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A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE

by Tennessee Williams

Gate Theatre • July – September 2013

Sets: Lee Savage • Lights: Paul Keogan • Costumes: Joan O’Clery • Sound: Denis Clohessy

Winner of the Irish Times Theatre Award for Best Director

Best Leading Actress (Lia Williams)

Best Supporting Actress (Catherine Walker)

Nominated for three additional awards including Best Production, Best Scenic Design, and Best Supporting Actor

“★★★★” *Sunday Times*

“★★★★” *Evening Herald*

“★★★★” *Irish Mail on Sunday*

“★★★★” *Metro Herald*

“★★★★” *Sunday Business Post*

“★★★★” *Irish Daily Mail*

“**Ethan McSweeney’s gripping production at the Gate Theatre, however, is a model of effective restraint** ... what is really at stake in McSweeney’s production is not just desire but two different ways of seeing the world, as Blanche’s idealism is gradually eroded by Stanley’s realism ... **there isn’t a moment when it is less than compelling.** In this fine production “an hour isn’t just an hour, but a little piece of eternity”.

Sara Keating, *The Irish Times*

“**No detail is too small in this excellent production** directed by Ethan McSweeney, making his directorial debut at The Gate, and what a way to begin... **You will be hard pressed to find a piece of theatre as good as this anywhere, anyplace** ... To use that old cliché, **if you only see one play this year, make sure it’s this one.** You will not be disappointed, as you realize that this is the stuff of theatrical excellence. You will want to see it again. I do.”

Red Curtain Review

“It’s easy to make the mistake that Blanche is nothing but a pathetic, man-eating, manipulative, soulless siren, yet despite all that, and more — her childish horror of ageing, and her ready acknowledgment that more often than not, she plays fast and loose with the truth — the depth of her decline is pure abjection, and is correctly **put centre stage in this production, beautifully** orchestrated by director Ethan McSweeney. ‘Orchestrated’ because here, **Williams’ dangerous text is approached as a symphony** ... **That first silence is a revelation: the mark of a director who knows how to pace the beats of a play,** and since we are in for the long haul – three hours and a bit – **we are, thankfully, in calm, confident, creative hands.** This idea of playing on the musicality of the text, of emphasising its rhythms and movements, is further extrapolated through the use of live songs performed by vocalist Esosa Ighodaro and Conor Sheil on clarinet. Nominally employed to cover what could have been pace-destroying scene changes, the music

enlivens and underscores the atmosphere. We are in a very specific place...comprised of the mournfully hopeful elegies of gospel and soul.”

Susan Conley, *Irish Theatre Magazine*

“American director Ethan McSweeney, whose début at the Gate the play is, manages to beautifully orchestrate the classic play without losing any of its depth and fascination. ... ***A Streetcar Named Desire is without a doubt one of the highlights, if not the most spectacular play, of this year’s theatre season in Dublin. Ethan McSweeney’s reputation as one of theatre’s brightest stars is founded as he created a must-see play.***”

Claire Fastner, *The Journalist*

“American director Ethan McSweeney subtly rebalances its characterizations and shifting sympathies: instead of extreme polarization between the lead characters of Stanley Kowalski, his pregnant wife, Stella, and her visiting sister, Blanche DuBois, we are shown a more complex and affecting picture. “

Helen Meany, *The Guardian*

“The Gate production is intriguing chiefly for the way in which Walker and Williams complicate the received images and soften the contrasts. **The drama they create is not one of stark opposites but one of intertwined and interdependent personalities ... Indeed, one of the many admirable things about Ethan McSweeney’s excellent current production** at the Gate Theatre in Dublin is the intelligent manner in which Garrett Lombard as Stanley stays out of the way. He is, as Stanley must be, a powerful physical presence and a domineering bully. But his performance sets its own proper limits. Lombard does not seek to occupy too much psychological or emotional space. Stanley is what he is: an almost parodic expression of primitive maleness.”

