

Arthur Miller's All My Sons by Maitland Repertory Theatre

Review by Genevieve Graham

'Watching life unfurl'

I came to this play with no prior knowledge of the story and made the decision not to read the program before watching the drama unfold. I was captivated by the storylines that loop together and was oblivious to what the plot would reveal. Because of this, I'll be keeping my plot description of All My Sons to the bare minimum – no spoilers!

All I will say is what begins as a seemingly simple family drama slowly becomes more complicated and corrupt. That's all you get. Do yourself a favour and come to this play as a blank slate, if you can. You'll be in for a thrilling experience.

All My Sons at Maitland Repertory Theatre is directed by Pip Thoroughgood. It is set in the yard of the Keller house in the outskirts of an American town after World War II. As an audience member, Pip made me feel like I was sitting on the front porch of a neighbouring house watching a family's life unfold across the street.

One of world renowned American playwright Arthur Miller's gems, All My Sons combines social awareness with a concern for the characters' inner selves. His play also looks at the plight of the common man tapping into the dissatisfaction and unrest within the post war American psyche.

The actors in All My Sons take Miller's characters head on and never stop. They gather on a slightly angled, simple stage for a script that keeps them working hard. There is a limited set and minimal props meaning there is nowhere for them to hide. The lives they are portraying are laid bare, exposing the complexities of their inner lives. They work through generational divide, the processing of grief, the piecing together of a life, and an overbearing mother to boot.

It's safe to say the actors playing the Keller family, who are central to the play, had me hooked. They really put me through the emotional wringer. The minimalist set forces audiences to focus on every minor detail of the actors' performances. Carl Caulfield who plays Joe Keller for instance was riveting. He portrays the family man and good neighbour whilst juxtaposing this with feelings of anger and frustration brilliantly. I'll admit when he raises his voice he had me squirming in my seat like a child being chastised by a parent. Kate Keller, played by Aimee Cavanagh made me feel sympathetic, suspicious and agitated all at the same time. Richard Rae as Chris Keller drew me into intimate moments and made me feel like I needed a lie down by the end.

Watching this play brings the phrase 'life's a stage' to mind. Familiar moments and gestures being interrupted by the messy nature of being human. There is constant activity on the stage, like in life, even in the moments of chatter when the house lights are on. Come and be a voyeur to the daily hum of life and intimate moments of drama played out in All My Sons.

Book and find out more at <https://www.mrt.org.au/2023-season/all-my-sons/>