

BOB & JEAN

A LOVE STORY



atc

ARIZONA
THEATRE
COMPANY

STUDY GUIDE



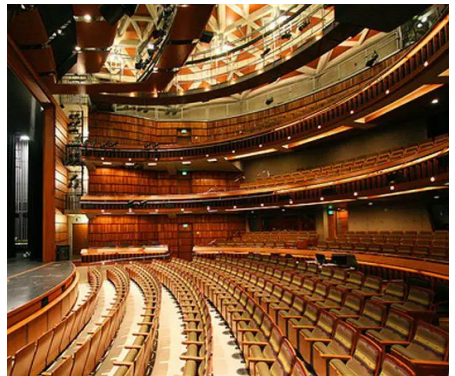
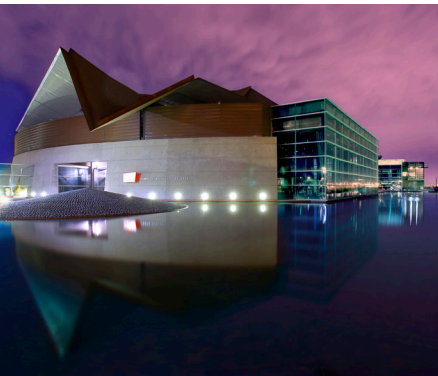
ABOUT ARIZONA THEATRE COMPANY

We are the official state theatre. With a production schedule of 5 plays a year – everything from comedies, to musicals, to dramas and thrillers, as well as holiday spectacles – we offer entertainment for a wide range of artistic tastes. Our leadership, Broadway director Matt August and Phoenix Business titan Geri Wright, bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the table. Employing a full-time staff of over 70 people and about the same number of artists brought in on

a show-to-show basis, we build all of our shows here in our own production facility consisting of full shops for scenery, costumes, props, and lighting. Our company performs in Tucson at the beautiful century-old Temple of Music and Art and in Tempe at the stunning state-of-the-art Tempe Center of the Arts. We are the only fully professional theatre company in Arizona and a member of the prestigious League of Resident Theatres (LORT).



The Temple of Music and Art, the home of ATC shows in downtown Tucson - 330 S. Scott Avenue, Tucson, AZ 85701



Tempe Center for the Arts, ATC's performance venue in Tempe - 700 W. Rio Salado Parkway, Tempe, AZ 85281

LOGLINE

Almost exclusively quoting from letters exchanged between the playwright's own parents, the play tells the story two young people, coming from different backgrounds, navigating the uncertainty of a rapidly changing world, and discovering each other through the vulnerability and eloquence of written words.

PLOT DESCRIPTION

The play tells the story of the Narrator as he goes through the real-life letters of his parents, Bob and Jean. He finds their correspondence stored in old boxes in the attic and discovers a passionate courtship between them that he never knew occurred. As he goes through the letters, he imagines their relationship's journey, from their contentious start as college students, to secretly meeting to see a play in New York, to falling helplessly in love with each other, only to be separated by their different engagements in World War 2. Bob joins the Navy and became a bomb disposal officer, and Jean is cast in a USO show that traveled to entertain troops who were stationed around the world. Will their love survive the war? Will THEY survive the war? How did they stay connected to each other and deepen their love, when the only way they had to communicate was through writing letters that may or may not reach the other? Bob and Jean were two kids falling in love while the world went mad around them, a situation we can still relate to today.

SETTING

In the imagination of the Narrator; Europe, the Pacific, the United States, and Alaska 1941-1944, a little in the late '80s/early '90s

CHARACTERS

Bob Schenkkan, Jean McKenzie, Narrator

AUTHOR INFORMATION



Robert Schenkkan is a Pulitzer Prize, Tony, WGA, and Humanitas Award winner and three-time Emmy nominated writer. He is the author of 20 plays. He is best known for *All The Way* (Tony, Drama Desk, Outer Critics, Steinberg, and Edward Kennedy Awards) and *The Kentucky Cycle* (Pulitzer Prize); He also wrote HBO's *THE PACIFIC* produced by Steven Spielberg and Tom Hanks, and *HACKSAW RIDGE* starring Andrew Garfield and Mel Gibson. He is a board member of the Orchard Project, a member of the Dramatists Guild National Council, National Theater Conference, and a New Dramatists Alumnus.

