

ONCE upon a time Arthur Miller was known only to the faithful followers of serious drama, but since his marriage to Marilyn his works have acquired a reflected lustre, a blonde glow, as it were. On July 21, ZB Sunday Showcase will present *Death of a Salesman*, perhaps his most successful play, and those listeners who tune in from curiosity should find themselves well rewarded. This serious play, a popular hit, roused critics and audiences to the highest pitch of enthusiasm. So much so that one critic described it as delivering "a terrific wallop, as furious in its onslaught on the heart as on the head."

Not many contemporary plays have so emphasised the reminder of Alexander Pope that "The proper study of mankind is man." John Mason Brown praised it as "the most poignant statement of man as he must face himself to have come out of our [American] theatre."

It reveals the tragedy of a typical American who loses out by trying too hard to win out—the failure of a man who worships success. Willy Loman has been a hardworking salesman all his life. He is a family man with two sons. No one could question his industry or his loyalty to his family and firm; but he has lived on his smile and his hopes, clinging to the illusion that he has countless friends, that he is a success and that his boys will be successful, too.

His misfortune is that he has never looked below the surface. His personality has been his profession. He is a salesman, who believes that the approach, the personal angle is everything, that the line of talk is more important than the line of merchandise. His ideal for himself and his sons is to be "well-liked," the popularity of a bluffing, back-slapping immature football hero. The result has been that his need to be a big-shot has turned him into a bluffer and self-deceiver.

Now at 63 Willy Loman is too old to continue working. He has exhausted himself carrying the sample cases of

goods no one wants to buy any more. His tired, wandering mind makes it unsafe for him to drive the dilapidated but not-quite-paid-for car from town to town. His sons see through him and despise him, both the son who loved his father until he saw him with another woman, and the son who never loved anything but a good time. His wife, too, sees through him, but defends him, knowing him to be better than most, and, at any rate, well-intentioned. The worst comes when Willy loses his job and he begins to see through himself. His weary body and tormented mind slip backward and forward in time from what is to what was and what might have been. He continually remembers and recreates his brother Ben, the hardy adventurer who is to Willy, who lacked his daring and luck, the symbol of success. When even the symbol turns on him, Willy Loman is finally crushed. Yet his final act is to provide for his wife, and even at the last a friend can be found to justify his dreams.

Tragedy, usually associated with the great, is here intimate, modern and personal. In the drama of Willy Loman, Arthur Miller has tried to arouse his audience to re-appraise their attitudes to life. Wanting to discover, as he said, "the ordinary man in the extreme of crisis," he has shown how completely needless are his blunders, and how inevitable.

ARTHUR MILLER—
"The proper study of
mankind is man"



death of a SALESMAN

This recorded production is by Elia Kazan, who also directed the stage and film productions. Thomas Mitchell who won an Academy Award for his work in *Stagecoach*, plays Willy Loman. The other parts are taken by the members of the original Broadway cast. Linda, the wife, is played by Mildred Dunnock, whose most recent film appearance was as Aunt Rose Comfort in Elia Kazan's production of *Baby Doll*. Arthur Kennedy plays Biff, the elder son, and Cameron Mitchell is Happy, the younger son. Charley, Willy's neighbour and friend, is played by Howard Smith, and Thomas Chalmers is Ben. Other parts are taken by Alan Hewitt, Don Keefer, Tom Pedi, Winifred Cushing, Constance Ford, Hope Cameron and Ann Driscoll.

In the recording, every scene from the original play is represented. Arthur Miller, in an introductory note, stated that there were contractions, rather than deletions, and that no action had been omitted or any character slighted. The only departure from the play was the introduction of a narrator who serves to set the scene. This narrator is Arthur Miller himself.

The son of a coat manufacturer, Arthur Miller played high school football in Brooklyn, and worked as a shipping clerk, truck-driver and dishwasher to attend the University of Michigan. His first success came from a novel, *Focus*, about anti-Semitism, written on the rebound from the failure of a play. He spent the next few years writing for radio, and then he tried again in the theatre. The result, *All My Sons*, won the Drama Critics' Award in 1947. Two years later he won this award again with *Death of a Salesman*, which collected the Pulitzer Prize and various other awards in its Broadway career of more than a year. Since then Arthur Miller has written *The Crucible*, about the Salem witch hunts (the text was recently reviewed in *The Listener*), and *A View from the Bridge*.



THOMAS MITCHELL, who plays
Willy Loman

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

<i>Is Our Climate Changing?</i> -	4-5	<i>New Recordings</i> -	18
<i>Rowena Jackson</i> -	6	<i>Bruce Mason's Intimate Revue</i> -	19
<i>Gold Medal Balladeer</i> -	7	<i>Open Microphone</i> -	20-21
<i>Found: A New Pleasure</i> -	8	<i>Close-up of Richard Lewis</i> -	23
<i>Auckland Letter</i> -	8	<i>Dr Turbott's Health Talk</i> -	24
<i>Shepherd's Calendar</i> -	9	"The Listener" Crossword -	25
<i>Editorial</i> -	10	<i>Programme Guide</i> -	28-29
<i>Letters from Listeners</i> -	11, 26-27	<i>Radio Review</i> -	30-31
<i>Books</i> -	12-13-14	<i>Ask Aunt Daisy</i> -	32-33
<i>Films</i> -	15		
<i>Two World Premieres</i> -	16-17		

BROADCAST PROGRAMMES
Monday to Sunday, July 15-21 35-55