Buffalo Theatre Ensemble

Presents

*Time Stands Still*

“A quietly powerful drama [that] crackles with bright wit and intelligence.”
—The New York Times

**PREVIEW:**
THURSDAY, FEB. 1, 8P

**FEB. 2 - MAR. 4**
THURS. - SAT., 8P
SUN., 3P

*Time Stands Still*

Written by Donald Margulies
Directed by Connie Canaday Howard

By Donald Margulies
Characters
Sarah Goodwin
James Dodd
Richard Ehrlich
Amanda Bloom

Setting
Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

Time
2010

Synopsis
Pulled in its entirety from Dramatists Play Service, Inc.
https://www.dramatists.com/cgi-bin/db/single.asp?key=4263
TIME STANDS STILL focuses on Sarah and James, a photojournalist and a foreign correspondent trying to find happiness in a world that seems to have gone crazy. Theirs is a partnership based on telling the toughest stories, and together, making a difference. But when their own story takes a sudden turn, the adventurous couple confronts the prospect of a more conventional life.

Director’s Note
In a 2009 Playbill interview before Time Stands Still opened for the first time, the playwright Donald Margulies is quoted as saying “What I tried to do with this play… is capture a sense of the way we live now, to dramatize the things that thinking, feeling, moral people are thinking about and struggle with — the issues of how to be a citizen of the world, how to show compassion, how to be involved, how to be true to yourself and your immediate loved ones."

Donald Margulies is an important and gifted playwright, and Buffalo Theatre Ensemble has wanted to do one of his works for a long time. We’re ecstatic to bring this production to our audiences.

This piece, as most good scripts do, raises questions for us to ponder during the ‘life’ of the performance. Some questions are ‘where and how can an individual be involved in global issues,’ as well as ‘what is the appropriate ‘role’ of media (in this script, in terms of reporting international conflict).’

But the core of the script, to me, raises the question of ‘how do we decide how much we can flex and sacrifice for the one(s) we love, and what do we do when we are faced with not being able to flex further, because we’d be betraying ourselves, and the people we love, if we flexed more?’
Thank you for supporting Buffalo Theatre Ensemble and live theatre; we’re so happy to share Time Stands Still with you. CCH

Background on Donald Margulies

From Margulies’ Faculty Page at Yale:
URL: http://english.yale.edu/people/adjunct-professors-and-senior-lecturers-creative-writers/donald-margulies:

Donald Margulies received the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for Drama for DINNER WITH FRIENDS and was a finalist twice before for SIGHT UNSEEN and COLLECTED STORIES in 1992 and 1995, respectively. His many plays include THE COUNTRY HOUSE (Los Angeles Ovation Award Best Play), CONEY ISLAND CHRISTMAS (based on the short story, “The Loudest Voice,” by Grace Paley); TIME STANDS STILL (2010 Tony Award nomination for Best Play, Outer Critics Circle, and L.A. Ovation Awards); SHIPWRECKED! AN ENTERTAINMENT — THE AMAZING ADVENTURES OF LOUIS DE ROUGEMONT (AS TOLD BY HIMSELF) (Outer Critics Circle Award nomination); BROOKLYN BOY (American Theatre Critics’ Association New Play Award, Outer Critics Circle nomination); SIGHT UNSEEN (OBIE Award, Dramatists Guild/Hull-Warriner Award, Drama Desk nominee); COLLECTED STORIES (Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle/Ted Schmitt Awards, L.A. Ovation Award, Drama Desk nominee, Dramatists Guild/Hull-Warriner Award finalist, Drama Desk nominee); GOD OF VENGEANCE (based on the Yiddish classic by Sholem Asch); THE MODEL APARTMENT (OBIE Award, Drama-Logue Award, Dramatists Guild/Hull-Warriner Award finalist, Drama Desk nominee); THE LOMAN FAMILY PICNIC (Drama Desk nominee); WHAT’S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?; TWO DAYS; BROKEN SLEEP; THREE PLAYS; JULY 7, 1994; FOUND A PEANUT; PITCHING TO THE STAR; RESTING PLACE; GIFTED CHILDREN, ZIMMER and LUNA PARK. His plays have been commissioned by and performed on and off Broadway and at major theatres across the United States including Manhattan Theatre Club, South Coast Repertory, Geffen Playhouse, Actors’ Theatre of Louisville, New York Shakespeare Festival, Primary Stages, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Long Wharf Theatre, and in cities all over the world. His plays are published by Theatre Communications Group and licensed by Dramatists Play Service. DINNER WITH FRIENDS was made into an Emmy Award-nominated film for HBO, and COLLECTED STORIES was presented on PBS. He wrote the screenplay for THE END OF THE TOUR, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival. Mr. Margulies has received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, The New York Foundation for the Arts, and the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation. His many honors include the Sidney Kingsley Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Theatre by a playwright, an Award in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the National Foundation for Jewish Culture Award in Literary Arts, the PEN/Laura Pels International Foundation for Theatre Award for an American Playwright in Mid-Career, and the William Inge Award.
for Distinguished Achievement in the American Theatre. Mr. Margulies is an alumnus of New Dramatists and serves on the council of The Dramatists Guild of America.

