

"We all know that something is eternal."

New Stage Theatre
presents



Our Town

by Thornton Wilder

Directed by Francine Thomas Reynolds



Oct 25 – Nov 6, 2016

Sponsored by



Tickets: 601-948-3533
or newstagetheatre.com

NEW STAGE
Theatre

STUDY GUIDE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PERFORMANCE INFORMATION	PAGE 3
TORNTON WILDER	PAGE 4
THORNTON WILDER CHRONOLOGY	PAGE 5
OUR TOWN: A BRIEF HISTORY	PAGE 6
PLAY SYNOPSIS	PAGE 7
CAST OF CHARACTERS	PAGE 10
THE PULITZER PRIZE	PAGE 11
OUR TOWN: A HISTORICAL TIMELINE	PAGE 12
THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGING	PAGE 16
THEMES OF OUR TOWN	PAGE 17
NEW HAMPSHIRE	PAGE 18
SCENIC DESIGN	PAGE 19
PROMPTS FOR DISCUSSION	PAGE 21
AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE	PAGE 22
STUDENT EVALUATION	PAGE 23
TEACHER EVALUATION	PAGE 24



New Stage Theatre
Presents

OUR TOWN

by
Thornton Wilder

Directed by Francine Thomas Reynolds

Sponsored by Sanderson Farms

Stage Manager
Elise McDonald

Lighting Designer
Brent Lefavor

Scenic Designer
Dex Edwards

Costume Designer
Lesley Raybon

Technical Director/Properties
Richard Lawrence

There will be one 10-minute intermission

THE CAST

Cast (in order of appearance)

STAGE MANAGER	Sharon Miles
DR. GIBBS	Larry Wells
HOWIE NEWSOME	Christan McLaurine
JOE CROWELL, JR.	Ben Sanders
MRS. GIBBS	Malaika Quarterman
MRS. WEBB	Kerri Sanders
GEORGE GIBBS	Cliff Miller *
REBECCA GIBBS	Mary Frances Dean
WALLY WEBB	Jeffrey Cornelius
EMILY WEBB	Devon Caraway*
PROFESSOR WILLARD	Amanda Dear
MR. WEBB	Yohance Myles*
WOMAN #1	LaSharron Purvis
SIMON STIMSON	Jeff Raab
WOMAN #2	Hope Prybylski
WOMAN #3	Ashanti Alexander
CONSTABLE WARREN	Chris Roebuck
MRS. SOAMES	Joy Amerson
SI CROWELL	Alex Forbes
SAM CRAIG	Jake Bell
JOE STODDARD	James Anderson
FARMER MCCARTY	Peter James
VIOLINIST	Miranda Kunk

*The actor appears through the courtesy of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

THORNTON WILDER



Thornton Wilder was born in Madison, Wisconsin on April 17, 1897. He was actually one of a set of twins, but the other twin died at birth. His father was a U.S. diplomat and the family lived in China for part of Wilder's childhood before moving to California. He graduated from a high school in Berkeley in 1915, so *Our Town* is about a time period Wilder experienced and knew very well.

Wilder attended Oberlin College in Ohio, but then transferred to Yale University. He obtained his B.A. from Yale and his M.A. in French from Princeton in 1926. That same year he published *The Cabala*, his first novel.

After graduation, Wilder lived for a time in Rome, working at archeological digs before moving back to the U.S. to teach French. In 1928, he won the Pulitzer Prize for *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, his first commercial success as a writer. Wilder taught at the University of Chicago from 1930-1937, during which time he penned *Our Town*. The play won Wilder great praise and earned him another Pulitzer, this time for Drama, in 1938. In 1942 he won the prize again for his play *The Skin of Our Teeth*.

Wilder served in the Army Air Intelligence during World War II, earning the distinguished rank of lieutenant colonel. After the war he remained in Hawaii, teaching at the university there before taking a position at Harvard teaching poetry.

Wilder's close friendship with author Gertrude Stein is said to have inspired *Our Town*. Her piece *The Making of Americans* greatly influenced the play, especially its deconstructive style. Another influence on *Our Town* was the town of Peterborough, New Hampshire. Wilder wrote a large portion of the play at the MacDowell Colony near Peterborough, and it widely accepted that he based Grover's Corners on the town.

Wilder himself played the Stage Manager briefly on Broadway and later in many summer stock productions. He wrote several more novels and even the screenplay for Alfred Hitchcock's *Shadow of a Doubt*, but his theatrical interest continued, with *The Matchmaker*, a play which later became the book for the popular musical *Hello, Dolly!* His last novel was published in 1973, and Wilder died on December 7, 1975 in New England.

