

Ghent Playhouse, Ghent, NY

**All My Sons**, by Arthur Miller. Directed by Ed Dignum.

Reviewed by J. Peter Bergman.

***“None of them believed I was innocent.”***

A 77 year old play is making a spectacular comeback at the Ghent Playhouse in Ghent, New York as the theater finally reopens for its 49th season of outstanding community theater. Director Ed Dignum and producer Cathy Lee-Visscher have assembled a terrific company of players to deliver the best play ever written by Arthur Miller and give it its just desserts. In 1947 the play won several awards and as often as I’ve read it and seen it, this production brought me to tears, several times, after bellowing well-deserved laughter. The play has everything and this time around, it has a cast to die for.



ALL PHOTOS ARE REHEARSAL SHOTS BY CATHY LEE-VISSCHER,  
Paula Kaplan-Reiss, Leo Hernandez, Lara Denmark, George Filieau.

As Joe Keller, who ultimately believes that twenty-two dead soldiers (this is a post World War II play) were intuitively “*all his sons*,” George Filieau gives the performance of his life. He is more human and real in this play than I have ever seen him before. His work here will live in my memory and my heart for a very long time. His ultimate confession to his son about the guilt he finally feels is more moving than his final off-stage actions could ever be.

As his wife, Kate, Paula Kaplan-Reiss has created the ultimate mother, far outstripping

Miller's other great mothers in plays like "Death of a Salesman" and "The Crucible." Her fine performance of Kate Keller leaves no doubt in mind about her acting ability. She sweeps onto the stage and takes it prisoner never letting go of her control in the play up to its final moments.

Their son Chris is played with emotional impact by Leo Hernandez who captures the style of the period without sacrificing his contemporary acting abilities. He is delightful, moving and realistically pissed-off at times. More than merely competent this is an actor whose career on local stages should be watched for years to come.



Leo Hernandez, George Filieau

The girl of his dreams, Ann Deever, is played by Lara Denmark who's realistic acting almost made her character seem to be fully and realistically alive on the Ghent stage. She and Hernandez made a most attractive and hyper-active couple of lovers, which is as it should be. Their work together was exemplary.

Miss Denmark's scenes with others in the company brought

very realistic reactions out of actors who needed to be as real in their roles as she was. Kaplan-Reiss and Denmark were wonderful in their scenes and Jackie DeGeorgis as the nosy neighbor Sue Bayliss made an amazing impression in her role. A comic part always shines when played by DeGeorgis, but this time around she had many emotions to support and she did this very well.

As neighbors go, lovely Tiffany McWilliams gave giddy life to Lydia Lubey and Mark Wilson as her husband delivered his usual professional performance. (Even better than in the most curious HMS Ruddigore?) Brian Yorck was excellent as Dr. Bayliss.



Jackie DeGeorgis, Lara Denmark

Bill Schein, one of our most reliable regional actors, was stunning as Ann's brother George Deever. In fact he was devastating in a performance that would have stopped the show if this play had less of a perfect rudder driving it forward.



Bill Schein, Paula Kaplan-Reiss. Leo Hernandez

I have never been able to understand why this play is so often ignored when it deals with such amazing characters in such a dangerous situation. It is a perfect drama and very welcome at this odd political time we live in.

The production has an able crew of talents working on it's success including Lee-Visscher herself designing the set, Joseph Sicotte the lighting and Karin Mason the costumes.

Linda Murawski and Vivian Wachsberger handling set decor, Michael O'Keefe designing sound and a generous crew of workers making it all happen. Director Dignum had all the luck he needed in bringing this fine play back to such vibrant life.

Performances continue through February 18 and it is the second play I've seen this month that really needs to be seen. I more than encourage everyone to go see it. It is so very worthwhile.

+ 02/10/2024 +

**All My Sons** runs at the Ghent Playhouse, 6 Town Hall Place, Ghent, NY through February 18. For information and tickets call 518.392.6264.