Fintan O’Toole, *The Irish Times*

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WHO’S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF

by Edward Albee

CenterStage • October-November 2008

Sets: Lee Savage • Lights: Robert Wierzel • Costumes: Murrel Horton • Sound: Michael Bodeen
Baltimore City Paper Best Production of 2008

“Center Stage, which is mounting a **superb production** of Edward Albee's harrowing drama, hasn't tackled Virginia Woolf since 1974, when a fire burned the theater to the ground... **This time, all the fire is on stage... The talented director Ethan McSweeney elicits first-rate performances from his top-notch cast** ...The marvelous Deborah Hedwall portrays Martha as a woman who flaunts her sexuality but hides her intelligence...when the moment is right, [Andrew] Weems hurls an insult through the air like a blade, every syllable honed to maximum sharpness ... **Early in the evening, ticketholders at Center Stage reacted almost as if they were viewing a comedy, responding to every put-down with laughter. By the time the show had ended, there was nary a cough, a murmur, a rustled program. Audience members barely dared shift position. It's as though we, and not Albee's characters, were on the hot seat.**”

Mary Carole McCauley, *The Baltimore Sun*

“When you see *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* in its magnificent new production at

Center Stage, this 46-year-old play is nothing like its caricature... There's a surprising number of laugh-out-loud funny moments, especially in the first act, and some heartbreakingly sad moments as well, especially in the third. Above all, there's the brilliant writing--not only in the inspired wordplay of puns, allusions, and double meanings, but also in the way artifice, in the form of both party games and literary fiction, is used to distort and ultimately reveal reality...**and this terrific cast sucks us in during each confidential lull and then knocks us over with each new climax...** As Martha, Hedwall is a force of nature, dominating the stage ... Weems isn't as showy as Hedwall, but he's every bit as good ... **These are two of the best performances you will ever see on a Baltimore stage."**

Geoffrey Himes, *Baltimore City Paper*

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A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

by Arthur Miller

Guthrie Theater • September-October 2008

Sets: John Arnone • Lights: Don Holder • Costumes: Robert Perdziola • Sound: David Maddox

"Gifted actor John Carroll Lynch plays Eddie, **the problematic center of Ethan McSweeney's stunning production of Arthur Miller's psychosexual classic...** The volcanic staging -- a mountain range with eruptions followed by sizzling quiet -- flows like a great inflected opera... There is more than a touch of the ancient Greek in this tragedy, which is redolent with issues of lust, justice and immigrant dreams of America...**McSweeney's masterful staging, which makes excellent use of the thrust stage, underscores Miller's primal poetry."**

Rohan Preston, Minneapolis *Star Tribune*

"From the beginning, you know the thing is going to end badly; it's just a question of who is going to kill who, when, and why. **Guided by Ethan McSweeney's unobtrusively intelligent direction, the noose slowly tightens around Eddie's neck, until all his good intentions eventually lead him down the exit ramp to hell. The set, staging, casting, and direction all feel perfectly suited for this play, which is a testament to McSweeney's talent for putting the text and characters first,** rather than shellacking it with his own ideas about what the play "should" be trying to communicate. Miller's message in *A View* is as ancient as the Greek dramas upon which it is based, but seeing it unfold in a contemporary drama, with characters the audience can relate to, gives the play's final moments a much more immediate impact. These are simple people trying to get along in a complex world, which is of course a recipe for disaster— and, when it's done well, great drama."

Tad Simons, *Minneapolis.St.Paul Magazine*

"**Ethan McSweeney directs with a sure hand and has a made-to-measure cast.** John Carroll Lynch plays Eddie in a powerful realization of a big, middle-aged man, kind, but domineering and blind to himself. Beatrice comes to full life in the hands of accomplished Amy Van Nostrand ... Robyn Rikoon's engaging young Catherine begins as fresh as a morning in spring, but circumstance forces her to mature before our eyes...[Ron] Menzel infuses Marco, a family man who has starving children at home, with quiet passion...[Bryce] Pinkham charms as intelligent Rodolpho. **Lovely touches from director McSweeney add to the realism...** When Catherine throws herself into Eddie's arms, he staggers for a second and feels his back; he's a stevedore who lifts heavy goods for a living. **During the dramatically lit dockside loading scenes, ships' horns sound in the distance in David Maddox's sound design. The lawyer's desk is heaved on stage by stevedores, unpacked and, voila, Donald Holder's lighting turns a corner of the**

stage into an intimate office. McSweeney uses the generous space of the thrust stage to great affect, and I find it hard to imagine this expansive play being confined by a proscenium stage. My advice, **go and see the Guthrie's muscled production of *A View from the Bridge*.**“