THORNTON WILDER CHRONOLOGY

- 1897 Born in Madison, Wisconsin (April 17)
- 1906 Moves to Hong Kong in May and to Berkeley, California in October
- 1906-10 Emerson Public School in Berkeley
- 1910-11 China Inland Mission School, Chefoo, China (one year)
- 1912-13 Thacher School, Ojai, California (one year). First play known to be produced: ***The Russian Princess***
- 1915 Graduates from Berkeley High School; active in school dramatics
- 1915-17 Oberlin College; published regularly
- 1920 B.A. Yale College (3-month service in 1918 with U.S. Army in 1918); many publications
- 1920-21 American Academy in Rome (8-month residency)
- 1920s French teacher at Lawrenceville School, Lawrenceville, New Jersey ('21-'25 & '27-'28)
- 1924 First visit to the MacDowell Colony, Peterborough, New Hampshire
- 1926 M.A. in French literature, Princeton University
The Trumpet Shall Sound produced off-Broadway (American Laboratory Theatre)
The Cabala (first novel)
- 1927 ***The Bridge of San Luis Rey*** (novel- Pulitzer Prize)
- 1928 ***The Angel That Troubled The Waters*** (first published collection of drama—playlets)
- 1930s Part-time faculty, University of Chicago (comparative literature and composition); lectures across the country;
first Hollywood screen-writing assignment (1934); extensive foreign travel
- 1930 ***The Woman of Andros*** (novel)
Completion of **home** for his family and himself in Hamden, Connecticut
- 1931 ***The Long Christmas Dinner and Other Plays*** (six one-act plays)
- 1932 ***Lucrece*** opens on Broadway starring Katharine Cornell (translation of André Obey's *Le Viol de Lucrece*)
- 1935 ***Heaven's My Destination*** (novel)
- 1937 ***A Doll's House*** (adaptation/ trans.) opens on Broadway with Ruth Gordon
- 1938 ***Our Town*** (Pulitzer Prize) and ***The Merchant of Yonkers*** open on Broadway
- 1942 ***The Skin of Our Teeth*** opens on Broadway (Pulitzer Prize)
Screenplay for Alfred Hitchcock's ***The Shadow of a Doubt***
- 1942-45 Service with Army Air Force in North Africa and Italy (Lieut. Col. at discharge –Bronze Star and O.B.E.)
- 1948 ***The Ides of March*** (novel); performing in his plays in summer stock in this period
The Victors opens off-Broadway (translation of Sartre's *Morts sans sépulture*)
- 1949 Major role in Goethe Convocation in Aspen; lectures widely.
- 1951-52 Charles Eliot Norton Professor of Poetry at Harvard
- 1952 Gold Medal for Fiction, American Academy of Arts and Letters
- 1953 Cover of *Time* Magazine (January 12)
- 1955 ***The Matchmaker*** opens on Broadway starring Ruth Gordon
The Alcestiad produced at Edinburgh Festival with Irene Worth (as *A Life in the Sun*)
- 1957 German Peace Prize
- 1961 Libretto for ***The Long Christmas Dinner*** (music by Paul Hindemith—premieres in Mannheim, West Germany)
- 1962 "Plays for Bleecker Street" (***Someone from Assisi***, ***Infancy***, and ***Childhood***) premiere at NYC's Circle in the Square
Libretto for ***The Alcestiad*** (music by Louise Talma—premieres in Frankfurt, West Germany)
- 1963 Presidential Medal of Freedom
- 1964 ***Hello, Dolly!*** starring Carol Channing opens on Broadway
- 1965 National Book Committee's Medal for Literature
- 1967 ***The Eighth Day*** (National Book Award for Fiction)
- 1973 ***Theophilus North*** (novel)
- 1975 Dies in sleep in Hamden, CT on December 7. Buried at Mt. Carmel Cemetery, Hamden, Connecticut

OUR TOWN: A BRIEF HISTORY

Under the title of *M Marries N*, Thornton Wilder began working on the play that would become *Our Town* in 1935. Primarily written at the MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, New Hampshire, the town on which it is believed Wilder modeled Grovers Corners, *Our Town* premiered at the McCarter Theatre in Princeton, NJ on January 22, 1938. It then moved to the Wilbur Theatre in Boston three days later. *Our Town* had its New York debut at Henry Miller's Theatre on February 4, 1938, and soon moved to the Morosco Theatre. Later in 1938, Wilder received the Pulitzer Prize for *Our Town*.

The play has had several Broadway revivals since its debut. Among them was a 1969 revival which saw Peter Fonda as the Stage Manager, and a Tony winning 1989 revival which starred Spalding Gray, Eric Stoltz and Penelope Ann Miller. In 1976, Williamstown Theatre Festival mounted a production of *Our Town* that had Geraldine Fitzgerald as the Stage Manager; the first time the role was played by a woman (though obviously not the last).

Other versions include a 1940 film version which saw the ending changed to a "happy" one, and a 1955 televised musical version, starring Frank Sinatra as the Stage Manager, Paul Newman as George and Eva Marie Saint as Emily. This version of *Our Town* is most notable for the song "Love and Marriage", which is better known as the theme for the TV show *Married With Children*. There was also a televised performance on PBS in 1977 which saw Hal Holbrook portray the Stage Manager.

Our Town is widely considered one of the greatest plays of American drama, if not the greatest, and well loved worldwide. It has been translated into more than 30 languages. And it is said that it is performed at least once every night somewhere in the world.

PLAY SYNOPSIS

ACT ONE: DAILY LIFE

Our Town begins at daybreak in Grover's Corners, New Hampshire, on May 7, 1901. The Stage Manager gives the layout of the town and focuses on the houses of the two families who provide much of the action of the play, the Webb and Gibbs families. The morning begins with a flurry of deliveries: Dr. Gibbs is returning home from delivering twins, Joe Crowell delivers the morning newspaper, and Howie Newsome makes his rounds delivering milk.

