain to your family. The conversation with Alfieri worked well, the pauses and changes of pace in the delivery working well to show your difficulties in formulating your thoughts in a reasonable way. There was depth here – it was clear that deep down Eddie realised how wrong he was but was unable to face up to it, even to himself. You still kept a grasp on his humanity though, stopping the anger and jealousy from becoming too much. The boxing routine was given a veneer of fun even if it was one that had a cloud of dread floating overhead and the stomach punch was well delivered. The only physical aspect that missed the mark slightly was in that great three way argument with Rodolpho and Catherine. The kisses were quite well portrayed but the one delivered to Rodolpho was pulled somewhat. Still, the scene was effective overall and you then made a convincing drunk and offered us very natural tears. Your further meeting with Alfieri saw you do a grand job in showing your emotions rippling beneath the surface. You showed Eddie's increasing desperation, his losing his grip, very well indeed and we saw you going under, leading into an effective, tragic final confrontation with Marco. Eddie is one of those roles that it is a gift to play and you seized the opportunity with both hands. Very well done.

### **BEATRICE – CARMEL BIRD**

Beatrice was a calmer, quieter character for the most part, Carmel, and there was therefore a danger that she might be drowned out by the louder roles. Nevertheless, you made her a very real and extremely endearing character. You offered a good accent and made the fluid family exchanges seem natural and easy, offering a believable mother figure, a gentle lady who could become much sharper and tougher when necessary. The early excitement at your cousin arriving from Italy was endearingly played and it was enjoyable to see how you used a calm, placatory manner to keep on the right side of Eddie. The conversation about Rodolpho really did feel like a genuine conversation between a married woman and her husband and I loved the way you handled the conversation about your lacklustre sex life. The facial expressions and stance showed you concern and also clearly conveyed how sensitively you were trying to deal with it. You quickly showed yourself to be the strength in this marriage and this was never clearer than when calmly yet firmly dealing with the argument between Eddie and Catherine. This was great, subtle yet effective playing. You led the way in creating a warm family feel between yourself, Catherine, Marco and Rodolpho – also teeing up Marco

with a good laugh courtesy of your “She’s pretty, I bet?” line. You had a great handle on the traditional New York Jewish delivery too: “Dead, I wish I was!” The different emotions were all handled convincingly and they formed a well-rounded, seamless whole. Your anger whilst still keeping your calm during the quarrel with Eddie in Act Two was textbook quality. Many an actor can play calm and angry but not always at the same time, it often comes across as two unlinked moments. You however, flowed from one moment and emotion to the next without apparent effort or contrivance. Your standout moments came as events escalated. Your understanding and shock as you realised Eddie’s true feelings, your dignity in the face of defeat as you accepted not going to the wedding and your final, heartbroken revelation and huddled sobbing. Sometimes the quietest characters can make the most noise and impact. This was deftly done here, giving Beatrice real life and leaving a lingering effect on the audience.

### **CATHERINE – MEL BESWICK**

Well done, Mel, you took Catherine on a believable journey from bubbly, friendly and vivacious young girl with a convincingly loving attitude towards her surrogate family through the lively excitement and pride at being the best student in class and being offered a job to the dignified but almost heartbreaking disappointment of Eddie pouring cold water on the idea. Your accent was as convincing as your youthful whirlwind of emotions and the dedicated and unconditional love that you showed to Eddie, providing him with a beer, lighting his cigar, and all with a naïve innocence. It was important that you showed this relationship clearly so that the developing relationship with Rodolpho, itself innocent enough, developing into a natural step forward as Catherine grew older, would ring alarm bells. You handled her conflicting emotions well, one of the finest moments being the clear change in your feelings as Eddie made you change your shoes like you were still a little girl. He couldn’t hold back time, of course, and your reappearance as a beautiful young woman in the red and white dress clearly signposted the fact whilst you cleverly showed us a more mature version of the character. You still showed love and enthusiasm to Eddie, your performance wasn’t overly obvious and there was a gratifyingly gradual progression to it. You conveyed the character’s slowly awakening awareness of your feelings for Rodolpho whilst still treating Eddie as you ever did. And yet your anger rose convincingly when he became difficult. I enjoyed your displays of defiance that were tempered with genuine concern for Eddie and pain at the unravelling relationship. I loved the “He sings, he cooks, he can make dresses” delivery, full of (deservedly) petulant sarcasm as it built up truthfully to a believable explosion of anger. I also thought that the scene with you and Rodolpho alone in the house was well played with a genuinely loaded atmosphere, full of pregnant expectation. This felt like the start of a very real romantic relationship. You handled the arguments and outbursts well but also showed us tension and awkwardness, being nicely subdued around Eddie as the second half unfolded. I felt your heartbreak as the Immigration Officers put a dent in your dreams and my heart melted a little at the sight of you making the best of the situation, smartly dressed without frills for a rushed wedding. Catherine felt very real throughout. Nice work.