Elizabeth Wier, TalkingBroadway.com

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DEATH OF A SALESMAN

by Arthur Miller

The Chautauqua Theater Company • July 2008

Sets: Lee Savage • Lights: Tyler Micoleau • Costumes: Tracy Christensen • Sound: Michael Roth

“The Chautauqua production, starring Stuart Margolin as the tortured protagonist Willy Loman and directed by CTC co-Artistic Director Ethan McSweeney, is incredibly well conceived and executed by the company’s mix of conservatory members and visiting artists. **Revelatory performances from Margolin and conservatory member Zach Appelman provide the freight-train force behind the production, and they are helped by a fiercely gifted supporting cast, along with the well-oiled staging and perfect pacing for which McSweeney has become known.** For Chautauqua Theater Company, McSweeney and especially for Margolin, this all-too-brief production of Miller’s masterpiece is a truly remarkable thing indeed.”

Colin Dabkowski, *Buffalo News*

“One of the finest American plays ever written is on the stage of Chautauqua's Bratton Theater this week, in **a production as good as the play itself.** If you were one of those slugs who read the abbreviated notes when your English teacher brought out Arthur Miller's "Death of a Salesman," this is your opportunity to understand why this play is taught and revered all around the world. Great directors have found many approaches to playwright Miller's wonderful words. At Chautauqua, Ethan McSweeney has found threads of fatalism in the play, subtly highlighting how Willy's own childhood had taught him to live on dreams, and how he has raised his own sons with exactly the same values which have served him so badly.”

Robert W. Plyler, *Jamestown Post-Journal*

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ALL MY SONS

by Arthur Miller

Chautauqua Theater Company • July 2005

“**A shattering performance...brilliantly directed by Ethan McSweeney** and superbly performed by a strong cast of professional and conservatory actors...The production compares favorably with shows I saw this summer at the Stratford and Shaw festivals in Canada.”

Wilma Salisbury, *The Cleveland Plain-Dealer*

“**A superb production...**the cast is excellent...Harrow is spellbinding...Margolin is the perfect counterpoint...Charles Semine is powerful and memorable...**McSweeney’s staging is unfailingly sharp throughout...** [he] gives this first outing a visceral excitement and emotional coherence that promise great things for the future.”

Richard Huntington, *The Buffalo News*

“Sucks the audience into an emotionally gripping story [that] holds you in rapt attention, arcing its way to its devastating conclusion with the momentum of destiny ... **A powerful debut for the new artistic team.**”

“There is stunning, breathtaking theater on stage at Chautauqua this week...If Ethan McSweeney’s first production as artistic director is typical of what audiences can now expect at Chautauqua Theater, tickets are going to be sold out months in advance for every performance they present...See this production, if you possibly can!”

Robert Plyler, *Jamestown Post-Journal*

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DANGEROUS LIAISONS

by Christopher Hampton

Stratford Shakespeare Festival • August-October, 2010

Sets & Costumes: Santo Loquasto • Lights: Robert Thomson • Sound: Michael Roth

“★★★★... Stylish, intelligent and funny ...Sex has never been a big commodity at Stratford, but that situation definitely changed on Thursday night when *Dangerous Liaisons* opened at the Festival Theatre...Ethan McSweeney’s production of this slice of late 18th century French sensual intrigue is not only impeccably stylish, acerbically intelligent and mordantly funny, but it packs a truly erotic kick that is very welcome indeed ... Technically, the show is Stratford at its best. Santo Loquasto creates a chilling world of metallic elegance, which respects the original period, but still gives everything a soulless modern edge. His costumes make everyone look eminently seduceable and the lighting of Robert Thomson knows when to blast us with cold white light, or dazzle us with rock ‘n’ roll primary colours...**McSweeney**, for someone who has never directed on the Festival stage before, **shows an astonishing command of how to make that mystic space work.** His direction is **clear, precise, pointed, always showing us what we need to see**, or – in the case of his detailed scene changes that involve the servants – showing us things we never expected to see as well. **This is world-class theatre and we should be thrilled to have it on our doorstep.”**