The Webb children, Emily and Wally, and the Gibbs children, George and Rebecca, appear for breakfast in their houses and get themselves ready for school. After the Doctor has gone upstairs for some rest and the children are on their way to school, Mrs. Gibbs and Mrs. Webb have a conversation while they string beans. The Stage Manager interrupts the women and calls on Professor Willard for a scientific report on Grover's Corners. Editor Webb gives a social and political report on the town, and takes a few questions from the audience. The children return home from school and Emily promises to help George with his homework.

Night falls on Grover's Corners and the Congregational Church choir, directed by Simon Stimson, begins its practice. George and Emily discuss Algebra. Dr. Gibbs and George have a "serious" talk about allowances and responsibility. Mrs. Webb, Mrs. Gibbs and Mrs. Soames gossip about Simon Stimson's drinking problem. George and Rebecca chat at the window. Mr. Webb meets Constable Warren on his way home, and the men talk briefly. Mr. Webb talks to his daughter, who is enjoying the moonlight at her bedroom window, and the Stage Manager calls an end to this typical day in Grover's Corners.

ACT TWO: LOVE AND MARRIAGE

Three years have passed since Act One and it is now early on the morning of July 7, 1904. The town is abuzz about George and Emily's wedding. George attempts to see Emily, but Mrs. Webb won't let him see his bride on their wedding day. George and Mr. Webb have a brief and humorous conversation.

The Stage Manager interrupts to present a scene from the past when George and Emily first became aware of their love for each other. While the actors set up chairs to be pews for the wedding scene, the Stage Manager talks to the audience about the importance of marriage. Mrs. Webb expresses sudden concern for Emily. George has some momentary doubts and is comforted by his mother. Emily arrives dressed in white, doubtful and very frightened. Her father tries to comfort her, but without success. He calls George over, who overcomes the doubts and fears, and the wedding begins with the Stage Manager as the clergyman. The words of the service are overwhelmed by the shrill comments of Mrs. Soames on the loveliness of marriage and the "perfectly lovely wedding." George and Emily run off joyously at the end of the ceremony, and the Stage manager announces the end of the second act.



ACT THREE: DEATH AND ETERNITY

Act Three opens in a graveyard. The Stage Manager tells the audience that nine years have passed. He talks briefly about death and what death means to the people of Grover's Corners, but is interrupted by Joe Stoddard, the undertaker, and Sam Craig, a Grover's Corners native who moved away but has returned for the funeral. The graves of Mrs. Gibbs, Mrs. Soames, Mr. Stimson, and others are represented by rows of chairs in which the occupants are quietly sitting. When the funeral procession enters, Mrs. Soames asks Mrs. Gibbs who is coming, and Mrs. Gibbs replies that it is her daughter-in-law, Emily.

When Emily appears from the umbrellas of the funeral procession, the dead greet her, but she is still restless, talking about the new barn and George's new Ford. Despite the warnings from Mrs. Gibbs, Mrs. Soames, Simon Stimson and even the Stage Manager, Emily decides to return to the happiest moment of her life: her twelfth birthday. She sees the town as it was then, but it is just too painful. She can't stand watching everyone pay so little attention to life while it is being lived, so she returns to her place among the dead.

As the Stage Manager draws a black curtain over this quiet scene, he tells the audience that almost everyone is asleep in Grover's Corners. "You get a good rest, too," he advises the audience as the play ends.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Stage Manager: the narrator; much like the chorus of Greek theatre

Emily Webb: young lover

George Webb: young lover

Dr. Frank Gibbs: George's father, town doctor

Mrs. Julia Gibbs: George's mother

Rebecca Gibbs: George's younger sister

Mrs. Myrtle Webb: Emily's mother

Mr. Charles Webb: Emily's father, editor and publisher of The Grover's Corners Sentinel

Wally Webb: Emily's younger brother

Simon Stimson: the church choir director

Mrs. Louella Soames: gossip town resident

Joe Crowell: a newspaper boy

Si Crowell: Joe's younger brother, also a newspaper boy

Howie Newsome: the local milkman

Professor Willard: professor from the State University

Constable Warren: the local policeman

Sam Craig: Emily's cousin, businessman

Joe Stoddard: the town undertaker

THE PULITZER PRIZE

Considered the highest honor in the United States for literary achievement, musical composition, and newspaper journalism, the Pulitzer Prize was first awarded on June 4, 1917. The award is named for Joseph Pulitzer, a journalist who, upon his death in 1911, left money for the prize to Columbia University.

There are twenty-one total categories of the award: fourteen for Journalism (including breaking news reporting, feature writing, commentary, criticism, etc.), six in Letters and Drama (including non-fiction, poetry, and history) and one prize is given for music. There are several special citations and awards also awarded.

Famous literary recipients of the Pulitzer Prize include Margaret Mitchell, Ernest Hemingway, Harper Lee, Saul Bellow, Eudora Welty, William Faulkner and Robert Frost. Playwrights who have won the award include Arthur Miller, Suzi Lori-Parks and Tony Kushner. Only a few playwrights have been awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Drama more than once. Eugene O'Neill has won the prize four times, Edward Albee has won three times, while several others have won it twice. They include George S. Kaufman, Thornton Wilder, Tennessee Williams, and August Wilson.



