

November 3 - 18, 2006

All My SonsReviewed by [Brad Hathaway](#)

Running time 2:20 - one intermission

A solid presentation of Arthur Miller's substantial drama

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Arthur Miller didn't write any frivolous plays. The string of important studies of the American experience that included *The Crucible*, *The Price*, *A View from the Bridge*, *After the Fall* and the masterpiece *Death of a Salesman* began with this drama of a family torn by an otherwise unexamined aspect of World War II's place in the national psyche. It put a human face on the business side of war and treated a timely issue with timeless values. Produced on Broadway less than eighteen months after the end of World War II, it touched contemporary emotions without needing to explain anything about the condition on the home front during and just after the war. Everyone in the audience had lived through those years. The test of the great accomplishment of Miller is that if it is given even a minimally effective production it still works before an audience made up mostly of people born after 1945. This community theater presentation is very much better than minimally effective. As a result, it is an affecting evening of emotionally involving theater.

Storyline: One day and night in middle America, where a year after the end of World War II, a family is still struggling with the impact of the war on their lives. The father has been released from prison after being cleared of charges of knowingly supplying defective parts to the Army resulting in the death of 21 pilots. The mother holds on tenaciously to the thought that her missing-in-action son will turn up even three years after the disappearance of the fighter he was piloting. The surviving son has finally decided to move on with his life, seeking the hand of the daughter of his father's deputy who has been convicted of the fatal fraud. She had been his brother's girl before he left for the war.

Port City Playhouse is one of the consistently reliable community theaters. They almost invariably select plays that are well written and deal with intriguing subjects, and they frequently give them high quality productions. This time out they have a play that has all the heft you would want of a drama, and they have assembled a satisfying cast under the direction of Adriana Hardy, who allows the story to play out without distractions.

G. Smith makes an imposing owner of the factory that manufactured the faulty aircraft parts. Although the role is often played as a hollow shell, Smith lets the frailties of his psyche appear a little at a time, certainly a valid approach to the role. Hans Dettmar contrasts that approach with a constantly strengthening portrayal of the son who has refused to doubt his father's innocence until faced with new evidence during the play. Jessica Lada does a nice job with the rather over-burdened role of the daughter of the neighbor who is still in prison for his part in the supplying of defective war parts. She is the former fiancée of the dead son and now is becoming the fiancée of the surviving son.

The stage at the Lee Center is a wide, deep space that is difficult to fill. This one-location play calls for a swath of back yard with a wind-damaged tree and the rear door of at least one house (the neighbor's house in this case is apparently just off stage left). Set and lighting designer Les Zidel provides the basic locale for the actors and then Farrell Ann M. Hartigan's costumes go a long way toward establishing the time period without being too obvious about it.

Written by Arthur Miller. Directed by Adriana Hardy. Design: Les Zidel (set and lights) Farrell Ann M. Hartigan (costumes) Bette Williams (makeup and hair) Eleni Aldridge and Kira Simon (properties) Alan Wray (sound) Douglas Olmsted (photography) Laura S. Newport (stage manager). Cast: Bob Ashby, Maggie Bowers, Hans Dettmar, Michael J. Fisher, Karn Henderson, Jessica Lada, Jonathan Poole, Laura Russell, G. Smith, Jacob Yeh.