

# The New York Times

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Mr. Robert Christopher, Administrator  
The Pulitzer Prize Board  
702 Journalism  
Columbia University  
New York, N. Y. 10027

Dear Bob:

What follows are the majority and minority reports of the 1983 Pulitzer Drama Jury. An addendum concerning the jury's efforts to consider theatrical offerings on a national basis is also attached. Should you need further information concerning either of the reports or the addendum, please do not hesitate to call.

## MAJORITY REPORT

A majority of the jury wishes to nominate a single play for the Pulitzer Prize in Drama: "Night, Mother" by Marsha Norman.

With deep compassion and without a trace of condescension, Marsha Norman dramatizes the bottomless alienation of two contemporary American women -- a widowed mother and a divorced daughter who live together in a comfortable house somewhere in the New South. When the daughter announces her intention to kill herself, both women find that even love and faith cannot overcome their terrifying recognition of the emptiness of their existence.

"Night, Mother" is not a message play about suicide. It is a clear-eyed, unsentimental portrayal of two mainstream Americans who are struggling to find meaning in lives defined by the normal but, in our time, increasingly shaky coordinates of work, family, community, commerce and mass culture. Norman doesn't preach or make moral judgments: she performs the harder task of allowing inarticulate characters to speak in their own voices and to arrive at their own, hard-won definition of human dignity.

"Night, Mother" exerts the inexorable force of classic tragedy. Its lucid, pared-down, eerily poetic evocation of the desolation of ordinary life is in the quintessentially American tradition of such artists as Edward Hopper and Sherwood Anderson.

"Night, Mother" received its premiere at the American Repertory Theater in Cambridge, Mass. on December 15, 1982 and is scheduled to open at the John Golden Theater in New York later this month.

-- Frank Rich, Jack Kroll

MINORITY REPORT

A minority of the jury wishes to nominate a single play for the Pulitzer Prize in Drama: "True West" by Sam Shepard.

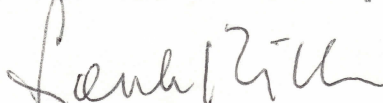
"True West" is Sam Shepard's funny and astonishing drama of two brothers locked in a revealing struggle for power and identity during an unscheduled reunion in their mother's Southern California kitchen. It is a play of inventive language, haunting imagery and sardonic humor. Much of the humor comes from the inspired mischief of the older brother, Lee, a mangy but cunning outlaw who has come in from the desert to appropriate his younger brother Austin's budding success as a screenwriter. Lee tries to steal his brother's career just as routinely as he steals household appliances. What ensues is in part the eruption of a sibling rivalry, but the battle grows larger. It becomes a contest between two opposing value systems, between Austin's shallow Hollywood respectability and Lee's unlettered anarchy.

Before the fight is through, a bizarre and fascinating reversal of roles takes place, ending with each brother grasping at the other's shadow. On the trail of another dark family saga, Shepard has located a stunning parable. "True West" is, in a sense, a picture of what's left of the American West: a screenwriter and a hoodlum trying desperately to exchange identities as each one seeks an authenticity that has eluded him. It is one of Shepard's most social plays, as well as one of his most volatile. A comedy-drama of considerable resonance, it is noteworthy in particular for its introduction of a highly original character (Lee) who looms as an archetype of a new class of modern barbarian.

"True West" received its premiere at the Magic Theater in San Francisco on July 10, 1980. It is currently running at the Cherry Lane Theater in New York, in a production that originated at the Steppenwolf Theater in Chicago.

-- Sean Mitchell

For the Drama Jury,



Frank Rich  
Chairman