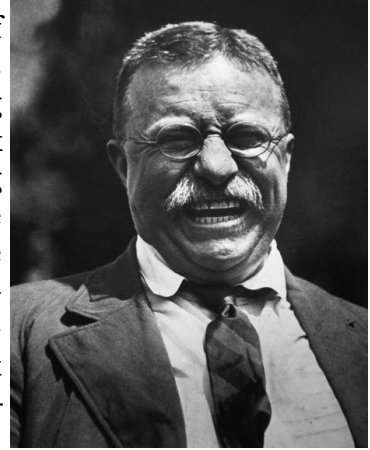
Joseph Pulitzer



The Pulitzer Prize

OUR TOWN: A HISTORICAL TIMELINE

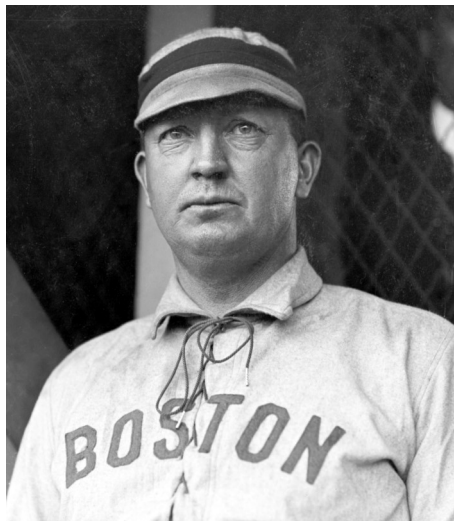
1901—"Century of Electricity" replaces the "Century of Steam" — As Vice President, Teddy Roosevelt states his rule of foreign policy, "Speak softly and carry a big stick" — President McKinley is shot at point-blank range by an anarchist; he dies 8 days later, making Teddy Roosevelt becomes the youngest chief executive in U.S. history— Artist Pablo Picasso begins his Blue Period— U.S. Steel Company is created by J.P. Morgan— Nobel Prizes, from a fund established by dynamite magnate Alfred Nobel) are awarded for the first time— The American League of Baseball is organized— Ragtime jazz develops in the U.S.



1902— Cuba gains its independence from Spain and U.S. troops are withdrawn— President Roosevelt officially ends the "great insurrection" in the Philippines— Five month coal strike cripples the U.S. market and prices nearly triple— First train route between Chicago and New York begins regular service— U.S. acquires perpetual control of the Panama Canal Zone— Comic strip "Buster Brown" appears in the New York Herald— The Teddy Bear, named for President Roosevelt, is introduced and creates a national sensation— J.C. Penney Company is founded in WY.; Pepsi-Cola Company is founded in N.C.

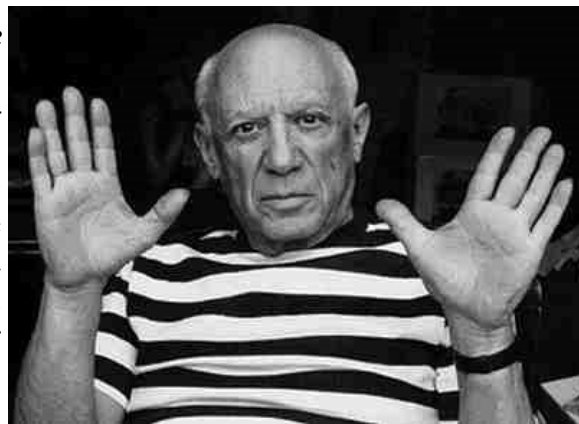
1903—Congress votes to create the Department of Commerce and Labor— The Supreme Court upholds an Alabama law denying blacks the right to vote— Henry Ford creates the Ford Motor Company— The Wright Brothers make their first sustained flight in a gasoline-powered aircraft— Pulitzer Prizes, created by Joseph Pulitzer's agreement to start Columbia University's school of journalism, are first awarded.— Jack London's *The Call of the Wild* is published and gains popularity— In the first World Series baseball game, the AL's Boston beats defeats NL's Pittsburgh— Canned albacore tuna is first introduced— Construction workers break ground on the Hershey Chocolate Factory in Harrisburg, PA





1904— President Roosevelt is re-elected in an easy win over Judge A.B. Parker of NY— First major NYC subway line opens to the public— First radio transmission of music happens in Austria— Work begins on the Panama Canal— The World Exhibition and the first American Olympics occur in St. Louis, MO— Helen Keller graduates from Radcliffe College and begins to write about blindness— Marie Curie discovers radioactive elements radium and polonium in uranium ore— Cy Young pitches his first perfect game for the Boston Red Sox— Campbell's Pork and Beans is introduced—The ice cream cone is introduced at the St. Louis exposition by a Syrian immigrant

