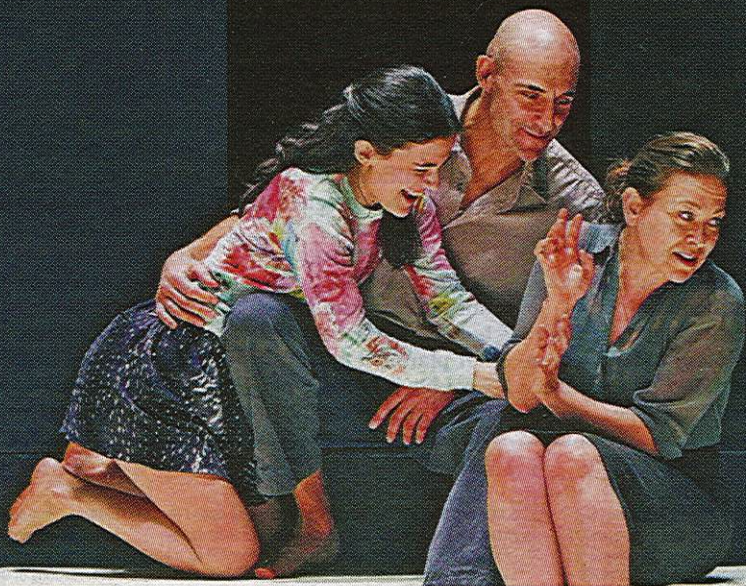


Phoebe Fox  
(Catherine),  
Mark Strong  
(Eddie) and  
Nicola Walker  
(Beatrice)



# Bridge over troubling waters

**Kate Bassett  
on a stunning  
Arthur Miller  
revival with  
extra shocks**

**Theatre**  
**A View from  
the Bridge**  
Young Vic, SE1  
★★★★★

As views go, this one is not to be missed. For sure, Arthur Miller's vision of family life ain't pretty in his classic 1950s tragedy, set in a dockers' neighbourhood below the Brooklyn Bridge. Eddie, an Italian-American longshoreman, is obsessed with Catherine, his niece whom he has raised like a daughter but who is now reaching womanhood. She is sweet on the new lodger, Rodolpho, and Eddie is spoiling for a fight, with his machismo in a Freudian twist.

Performed by an outstanding British cast, working with the world-class director Ivo van Hove (of Toneelgroep Amsterdam renown), the Young Vic's production ends with a bloodbath, literally. Catherine's wedding day descends into an honour killing, which van Hove choreographs as a writhing knot of bodies under a rain of gore — an image akin to Dante's *Inferno*.

This *View From the Bridge* is stripped of the clutter of realistic furnishings. The fate of Mark Strong's sinewy, dark-eyed Eddie is played out in a rectangle of light, on a stage that jetties out into the audience. That is overhanging, architecturally, by a hulking black hood, industrially oppressive, with the light filtering from on high through a steel grille (design by Jan Versweyveld). A surprising soundtrack of choring endows Strong with a hint

of Lucifer, and Luke Norris's golden-haired Rodolpho with a touch of hamstrung martyr (albeit his character is slightly underdeveloped). Miller's characters are underdogs, a close-knit community aspiring to a brighter future, yet also pulling each other down in the land of the (questionably) free. When Rodolpho's illegal immigrant brother — enraged by Eddie's bigotry — raises a chair above his head it is a startling iconic image, like a warped Statue of Liberty.

The thrill lies in van Hove's combination of risky, experimental stylisation and detailed naturalistic acting. The incestuous desires, about which Eddie is in denial, are a slow burn, looking like innocent demonstrations of affection at first. Still behaving like a child, Phoebe Fox's petite Catherine leaps into his arms to monkey-hug him when he comes home from work. When she curls up beside him he strokes her gently like a cat. Nonetheless, his anxiety-haggard wife Beatrice (Nicola Walker) sees where this is heading.

If van Hove's isn't a heartbreaking production, it has lovely flickers of social comedy. And it is hair-raisingly tense. Low, metallic thuds keep pulsing beneath the dialogue; maybe hammer blows from a shipyard, but like a ticking bomb.

**Box office: 020-7922 2922, to Jun 7**