### **ALFIERI – VICTOR HASSAN**

This was an excellently played supporting role, Victor, the brilliant New York Jewish accent, the dapper dress reminding me of no less a great actor than the late Eli Wallach, both visually and in delivery. You talked to the audience in a disarmingly relaxed way and were an immediate confirmation of place and era. You acted as narrator well, having a real stage presence as you popped up here and there to offer exposition in an emotional voice. You also scored highly when interacting with the rest of the cast too. I particularly enjoyed how you kept calm and professional, even when remonstrating with Eddie. You segued well from this conversation to re-breaking the fourth wall too. Despite you not having the same amount of stage time as the key principals, I genuinely felt that you deserved your final walk into the spotlight centre stage at the end. You made Alfieri seem wise and important.

### **RODOLPHO – HARRY CHALMERS-MORRIS**

Wow, Harry, it doesn’t seem like three and a half years or so since I saw you playing a soldier in The Snow Queen! I remember you being part of a standout double act back then and I am not surprised that you are getting roles such as Rodolpho now. I am pleased to say that you were more than up to the task. You were believable as the young Italian immigrant, looking great in suit and cap, carrying your possessions in a bettered old case and sporting a decent

Italian accent. We as an audience had to understand why Catherine fell for Rodolpho and your youthful exuberance and expressive face, naïve and yet eager to experience the world, made it easy. You generated a clear enthusiasm for work and money but conveyed a passion for life also, holding court well, circulating the apartment and entertaining the family with your spiel. Your enthusiasm was infectious and your roaming was natural – well, up until the precarious perching on the table, which did actually look a tad contrived. Other than that, your movement and dialogue was very natural, making the most of quite a confined space and making the most of some lovely high-pitched peaks in your vocal delivery. Your work with Catherine was nicely done, showing that developing relationship. You managed a certain amount of cool sauntering that still seemed beguilingly inexperienced. Full marks too for the delivery of Paper Doll. This was nicely sung but also managed to not be absolute perfection – not a criticism here – and convince within the context of the piece, Rodolpho had a real talent but he was still a penniless young man travelling across the world in search of work. He was confident at the same time as being unsure of himself. I enjoyed the development in the character, the confidence growing, looking cool in the grey leather coat. The enthusiasm was still there too but tempered with a serious caution around Eddie – you helped to create a good, subtle tension here. The physical scenes worked well: the dancing with Catherine, the puppy dog enthusiasm for the boxing match with Eddie and the reaction to the punch to the stomach were all fine. There was also a tangible sense of unbridled passion and expectancy in the air when you were alone in the house with Catherine, mature playing from the two of you as a pair, and this helped the subsequent scene's explosion into fighting. The atmosphere was already loaded and it was always going to blow up in one way or another. The three-way scuffle worked convincingly until the slightly pulled smacker from Eddie (although I understand the potential awkwardness of such a scene, at the end of the day it's acting and you've just got to bite the bullet). My overriding feeling though was that of being impressed at the variety of emotions that you nailed: the subdued reaction to having been ratted on to Immigration, the touching camaraderie with Marco and the marvellous tension when you ran on to warn Eddie that Marco was coming to settle the debt. This worked well because there was a clear loyalty to everyone, even the difficult Eddie, and it emphasised just how decent a guy Rodolpho really was. There was a tangible sense of tragedy created, marred only by a slight sense of treading water that was perhaps a result of repetitive urges for Eddie to run and a bobbing around ineffectually in the background – a minor quibble – before Marco arrived. The kneeling to apologise to Eddie was beautifully done and again increased the sense of goodness in your character and the mood of escalating dread. I presume that you're still pretty young in the grand scheme of things with a long journey left in the world of theatre. Based upon this performance it is a journey that I look forward to sharing. Great work.

