

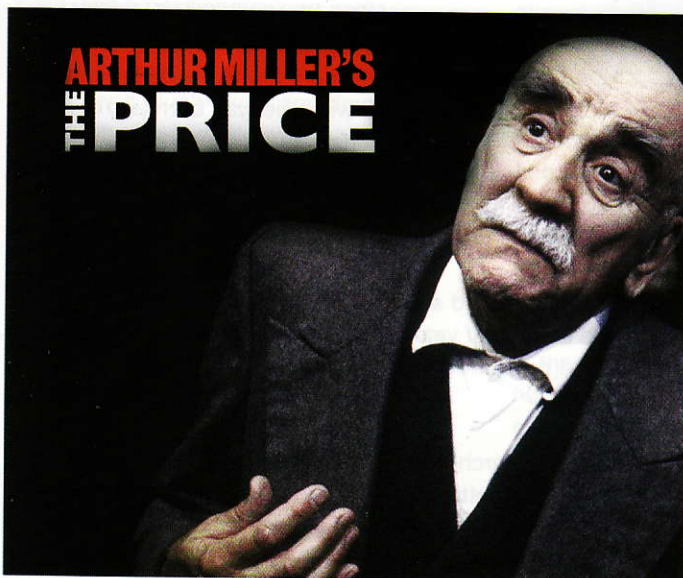
thanks to Mrs Bergstein's and her son's ministrations. I also saw 'A Saturday Walk' in which an Israeli woman, now living in Germany, comes back to Jerusalem and takes a Saturday walk around the city, visiting her childhood haunts and seeing how they have changed. The changes are not only physical, eg the ruin of the old railway station, which closed in the 1980s; but also symbolic of the polarisation of religious and non-religious Jews, and Jew and Arab, and the militarisation,

which have become so deeply embedded in Israeli society. I did not see the film in which an Israeli child living in a settlement takes a stand against his friends by refusing to go up onto a boundary wall to shout 'Death to the Arabs' but it made a big impression on my husband. He saw the whole series and thought that this was the best film of the lot.

A Review of "The Price"

by Arthur Miller, starring Warren Mitchell

Janet Mundy



Many years ago, I went with my father to see a production of Arthur Miller's "Death of a Salesman" starring Warren Mitchell. I had studied the play at school and was mesmerised by Mitchell's performance, bringing the words I knew so well to life, and playing out the tragedy behind the failure of the American dream. Like everyone else, I knew Warren Mitchell primarily in his role as Alf Garnett in "Till Death Us Do Part", and seeing him on the stage was a revelation. That both Mitchell and Miller were Jewish was of negligible importance to me at that time, and I have no idea how significant their Jewishness was to my father, sitting beside me.

So when I saw a poster a few months ago advertising Warren Mitchell in another Arthur Miller play, I was overjoyed that I would have the opportunity to relive a fantastic

theatrical experience (this time with my mother). Although I knew a lot more about the Jewish backgrounds of both men, I was still driven more by a desire to repeat the frisson of that earlier time than by a shared cultural background. I was therefore unprepared for the shock of seeing a little old Jewish man shuffle on stage, who far more

resembled my now long-dead father than Willy Loman.

In the play, Warren Mitchell plays Solomon, an elderly antiques dealer. Solomon has been asked to value the contents of a New York apartment long after the death of their owner by the older of his two sons. This son, Victor, had cared for his father, and freed his younger brother, Walter, to make his own life without family constraint. The main theme of the play is the tension between the two brothers since their youth, echoing Miller's own life, as his older brother Kermit had given up his place at university during the Depression to support the family. "The Price" of the title is therefore not only the value placed on the contents of the apartment by Solomon, but also the sacrifice perceived as having been made by one brother to support the other. The stresses of the relationship are emphasised by Victor's wife,

Esther, who in many ways is the catalyst of the play. She encourages Victor to call in Solomon to make the valuation, and also she vocalises the history and nature of the resentment Victor feels towards Walter going back to their youth and the 1929 crash, 40 years previously.

Solomon is the outsider in the midst of this family drama and, as such, lightens the mood for the audience. As an overtly Jewish character, he also reminds us that Jews came to the United States as outsiders. There is a faint echo of "The Merchant of Venice" in having a Jewish character whose relationship with the other characters is based on money. Strange that Miller chooses to portray his relationship with his own brother through the non-Jewish brothers in this play, while caricaturing a Jewish stereotype in Solomon, however affectionately.

Despite that unease, this was an excellent production of a fine play, full of drama with some lighter moments, and beautifully acted throughout. No doubt Warren Mitchell's Solomon was the star of the show, but the other actors – Larry Lamb, Brian Protheroe and Nancy Crane – portrayed the difficult relationships within the family realistically and with a fine dramatic tension.