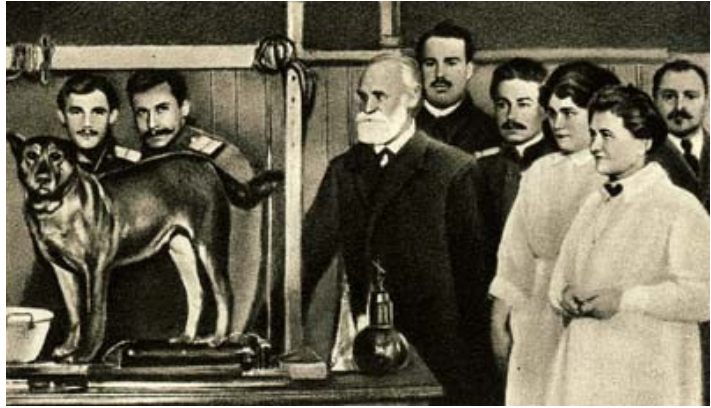
1905— Edith Wharton publishes *The House of Mirth*— Pablo Picasso arrives in Paris and begins his Pink Period— Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity is circulated— Sigmund Freud writes "Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex" - The first neon lighted signs appear— The first regular cinema is established in Pittsburgh, PA— Ty Cobb begins his major league baseball career, playing for the Detroit Tigers



1906—President Roosevelt takes the first ever trip outside the U.S. by a sitting president, visiting the Panama Canal Zone— U.S. troops occupy Cuba (until 1909) — Upton Sinclair writes *The Jungle*— First radio program with voices and music is broadcast in the U.S. by Fessenden— The San Francisco earthquake kills 700 people and does \$400 million in damages—

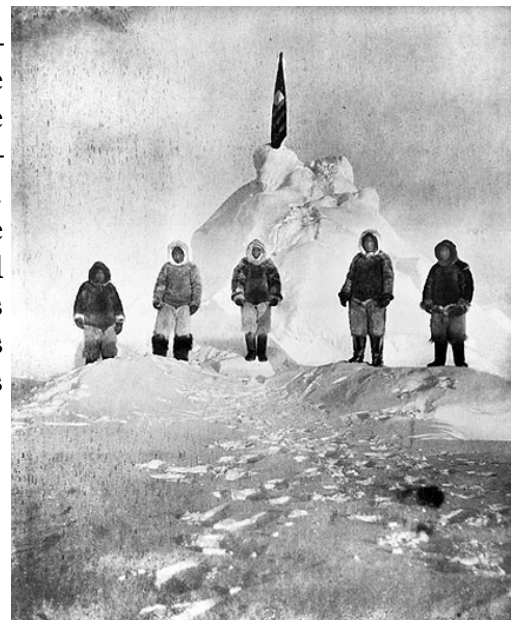
New York's population reaches 4 million— AL's Chicago team defeats NL's Chicago team in the World Series

1907— President Roosevelt bars Japanese immigrants from coming to the U.S.— An International Peace Conference is held at the Hague— Oklahoma becomes the 46th U.S. state— Ziegfeld's first production of the "Follies" is staged in New York— Pavlov presents his study on conditioned reflexes— Immigration to the U.S. is first regulated by American laws— S.S. *Lusitania* and the S.S. *Mauretania* set sail, breaking transatlantic records— Chicago defeats Detroit to win the World Series



1908— William Howard Taft is elected U.S. President— Isadora Duncan becomes a popular interpreter of dance— French artist Matisse coins the term "cubism" — General Motors Corporation formed— Fountain pens become popular— Wright flies 30 miles in 40 minutes— Ford Motor Company produces the first Model 'T', eventually selling 15 million of them

1909— Newsreels first appear in the U.S.— Freud first lectures on psychoanalysis in the U.S.— Frank Lloyd Wright completes the Robie House and others in the Chicago area— Ehrlich prepares the cure for syphilis— U.S. explorer Peary reaches the North Pole— The Rockefeller Sanitary Commission, which will become the Rockefeller Foundation, is established— The Plastic Age begins, as commercial manufacturing of Bakelite is developed





1910— W.E.B. DuBois founds the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) — The Mexican Revolution begins— The South American tango gains immense popularity in Europe and the U.S.— Murray and Hjort undertake the first deep-sea research exhibition— Halley's comet is observed by thousands— Father's Day is first celebrated in Washington, D.C.

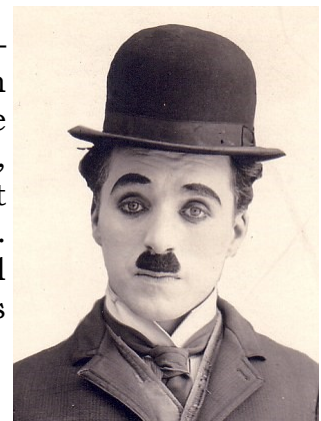
— Carnegie Endowment for International Peace established— The “week-end” becomes popular in the U.S.

1911— U.S.-Japan and Anglo-Japan commercial treaties signed— Leonardo Da Vinci's “Mona Lisa” is stolen from the Louvre (and found in Italy in 1913) — Irving Berlin's song “Alexander's Ragtime Band” gains worldwide popularity— Kettering develops the first practical electric self-started for automobiles— First flight from Munich to Berlin reaches a record height of 12,800 ft.— American golfer Robert T. Jones wins his first title at age 9



1912— Woodrow Wilson wins the U.S. presidential election— Arizona and New Mexico become U.S. states— Strikes in London cripple coal industry, dock work and transportation— Nearly 5 million people in the U.S. now visit cinemas daily— Explorer Scott reaches the South Pole— S.S. *Titanic* sinks on her maiden voyage after striking an iceberg, killing 1,513— The F.W. Woolworth Company is founded

1913— The U.S. Federal Reserve System is established— Federal income taxes are introduced in the U.S. through the 16th amendment— Grand Central Terminal and the Woolworth Building open in New York— Paramount, Charlie Chaplin, and Cecil B. DeMille make their first films— Zippers and the foxtrot become popular— John D. Rockefeller founds Rockefeller Institute with an initial grant of \$100 million— U.S. team wins Davis Cup tennis trophy



THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGING

Turn of the Century: Most schoolteachers were women. If they wanted to marry (like Joe Crowell's teacher in Act One), they had to resign their teaching positions. In rural communities, teachers often lived with local families during the school year.