Richard Ouzounian, *The Toronto Star*

“Deliciously engaging ... to say the festival season goes out with a luxurious and seductive bang is an understatement. And it’s all deliciously depraved enjoyment for cast and audience alike. Directed by Ethan McSweeney in an impressive Stratford debut, [*Dangerous Liaisons*] assembles some of the festival’s stars in Seana McKenna, Tom McCamus and Martha Henry...witnessing McKenna and McCamus verbally joust on stage brings the script to life before our very eyes — language transformed into action, literature transformed into life in all its sordid glory. McSweeney adds a touch of contemporary musical theatre flair with refrains from a harpsichord giving way to driving electric guitar riffs – it works in marvelously jarring way..the juxtaposition of 18th century opulence and modern theatrical artifice is [further] achieved through the contrast between a magnificent crystal chandelier, complete with real candles, and banks of stage lights and a monumental stainless steel door as a backdrop. The production is not only stylish, thanks in large part to designer Santo Loquasto, but is **one of the most unabashedly sexy productions ever staged at Stratford.”**

Robert Reid, *The Record*

“Dangerously irresistible... In an impressive Stratford debut, director Ethan McSweeney stages these wicked games on a chessboard set designed by Santo Loquasto. In between the scenes, **he’s choreographed what seems like a whole second shadow play between the various maids and servants who roll the sets on and off.** It shows who’s really in charge –

soon, it'll be the *ancien régime's* heads they'll be rolling off. The scene changes take place to a soundtrack of harpsichord mixed with squealing electric guitar and are lit by Robert Thomson like a rock concert, linking this sexually licentious world to the decadence of more recent decades. As the tightly wound Tourvel, Topham loosens her corseted conscience only inch by inch – and **the slow seduction only makes it all the hotter**. It's indeed impressive that she stays upright as long as she does, because she and McCamus have some **truly sensational chemistry**...Michael Therriault gets the second biggest laughs of the night as an inexperienced suitor, sheepishly caught with his pants down. The biggest one goes to Martha Henry as Valmont's eccentric older aunt sharing her hairstyle and a communion wafer with her lapdog."

J Kelly Nestruck, *The Globe and Mail*

“★★★★★ ... Impressively directed by Ethan McSweeney and lavishly designed by Santo Loquasto, this is a compelling production [with] impressive performances throughout from a blue-blooded supporting cast — the venerable Martha Henry, the always impressive Yanna McIntosh and the evergreen Michael Therriault joining Jillard and Topham in an all but flawless ensemble — it belongs, in the end, to McCamus and McKenna ... **And well it should, for rarely have these two worked better, either separately or as a team.** “

John Coulborn, *The Toronto Sun*

“Sexual evil stalks Stratford stage...This final production of Stratford's 2010 season is also **one of its best**...director Ethan McSweeney has seen the exciting possibilities of the Festival Theatre's famous thrust stage for exploiting the hothouse intimacy of the play and of drawing the audience into its embrace...**McSweeney, obviously excited by this space, makes outstanding use of it in mounting his exquisitely detailed dissection of the manners, mores and monstrosity of a culture soon to be felled by the revolution.**”

Jaimie Portman, *The Vancouver Sun*

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SOMEONE WHO'LL WATCH OVER ME

by Frank MacGuinness

Westport Country Playhouse • June-July, 2004

“Those seeking an **intense brilliantly presented performance** should make the trip to watch the Westport Country Playhouse's 'Someone Who'll Watch Over Me.'

Elizabeth Gerteiny, *Weston Forum*

“Looming silences are key, perfectly times and injected...It is a sparseness that under the direction of Ethan McSweeney beautifully focuses attention on the intense and heart-wrenching voice the actors give to their characters' respective wisdom, kindness, and strength.”