TEACHER RESOURCE

Plot – The story and action of the play: Bob and Jean meet, all in love, go to war, reunite, marry, live their lives and die. The Narrator, their son, tries to understand who they were and what they went through with only their letters and his memory to guide him.

Setting – When and where the play takes place: Europe, the Pacific, the United States, and Alaska 1941-1944, a little in the late '80s/early '90s.

Point of View – Where the play is coming from: The Narrator is trying to come to a better understanding of who his parents were. There is a bit of melancholy to the process, but there is joy as well. He takes a certain amount of pleasure in piecing their story and feelings together using only their letters. In the end, it seems that people are changed by their experiences, but some things are immutable.

Characters – The people (or animals, or fairies, or just about anything you care to mention) who populate the play and interact with one another or with us to tell the story:

Bob: A young man from a working-class New Jersey neighborhood. He put himself through college and enlisted in the Navy after Pearl Harbor was bombed. He has a deeply repressed family secret.

Jean: A young woman from a middle-class Palm Beach family. Too restless to settle for her comfortable life, she studied acting in college and aspired to be a successful actress in New York City.

The Narrator: Bob and Jean's fully grown son who is a professional playwright and writer. He reads their letters and remembers them after their deaths.

Resolution – How the story comes out—ideally, a satisfactory tying-up of all of the various strands of the plot: Bob and Jean reunite, marry, raise a family, die, and are buried together.

Dramatic Irony – When the audience knows more about what is going on than the characters. Can be used to create all kinds of effects, from suspense to comedy: We know from the beginning that Bob and Jean will ultimately get married and have at least one child. We also know how the war comes out. Bob and Jean, of course, don't know any of this.

Situational Irony – When the outcome of a situation is the opposite of or different from what is expected: Bob and Jean seem to be committed to each other early on, when Jean suddenly introduces Lt. Ware, who she finds quite charming. This reverses again, when spending time with Ware makes her miss Bob even more.

Imagery & Symbolism – Using what we see onstage (the imagery) to convey a deeper meaning beyond what we are seeing. An image symbolizes a larger idea: The letters themselves stand in for a lot of things—the parents themselves, their experiences and how they change and grow over the course of time.

TEACHER RESOURCE

Literal Language – Factual, non-poetic speech: For example, “The sun is a ball of flaming gasses suspended in space very far from us Jean: “Let’s slow down and do this right” “So little to do with, these kids. And they do so much. Oh, these boys, these boys” Jean generally tends to communicate in a more straightforward manner, though she is capable of a turn of phrase or a flight of poetic language.

Figurative Language – Poetic, symbolic, or otherwise fanciful speech: For example, “The sun is the eye of nature looking down upon the earth.” Bob: “We two have met in the profoundest regions of the spirit and there is now no turning back. Not an engagement ring but a flag planted. A line drawn.” Bob refers to the letters as “paper telephones”. Bob’s syntax is more complex and poetic throughout the play.

Themes – The central idea(s) or message(s) that a story is concerned with: Themes can be reinforced and clarified though all of the components that make up a play, from the writing to the costumes. “What man has looked into his father’s heart, or knows his brother?” “I must serve to deserve you.” The passage of time and our short allotment of it.

VOCABULARY

AWOL: Absent Without Leave. When a person in the military is not where they are assigned to be, but they don’t actually intend to desert.

Navy Service Pin: A pin sometimes worn by sailors, sailor retirees, veterans, family members, friends, and supporters of the Navy to show membership or dedication.

Tangible: Perceptible by touch

Gable: Clark Gable, an extremely popular leading man in movies with a career stretching from the 1920s to the 1960s

Pagan: a person holding religious beliefs other than those of the main or recognized religions.