1930s: As the country struggled with unemployment during the Great Depression, teaching positions were prized jobs for both single and married women. More men joined the ranks of teachers, mostly at the upper grade levels. Rural areas still had one and two-room schoolhouses.

Today: Women still outnumber men in the teaching profession. Salaries have increased and people can support families on teachers' wages. In many rural areas, towns have been forced to give up their own schools and join with other towns to create a single regional school.

Turn of the Century: People lived and worked in the same location. No place was too far away that a person couldn't walk to it. Horse and buggy was the principal transportation.

1930s: Automobiles replaced the horse and buggy as the primary mode of transportation. The Great Depression forced mills and factories that once thrived in small New England towns to shut their doors, forcing people to either move away or to travel elsewhere to seek work.

Today: Thousands of people commute into Boston everyday from small towns in southern New Hampshire. Some drive their cars on mutli-lane highways for nearly two hours each way, while others travel to an outlying train station and finish their commute into the city by rail.

Turn of the Century: Women rarely worked at a job outside the home. As the Stage Manager says in his opening monologue to Act Two: "both those ladies cooked three meals a day— one of 'em for twenty years, the other for forty— and no summer vacation. They brought up two children apiece, washed, cleaned the house— and never a nervous breakdown."

1930s: Most women were mothers and housewives, but the economic realities of the Great Depression dictated that whoever could, worked. When the country entered World War II just three years after Our Town opened, thousands of women took factory jobs while men went off to war.

Today: Women are in the workforce in larger numbers than ever before. Families juggle work schedules of the father, the mother, and the children. Take-out food has replaced the traditional family dinner, and eating in front of the television has replaced conversation at the dinner table.

THEMES OF *OUR TOWN*

Cycle of Life Our Town begins at daybreak with the birth of twins in a Polish town and ends at night with the death of Emily Webb Gibbs in childbirth. As one life ends, another begins. Throughout the play, Wilder (through the Stage Manager—a role Wilder himself once played) directs the attention of the audience to the repetition of the cycle of life. In his opening monologue, he points out that the names on tombstones in the graveyard that date back to the 1600s are "the same names that are around here now." As Act Two opens, the Stage Manager talks about the sun having "come up over a thousand times," the growing up and the slowing down of some of the town's residents, and the millions of gallons of water [that have gone] by the mill." His comments about marriage are particularly interesting:

I've married over two hundred couples in my day Do I believe in it? I don't know. M ... marries N . . millions of them. The cottage, the g-cart, the Sunday-afternoon drives in the Ford, the first rheumatism, the grandchildren, the second rheumatism, the deathbed, the reading of the will,... Once in a thousand times it's interesting.

Meaning of Life Thornton Wilder is often considered to be a religious writer and Our Town is often considered to be a religious play. Yet, there is little mention of heaven or God or any of those subjects often thought of as being religious. The Stage Manager muses aloud about the word eternal at the beginning of Act Three.