Camilla Herrera, *The Stamford Advocate*

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A WALK IN THE WOODS

by Lee Blessing

George Street Playhouse • November 2003

“One of this season's most satisfying nights in the theater...Thanks to director Ethan McSweeney and two astonishing actors it's now receiving a better production at the George Street Playhouse than it did on Broadway 15 years ago... A Walk in the Woods is not an easy

play to direct, but McSweeney gets the juice out of the comedy, then switches gears nicely to the second act when things inevitably get more serious. Who'd think that a play about a treaty could be such a treat?"

Peter Filicia, *The New Jersey Star-Ledger*

"Everything that makes the theater absorbing is present in the George Street Playhouse production of Lee Blessing's drama 'A Walk in the Woods.' Ethan McSweeney directs with delicacy made necessary by the filo-like layers of interpretations and personality Blessing has written into the drama. McSweeney makes unusually effective use of several moments in which silence and stillness communicate as effectively as words ... A brilliant play, powerful actors, skillful direction, evocative design – we can't ask for more than this."

Charles Paolino, *Home New Tribune*

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SIX DEGREES OF SEPARATION

by John Guare

The Guthrie Theater • March-April, 2003

Winner Best Director, Best Production, Minneapolis Star-Tribune Award

"What director Ethan McSweeney and his brilliant team of designers and performers have achieved with *Six Degrees of Separation* is magnificent. You can wait a long time to experience something like this – the Guthrie Theater's most inspired and sublime production in years. Director McSweeney has chosen to play 'Six Degrees' simple, a winning choice that underscores the dualities of the play...The themes are reflected in the artistic palette here, with portals that resemble frames, with Christine Jones' simple, circular set that seems like a layer cake with a slice cut out, with Jane Cox's brilliant lighting design... All of this makes 'Six Degrees' a harmony of colors and lights that seem like visual music ... This 'Six Degrees' is a lot like falling in love – except you never catch yourself as you sit in your chair at the Guthrie, but keep falling deeper, laughing all the way. Thank you McSweeney, Christine Jones, Jane Cox and the rest of your terrific team. Thank you to the performers who are so clearly in the moment and enjoying themselves in this production, which is one for the theater history books."

Rohan Preston *Minneapolis Star Tribune*

"Great theater is worth revisiting. For proof, see the Guthrie Theater's engaging production of 'Six Degrees of Separation,' a 13-year-old play that already bears the trappings of a superb period piece. When I first saw the show 12 years ago I was struck by its power as a statement about black and white, rich and poor. Now, it stands as a moving, almost cautionary tale about failure and redemption, and how we create genuine meaning in our lives. The layers of connection, privilege, and lack are still there, of course, mined beautifully in director Ethan McSweeney's production. But, like all good theater, the play presents its themes subtly enough for us to discover them for ourselves and interpret them intimately."

Carolyn Petrie, *St. Paul Pioneer Press*

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OLD TIMES

by Harold Pinter

George Street Playhouse • March-April, 2001

“Ethan McSweeney has a lucid grasp of the elusive Pinter style, and the George Street production is remarkably accessible, free of affectations. Mr. McSweeney appears more interested in the gaze – a word Mr. Pinter emphasizes in his text – than in the pause. Precisely timed gazes and glances of three excellent actors exude dramatic tension beyond explanation into the sheerly experiential.”

Alvin Klein, *The New York Times*

“In Ethan McSweeney’s excellent new production, the characters peel off each other’s emotions as if they’re layers of skin, ever so slowly. That’s the more thorough and painful way. McSweeney recently signed on as associate artistic director at the playhouse, where he’ll stage a play a year. Here’s hoping that each of his productions will be as potent as this one.”