Other Works:
- Long Lost
- Time Stands Still
- Shipwrecked! An Entertainment
- Brooklyn Boy
- Dinner with Friends
- Collected Stories
- Sight Unseen
- The Loman Family Picnic
- The Model Apartment
- What's Wrong With This Picture?
- Found a Peanut
- Gifted Children
- The Country House
- Coney Island Christmas
- The Amazing Adventures of Louis De Rougemont
- God of Vengeance
- Two Days
- Broken Sleep: Three Plays
- July 7, 1994
- Pitching to the Star
- Resting Place
- Zimmer
- Luna Park
- Misadventure: Monologues and Short Pieces
- The End of the Tour (Screenplay)
- Middlesex (HBO Miniseries)

Interview with Donald Margulies

(The interview was conducted when the play re-opened at the Cort Theatre, 2010)


How did the idea for "Time Stands Still" first originate?
I've been writing plays for over 30 years, yet I can never say with certainty where they come from. They usually arise out of disquiet, a sense of unease. Sometimes that unease is with myself, sometimes it's with the world. In the case of "Time Stands Still" I became stymied while writing a very different play, when I decided to start from scratch. I was riding Metro-North into New York from my home in New Haven and wrote "A new play" in my notebook. Then I wrote "A loft." Then I began to ask myself a series of questions: "Who lives in this loft?" "What if it's a photographer?" "What if it's a woman
photographer?" "What if she's a photojournalist?" "What if she covers conflict?" "What if she's been injured covering a war?" and so on. By the time I got to Grand Central, I had the seed for a new play.

You're writing about a conflict that continues, and the play considers questions we don't have answers to. Is it harder to write about contemporary events than the more distant past?
It's tricky to take on current, ongoing events in plays. I don't feel that I've done that in "Time Stands Still". There are references to things associated with the war in Iraq but it is not "an Iraq play". War is the backdrop for what is essentially a domestic love story - a relationship drama in which the characters happen to have high stakes professions. As a dramatist I'm always looking for ways to raise the stakes for my characters; in the case of "Time Stands Still" those stakes are particularly high. I'm more interested in exploring behaviour than in answering questions about contemporary foreign policy.

Your play considers two ethical struggles: how to make a relationship work in the face of betrayals, and how to understand the job of a journalist when met with atrocities. How do you see them interlocking?
"Time Stands Still" is very much about the choices and compromises we all make — in love, in work, and, particular to this play, in war. Ethical struggles touch on all aspects of life.

Laura Linney's character, Sarah, propels the play, and her relationship with James forms the wobbly emotional centre. How did you go about shading the character of Sarah?
I love smart, funny, complicated women in life and in art. When I create a character like Sarah, I get inside her head (as I do with all of my characters) and improvise. I had ready access to her caustic sense of humour. There's a lot of humour in "Time Stands Still" that leavens its intensity. Audiences laugh in recognition of truths large and small.

This is the third iteration of "Time Stands Still". What has changed about the show?
"Time Stands Still" was commissioned by the Geffen Playhouse in Los Angeles, where it premiered in 2009. It was produced on Broadway a year later by Manhattan Theatre Club and, on October 7th, it reopened for a commercial run at the Cort Theatre. Between LA and the initial run on Broadway, working with the same director, Daniel Sullivan, I made significant changes to the script, tightening it by 15 minutes and, in so doing, made for a more focused love story, which had been my intention all along. I learned a lot by seeing it performed numerous times in front of audiences in LA. Only one member of the original cast, Alicia Silverstone in the role of Mandy, came east with the play, and she was the one member of the New York ensemble who was unable to stay with it for the commercial move (Christina Ricci has replaced her). Plays need time to grow, time they rarely get, not only in their development but in performance. Actors need time to fully inhabit their roles but such explorations are often cut short by limited runs. The production history of "Time Stands Still" is highly unusual. Plays rarely "re-open" on Broadway, let alone after a five and a half month hiatus (in our case so that Laura Linney
could shoot her Showtime series "The Big C"). What's different about this latest iteration is that audiences are seeing lives onstage that are more lived-in than they were before. Most people, including critics, who have seen the play more than once tend to agree.

I found the character of Mandy to be very interesting. In the first act I was worried she would be a ditzy caricature of sorts — it seemed as though the audience was laughing only at her, and in the second act she became much stronger, and more nuanced. How did you envision this character working in the play?

I enjoy defying audiences' prejudices. Mandy surprises because people think they know exactly who she is from the moment she appears (Sarah and James certainly have her pegged). Gradually, they begin to appreciate that this guileless young woman is much more formidable than they had given her credit for. Mandy becomes the inadvertent catalyst for the subtle shifts that occur in the play. She is a completely different kind of woman than Sarah so she provides a delicious contrast.