Stoicism: an ancient Greek school of philosophy founded at Athens by Zeno of Citium. The school taught that virtue, the highest good, is based on knowledge; the wise live in harmony with the divine Reason (also identified with Fate and Providence) that governs nature, and are indifferent to the vicissitudes of fortune and to pleasure and pain.

Marcus Aurelius: Roman emperor from 161 to 180, and a stoic philosopher.

Holocaust: the attempted genocide of European Jews carried out by the Nazis during World War II

Medusa: a creature from Greek mythology, one of three referred to as the Gorgons. She had snakes for hair and could turn people to stone with her gaze.

VOCABULARY

Gilding the lily: Adding unnecessary ornamentation or decoration to something already beautiful or perfect.

Malaria: a mosquito-borne disease common in tropical and sub-tropical countries. People with malaria alternate between high fever and shivering chills.

Al Jolson: A popular American singer and actor very popular in the 1920s, but with a career that continued into the 40s.. The first openly Jewish man to become a popular entertainment star in America. The first star to entertain troops overseas during World War II.

Gashouse Gang: the nickname of the St. Louis Cardinals baseball team from the late 1920s to the early 1930s. The name came from the team's shabby, unwashed appearance and rough-and-tumble tactics, and went on to be used to describe any group of rowdy people.

Satchel Paige: An American baseball pitcher with a career spanning five decades. He went from the Negro Leagues to the Major Leagues, and inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

Roy Rogers: American singer, actor, television host, and rodeo performer. Nicknamed King of the Cowboys, he was one of the most famous and popular western stars of his era.

Cab Calloway: American jazz singer and bandleader. A fixture of the Cotton Club in Harlem, he led one of the most popular dance bands in the United States from the early 1930s to the late 1940s.

Perambulating: Strolling or walking around.

Crepes Suzette: A French dessert. Thin pancakes with a sweet sauce. Part of the presentation of the dish involves essentially setting it on fire tableside, a process called flambeeing

Atabrine: a drug widely used by the Allies during World War II to prevent and treat malaria.

USO: The United Service Organization. Formed in 1941, their aim was to boost the morale of American troops and their families by providing recreational activities and entertainment.

Ingrid Bergman: A Swedish actress. Often regarded as one of the most influential screen actors in cinematic history.

Errol Flynn: Australian/American actor known for playing romantic swashbuckler roles.

Jitterbug: A fast dance, popular in the 1940s, usually done to swing music.

WHO CREATES A THEATRE SHOW

Playwright: Writes the script.

Composer: Creates the music for the show.

Producer: The person or organization who raises the money for the show and hires all the people who will work on it, then oversees the all the financial and managerial aspects of the show.

Director: Creates and implements the artistic vision of the show. Hires and oversees the design team and the actors, managing their work and responsible for all elements of the storytelling.

Choreographer: Creates and teaches dance routines and movement sequences for musical numbers and dramatic scenes.

Music Director: Oversees the use of live music in a show. Helps the musicians and singers to play and sing their songs correctly.

Scenic Designer: Designs the physical scenery and structures that create the world of the play.

Costume Designer: Designs all the clothing the actors wear that reflects the characters' personalities, time periods, and settings of the production.

Lighting Designer: Designs the lighting for a production, enhancing mood, atmosphere, and visibility on stage. They create a plot and program the instruments used, timing, cross-fades, and cues that orchestrate each scene with light. They use a variety of specialized lighting instruments, including floodlights (which illuminate a wide area), spotlights (which produce a narrow, controllable light beam), PAR (Parabolic Aluminized Reflector) lights (used when a substantial amount of "flat" light is needed for a scene) and Fresnels (which create a wide, soft-edged beam and are commonly used for back, top, and side lighting), among many others.

Sound Designer: Creates the microphone plot, sound effects, and amplification systems for a production, ensuring that actors' voices and music are heard clearly.