Peter Filicia, *The Star-Ledger*

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WIT

by Margaret Edson

Pittsburgh Public Theatre • November-December, 2000
Winner, Best Production, Pittsburgh Post Gazette Award

“Lisa Harrow [gives] a performance that is towering, impish, growling, and relentlessly no-holds-barred...[Harrow’s Vivian Bearing] is human granite. But gradually the cancer and its treatment wear her down. And a marvelous thing happens: Harrow’s hurricane force diminished, she turns out to be even more effective reduced to solitary weakness, indecision, and human need. **Though Harrow seems a force of self-generating nature, director Ethan McSweeney must have had a lot to do with sculpting her performance. He orchestrates beautiful support, both in acting and design.**”

Christopher Rawson, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*

“Director Ethan McSweeney’s staging clarifies the links between Donne’s poetry and Edson’s clinicians. **His steady hand holds the show together, knowing instinctively when to slow the pace to a near standstill and when to ratchet up the tension and stride.** Much credit goes to set designer Mark Wendland and lighting designer Frances Aronson for their ability to transform a single playing space into a seamless series of laboratories, classrooms, hospital rooms, and offices. The clinical setting is enhanced by the best use of the auditorium’s back wall since the O’Reilly was inaugurated.”

Alice T. Carter, *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*

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THE BEST MAN

by Gore Vidal

The Virginia Theatre • September-January, 2000/1
Outer Critics Circle & Drama Desk Awards for Best Revival, Tony Award Nomination

“A sophisticated, elegant, and damnably entertaining play.”

John Lahr, *The New Yorker*

“This play makes you wish that Vidal were writing the dialogue for the Presidential debates. You can sense from the audiences laughter that some of the play’s lines are sure to be repeated at cocktail parties this election season.”

Ben Brantley, *The New York Times*

“**Beautifully acted and fast-paced**, with effervescent, sparkling dialogue, *The Best Man* is fun! Vote for Vidal!”

Clive Barnes, *New York Post*

“A superb cast! **McSweeney mines the play for all its drama and humor, using effective theatrical touches to convey the political and journalistic hysteria surrounding the process.** Adding further verisimilitude is the voice of Walter Cronkite as a news commentator; the return of his reassuring tone is a vivid reminder of what we’ve been missing for several years.”

Frank Bobeck, *The Hollywood Reporter*

“Wonderful entertainment, smart sexy and compelling, with blistering and fantastically prescient observations, it couldn’t be more timely.”

Liz Smith, *Newsday*

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SIDE MAN

by Warren Leight

The Guthrie Theater • May, 2000

“**The Guthrie’s production of this audience pleaser has almost everything going for it.**

Director Ethan McSweeney has staged the show as **a tight and melodious jam session**, seamlessly moving from scene to scene...Stripes of neon light dangle over designer John Arnone’s set like notes in the air...Stephanie Zimbalist’s vivid, warts-and-all performance helps keep it real...the Guthrie’s triumverate of great male character actors – Stephen Pelinksi, Stephen Yoakum, and Richard Iglewski – are great to watch.”

Carolyn Petrie, *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*,

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THE BEAUTY QUEEN OF LEENANE

by Martin McDonagh

The Alley Theatre • January-February, 1999

“**Fiercely effective! Ethan McSweeney has directed the Alley’s production with steady pace and sensitivity to the play’s shifting moods.** [The production] restores – or for those who never cease believing, re-confirms – faith in theater as a vibrant art form.”

Everett Evans, *The Houston Chronicle*

“**A rich and luscious addition to Houston’s theatrical season!** [The play’s] disparate elements are brought into focus with Ethan McSweeney’s intelligent and seamless direction and with Kevin Rigdon’s heartbreaking set.”

Lee Williams, *Houston Press*

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GROSS INDECENCY

by Moises Kaufmann

The Guthrie Theater • November, 1998

“There’s a moment in “Gross Indecency” when the famous writer’s glibness betrays him on the witness stand. Asked by the prosecutor if he had ever kissed a particular young man, Wilde says no: the fellow was too ugly. Then, in a chillingly effective piece of staging, the eight other men in the courtroom rise in unison, leaning in silent disbelief and indictment ... **McSweeney makes the audience the jury, staging the court-room action between two banks of bleacher-style seats and using the whole venue, including the aisles, to make the drama immediate.**”

Rohan Preston, *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*