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T. Charles Erickson

Matthew Greer, right, brings a desperate authenticity to the part of Biff Loman in the Guthrie's production of "Death of a Salesman." Helen Carey, left, and Peter Michael Goetz play his parents.

## Biff adds life to 'Death of a Salesman'

By Graydon Royce  
Star Tribune Staff Writer

A few observations about the Guthrie Theater's fine production of "Death of a Salesman": First, it was a little surprising to find that opening weekend didn't sell out. This is one of the signature plays of the American canon, and unlike some of its companions on that list, it stands as bristling and accessible drama. Don't miss the opportunity.

Arthur Miller's play is about so much, and yet he refines it to such a simple little story, one barely worth our attention — a

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salesman from Brooklyn loses his job. Yet, as Linda Loman

admonishes her sons, "Attention, attention must be finally paid to such a person!" For in Linda's husband, Willy, Miller has deposited the hopes, virtues, vices, stunted dreams and inadequacies of American

commerce.

The piece, however, is just as much a family exploration of dissipation and regret. Poor Hap and Biff will never have a chance if they believe in their father's legacy.

And speaking of Biff, I had never thought of him as an equal partner with Willy Loman until witnessing **Matthew Greer's** performance at the Guthrie. Greer's stage style — that marvelous sense of being rather than acting — brought desperate authenticity to Biff. He became the sympathetic core of the play — a man nervously facing truth, history and a future apart from the mendacity of his family. Greer, Biff's quest clearly burning in his soul, never left the moment, never overreached the part and yet his work had a searing urgency. If we are to feel hope at the end of this American tragedy, it is with Biff's prospective journey into a new life, undertaken on shaky but honest legs.