Props Designer: Designs, sources, constructs, and maintains the various props (things the actors handle or use) needed for a production, ensuring they are safe and functional during performances.

Stage Manager: Manages and coordinates all aspects the physical productions. They are responsible for making sure all artistic needs are communicated to the production departments and producer during rehearsals and the running of the show during performances.

Deck Crew: A group of people who work on the physical aspects of a show, primarily moving furniture and scenery, operating a fly system (which moves pieces on and offstage from above), and keeping the stage clean and safe and ready for performance.

WHO CREATES A THEATRE SHOW

Light Crew: The people who handle the actual operation of the lights during a show. Board operators work the light board and make sure the light cues happen correctly. Spotlight operators aim and keep movable spotlights on the correct actors, and Master Electricians keep everything repaired and working correctly.

Marketing Staff: Thinks of ways to sell the show to the public. Create posters, ads, commercials, and social media content.

Box Office Staff: Creates every event with the date, time, tickets, prices, and any restrictions. Manages all ticket sales and will-call along with their staff.

House Manager: Manages and coordinates ushers and front-of-house staff, overseeing customer experience and ensuring safety and service, venue readiness, as well as handling illnesses and emergencies during performances.

Development Staff: Works to secure financing for plays, primarily through grants and donations.

Accountants: Track spending and profit for the show or the producing company. Help to create workable budgets for shows.

Actors: Bring characters to life, performing lines and movements as directed. They interpret and embody the story, choreography, and music according to the Director's vision.



Jake Bentley Young, Mary Mattison and Scott Wentworth in ATC's *Bob & Jean: A Love Story*. Photo Tim Fuller.

WHAT IS THEATRE?

- A **theater** is a room or a building ordinarily containing a stage and space for an audience to gather and view the action on the stage.
- **Theatre** refers to that action taking place on the stage—one of more performers presenting a story of one kind or another to an audience in hopes of eliciting a number of different possible reactions.
- These performers are aided by various artistic elements—costume, light, sound, sets, etc.—which support and clarify the themes or the mood of the story being told.

WHAT MAKES THEATRE SPECIAL?

- Theatre is a communal experience; the audience and the performers are all in the same room together.
- Theatre also exists in time differently than other forms of entertainment – once a play is over, you cannot watch the same performance again.

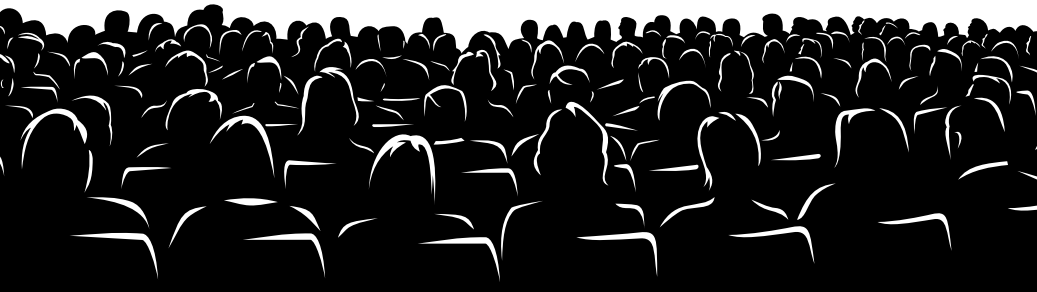


HOW TO WATCH THE SHOW

The basic rule is: Don't Disrupt the Show, and Don't Distract Fellow Audience Members. —don't talk, text, eat, or drink. Don't record or photograph the show. Use the restroom before the show and at intermission. Don't talk back to the actors. Stay seated during the performance. Use common sense and common courtesy.

There are a few things you want to be conscious of in the theatre as well – walk carefully, as the light can be low. Don't lean over the balcony rail or set anything on the railing. Use handrails where they are available. Listen to the ushers and your chaperones and be cooperative.

Appropriate laughter and applause at the act breaks are not only welcome, but absolutely desired.



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