Did you write this play for a target audience? This question popped into my head a few times in the show — there are many trappings of an upper-middle intellectual class.

I write plays I want to see. I write for my wife, my friends, but beyond them I have no particular target in mind. That theatre in America tends to attract upper-middle-class people with disposable income is a given; it's a self-selected group. All I can do as a living playwright is write what's on my upper-middle-class theatre-going mind and hope it speaks to others.

There is a scene where they go to the theatre and James drunkenly rails against the audience for lapping up the conflict in the Middle East to assuage their own guilt by feasting on a spectacle of horror. Is his opinion yours? How much do you see your own play as a more nuanced exploration of these issues?

Like James, I find "political" theatre suspect, although I don't share his rage. "Time Stands Still" is not a political play, or at least not intentionally, anyway. It questions, among many other things, how we represent and digest unimaginable events, whether in photography, in writing, or in popular culture. Given James's professional experiences (compounded by the trauma he suffers), it made perfect character-sense that he would have particularly strong feelings about a theatre piece he viewed as agit-prop.

Likewise, does a playwright have responsibility to bring awareness to suffering? Do you identify with Sarah, who seems to feel this compulsion?

A playwright's responsibility is to move people, to show them truths about their world and about themselves that they may not have considered in quite that way before, to amuse them, to make them think and, most important, to never, ever bore them. Being bored at the theatre is unforgivable. I identify with Sarah's passion for work. I don't really have hobbies, and I'm not very good at vacations.

Do you have a new play on the horizon?
I think my next play is going to be in a lighter mode; I'm still figuring it out. I may need another fateful trip on Metro-North to sort it out. In the meantime, I'm having a
wonderful time adapting Jeffrey Eugenides's marvelous novel "Middlesex" into a five-hour miniseries for HBO. Adaptation, particularly of material as rich as this novel, gives me a chance to use my skills in a different way. I like that.

**Things to think about prior to performance:**

- In life, as well as in art, a recurrent question is how environment and education/opportunity affect an individual. What are your thoughts?

- Another popular cultural question is how a person’s individual needs affects relationships. What are your thoughts?

- Donald Margulies, in reference to *Time Stands Still*, has said. "I'm just trying to deal with what's on a lot of people's minds at this stage of the history of the world. It's a play of ideas. Its setting is domestic, in a New York apartment, but it's really about things that the outside world brings into that apartment. It's about the information age as well — what do we do with what we learn about the world? The play asks a lot of these questions." What do you believe are the major issues on people’s minds today?

- The playwright has said that all of his works are about people finding themselves in a world that has turned upside-down, and trying to find a way to move forward. How is this seen in this script?

**Things to watch for in performance:**

- How do the design elements facilitate the action of the play (set, props, costumes, sound, lighting)?

- Note what the context and conflict are in each scene. Why are some moments staged with only James and Sarah, and others’ staged with three people or four people? What is Margulies attempting to say or show by writing the scenes in this way?

- Notice how often characters in this play tell stories, about their individual or shared pasts. Why and when do they do this? Is there a pattern?

- How do characters change throughout the show?

**Things to think about after the performance:**

- People often put what the people they love want before their own goals or desires. Both couples do this for one another in the script, and friends do it for one another. Identify moments when this happens (or when we learn of moments in the past in which it’s happened), and also identify moments when a character
can’t do this for another. Why do you think Margulies allows us to see and hear about these moments?

- We are only allowed to see four people in this play. Why do you think the playwright included these four people?

**Other Analysis “Tools”:**

- What happens in the very last moments of the play? Certainly, the last few minutes, but, more importantly, the last thirty seconds? In that time, what happens or is said, and what does that say about what the play is ‘about’? In a nutshell, how do the writers drive their point(s) home?

- And what is the significance of the title? Why did the writer decide that this was the most quintessential title for his work, do you think?

The running time for this production is approximately two hours and ten minutes, with one fifteen minute intermission.

Please join us for a **pre-show discussion Thursday, February 1st at 6:45 – 7:15 pm** preceding the preview performance. Note that pre-show discussions will include the director and designers, and will be a discussion of the approach to this production.

There will be a **post-show discussion** following the **Friday, February 9th** performance. The post-show will be with director, cast and crew, and will be fielding questions from the audience.

**College of DuPage Humanities Department Festival 2018**

**A Week Long Festival exploring The Noise of Culture**

**11-Noon Development of Character – How the Noise of Contemporary Culture is Depicted in Time Stands Still, (SSC 1200 Student Lounge)**

Professor of Theater Connie Canaday Howard will give background to David Margulies’, winner of the 2000 Pulitzer for Dinner With Friends, on his Tony nominated Time Stands Still. Professional actors Lisa Dawn and Brad Lawrence will present in workshop two scenes from the play, being produced by Buffalo Theatre Ensemble, February 2-March 4.

(Watch for an upcoming flyer for a week FULL of events hosted by the Humanities Department!)