### **MARCO – TED WALKER**

Ted, I enjoyed the dignity that you brought to the role of Marco. A big man of good stature, formidably capable of anger, strength and even violence but more disposed to gentle humour and friendliness. Arriving as a convincing picture of an Italian immigrant and, quietly spoken with an excellently Italian lilt, you offered a man who was obviously immensely grateful but naturally a little awkward. You were engaging and it was easy to see why the family took you to their hearts. You made nice use of hand gestures when emphasising your words – providing a peculiarly Mediterranean seeming effect – and the tangible emotion at being able to provide for your family was beautifully yet subtly done. I loved the comic timing on the “No” following a well-judged pause after Bea asked if your wife was pretty and the clear understanding of the character that radiated from your quiet dignity in dealing with the unreasonable animosity that Eddie showed towards Rodolpho. There was a delicate yet weighty judgement in your eyes following the sparring sequence – Marco knew what was in Eddie's mind and you well communicated the cogs working in the brain. The silent routine of lifting the chair by its leg as a show of power, putting Eddie in his place, his challenge countered was extremely powerful. You never lost Marco's gentleness or politeness but made it very clear that he would make a bad enemy. It created a powerful end to the first act. Act Two asked you to expand upon this darker side of the character and I admired the subdued taking of the Immigration Officers' visit and the nice spitting and stand off between you and Eddie which could have come off as an OTT 'Godfather' pastiche but worked beautifully. Likewise, the dramatic 'naming' of Eddie and the final, fatal knife fight. It is testament to your deft acting skill that we never lost sight of Marco's humanity and it was the touching

camaraderie between you and young Rodolpho that we took away with us. A lovely supporting role.

**LOUIS – ANDREW KIRBY**

**MIKE – ALEX NEWMAN**

Gentlemen, you helped to populate the stage well, looking convincing in the costumes of working men and busying yourselves naturally in a manner that did much to establish a time and place. The accents were variable but I sympathise as you had little dialogue and it wasn't really enough to give you a good run at it. Still, your banter was good, chatty, even giggly at times, and rather funny. It provided some important foreshadowing regarding Eddie's attitude towards Rodolpho and a bit of lightness amidst a heavy storyline. Nice work.

**TONY/IMMIGRATION OFFICER – TONY KANE**

**SECOND IMMIGRATION OFFICER – JACOB IRELAND**

You both looked perfect as the Immigration Officers – the overcoats and brimmed hats certainly helped but the clincher was how solidly and purposefully you moved and the square jawed, serious attitudes presented with strong NY accents. This was a pivotal scene and really needed selling convincingly. Job done.

**OVERALL ACHIEVEMENT (or CONCLUSION)**

*An excellent understanding of the author's intent. Direction which shows skill, originality, sensitivity and creativity using all the theatrical tools of pace, focus, delivery, timing and rhythm.*

*Talented actors creating highly effective dramatic impact.*

*Evidence of teamwork and unselfish ensemble playing.*

*Actors who interact and react and a production team who use all resources to create atmosphere and mood.*

It seems to me that the standards across GMDF improve with every passing season and some societies, yourselves included, never fail to offer professionalism of the highest order. I often feel that I should find more to criticise in a constructive manner but you don't make it easy! This is a strong play, and famous, and it needed to be treated with due respect yet be a distinctive production that you owned. As usual, you nailed it. Well done. Thanks, as ever, for the warm welcome and fine entertainment. I look forward to the next time.

<b>Adjudicator (print)</b>	<b>IAN TAYLOR</b>
<b>Adjudicator (sign)</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Wednesday 13/03/19</b>