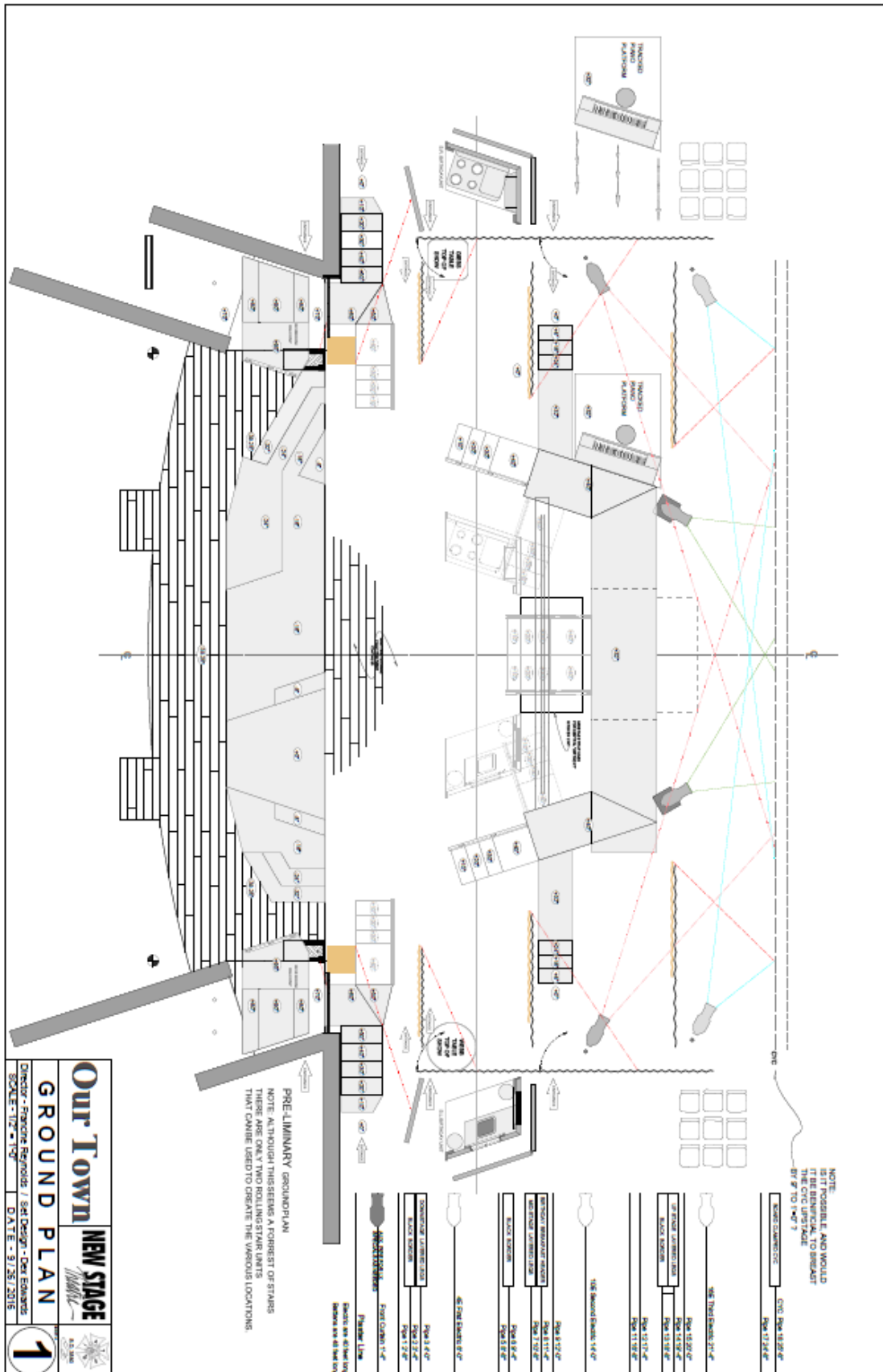
Now there are some things we all know, but we don't take'm out and look at'ra very often. We all know that something is eternal. And it ain't houses and it ain't names, and it ain't earth, and it ain't even the stars... everybody knows in their bones that something is eternal, and that something has to do with human beings. All the greatest people ever lived have been telling us that for five thousand years and yet you'd be surprised how people are always losing hold of it. There's something way down deep that's eternal about every human being.

Love and Passion The characters in Our Town mention love often and Wilder provides the audience with many illustrations. The major characters all love one another, and throughout the play the audience is given examples of different types of love. In Act One, family love and friendship predominate. Parents and children love each other, and neighbors love one another as well. In Act Two, romantic love blossoms into marriage. In Act Three, spiritual, selfless love, the love that expects nothing in return, is shown.

