

# Reviews

More reviews online

Caroline Sullivan on YouTube covers-band phenomenon Boyce Avenue [theguardian.com/music](http://theguardian.com/music)

## Ominous and elemental - Miller's ritual of timeless transgression

### Theatre

#### A View from the Bridge Young Vic, London

★★★★★

Ivo van Hove is an audacious Belgian whose production of Bergman's *Scenes from a Marriage*, seen at the Barbican last November, was a model of hyper-realism. But his highly impressive revival of Arthur Miller's 1955 Brooklyn drama goes to the opposite extreme by stripping the play of naturalistic detail and returning it to its roots in Greek tragedy.

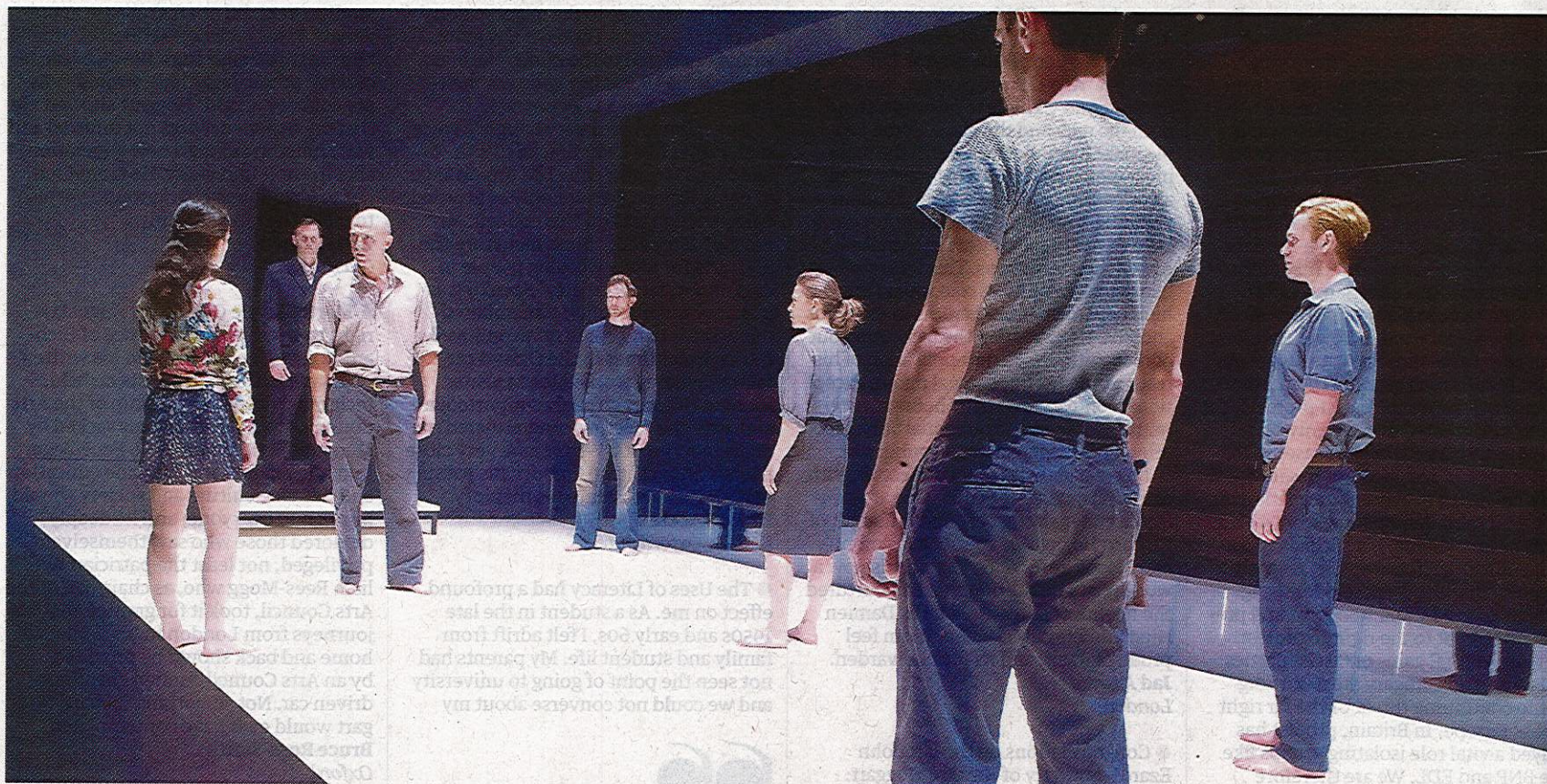
The action, in Jan Versweyveld's design, is played out on a long, rectangular platform that resembles a sunken bath; and the extraordinary opening image shows the longshoreman, Eddie Carbone, and a colleague standing beneath what might be a purifying, or possibly elemental, torrent of water. But signs of the ensuing tragedy are instantly apparent. When Eddie returns home, his niece Catherine leaps exuberantly into his arms and wraps her bare thighs round his torso. Their relationship is clearly tactile and intimately physical. And, when Catherine falls for Rodolfo, one of the two Sicilian immigrants lodging in Eddie's home, we know there can only be one outcome.

The ominous mood is reinforced by the requiem that plays subliminally throughout the two uninterrupted hours of the action. We also sense we are watching some timeless, transgressive ritual being played out on a naked stage: it is left to the lawyer, Alfieri, to bring on the chair that leads to a famous contest of strength between Eddie and the elder Sicilian brother, and the scene ends with Marco sustaining his pose of triumphant superiority. But, for all the production's visual brilliance, I don't believe it invalidates the more traditional approach. Miller himself says the myth grows out a social context, and Alan Ayckbourn's legendary 1987 production, with Michael Gambon, made an even greater emotional impact than Van Hove's spartan tragedy.

That is not to deny the rich behavioural accuracy or high quality of the performances in this exceptional production. Mark Strong's Eddie combines physical weight with inner confusion and left me wondering if Eddie is attracted to the skittish Rodolfo as much as to his niece. Nicola Walker as Eddie's wife confirms that idea by playing her, excellently, as a woman nursing a long grievance about her exclusion from Eddie's sexual affections. There is also strong support from Michael Gould as the choric Alfieri now firmly integrated into the action, from Phoebe Fox as the innocently sensual Catherine, and Emun Elliot and Luke Norris as the Sicilians. It's a forceful production that offers a radical alternative to the conventional realistic approach to Miller's tale, without displacing it.

**Michael Billington**

Until 24 May. Box office: 020-7922 2923.



A sunken bath ... a scene from *A View From the Bridge*, with Mark Strong third from left Photograph: Tristram Kenton for the Guardian