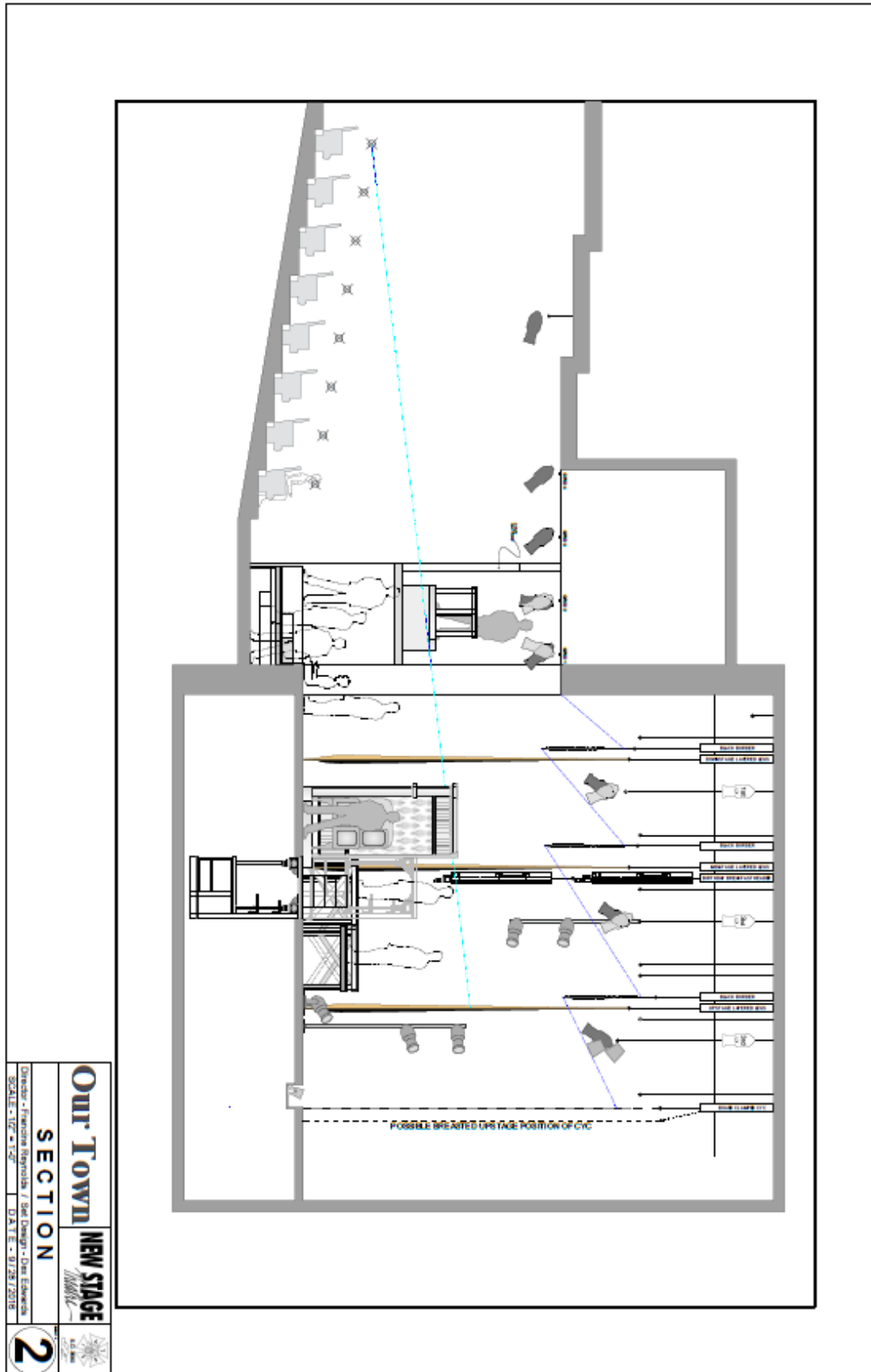
NEW HAMPSHIRE



SCENIC DESIGN



SCENIC DESIGN



PROMPTS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why do you think Thornton Wilder chose to present his play without scenery or props? What does this force the audience to do?
2. How does the world outside Grover's Corners affect its residents through the years? For instance, social and political changes in the world at the time that changed Grover's Corners residents' lifestyle.
3. In Mr. Webb's social and political report, he mentions that Grover's Corners is run by a Board of Selectmen. That all males vote at the age of 21 and women vote indirect. What does he mean by that and how is that different from today?
4. What references to industrialization and immigration does the Stage Manager make and how do these movements affect Grover's Corners?
5. Time is a very present theme throughout the play. Discuss some of the symbols that remind the audience of time in the text and in this production.
6. The Stage Manager thinks it would be a good idea to place a time capsule in the new bank under construction. In the capsule, he would place a copy of *The Sentinel*, *The New York Times*, the U.S. Constitution, the Bible, Shakespeare's works, and the text of the play he is participating in, *Our Town*. If your class were to make a time capsule, what would you put in it?
7. Organized baseball had its first World Series in 1903. Why did Wilder make this sport such a prominent theme in the play?



Audience Etiquette

For many of your students, a visit to New Stage Theatre to see *Our Town* may be their first theatre experience. It may be helpful to discuss with them the expected behavior of an audience. New Stage asks that prior to the performance, students are made aware of the following:

- Stay with your group at all times and pay attention to your teachers and chaperones.
- Listen to the New Stage staff member who will board your bus and escort your group to the lobby.
- Be sure to go to the bathroom before the performance begins. It is hard to leave once the performance begins.
- Make yourself comfortable while keeping movement to a minimum.
- Please do not stand up, walk around or put your feet on the seat in front of you.
- Absolutely no gum chewing, eating or drinking in the theatre.

Noise

Live theatre means live actors who can hear not only what is happening on the stage, but in the audience as well. While laughter and applause at appropriate time are appreciated by the actors, excessive noise and talking is not. Even whispering voices can be distracting to the actors and others in the audience.

- Do not talk during the performance.
- Cell phones are prohibited in the theatre. If you have one turn it off and put it away and do not bring it out during the performance.

Applause

Applause is used to acknowledge the performers and to voice appreciation or approval. Traditionally, applause comes before intermission and at the performance's conclusion. Dimming the lights on the stage and bringing up the house lights usually signals these intervals. A curtain call in which the cast returns to the stage for bows usually follows a performance.

Student Evaluation Form—*Our Town*

Name: _____

School: _____

What was your overall reaction to the play?

What was your reaction to the production values of the play (costumes, scenery, acting, etc.)?

What was your favorite part of the play?

Did you learn anything from this production? If so, what?

What other stories would you enjoy seeing staged by live actors?

Please list other comments and observations?

Please help New Stage by sharing your thoughts with us! Return this form to
Chris Roebuck/ Education Director/ New Stage Theatre/ 1100 Carlisle St/
Jackson, MS 39202 or fax to 601.948.3538

Teacher Evaluation Form—*Our Town*

Name: _____ School: _____
__What is your overall reaction to the production?

How do you feel about the production values of the performance (costumes, set, performers, etc?)

How did your students react to the production? (We would appreciate any written response from your students)

Please comment on the educational value of the program.

What is your overall reaction to the question and answer (talk-back) session?

How did you hear about the New Stage production of *Our Town*?

What other plays would you like for your students to see?

Please list other comments and observations.

Please help New Stage by sharing your thoughts with us! Return form to:
Chris Roebuck/ Education Director/ New Stage Theatre/ 1100 Carlisle St/
Jackson, MS 39202 or fax to 601.948.3538.