

# DAILY NEWS

## A marriage of humor & acid satire

**S**till hard at work at 80, Edward Albee has given his early works "The American Dream" and "The Sandbox" fresh, shiny coats of paint at the Cherry Lane Theatre, where the one-acts opened last night.

Nearly 50 years after their debuts, these satires on the storybook family deliver swift comic kicks and a piercing sting. They also contain the absurdism, acrobatic language and provocative thoughts on marriage and children that define Albee's long, illustrious career.

In the hour-long "Dream," written in 1960, Mommy (Judith Ivey) and Daddy (George Bartenieff) are an upscale couple who seem to have it all. They've got snazzy digs done up in timeless red, white and blue decor. But as Albee observes, things aren't usually as they appear.

Mommy and her henpecked Daddy indeed have issues. The toilet drips, their guests are very late, and grumpy live-in Grandma (Lois Markle) is driving them nuts — partly because of her keen observations about getting old, which they don't want to hear.

Albee's story begins full of fun and mischief, but the tone changes with the arrival of an old acquaintance, Mrs. Barker (Kathleen Butler), and a young man (Harmon Walsh). We soon learn some creepy details about Mommy and Daddy, including one about a son who is no longer on the scene.

The young man, who Grandma calls the American dream, isn't all he's cracked up to be. He's GQ gorgeous,



**From l., Kathleen Butler, Judith Ivey, Harmon Walsh and George Bartenieff**

sure, but he's an empty shell. For the right price, he'll do anything — and a turned-on Mommy seems all too eager to test that promise.

The family saga continues in "The Sandbox," which was written a year before "Dream." In this 15-minute work, Mommy and Daddy deposit Grandma at the beach to take her last breaths. They sit idly by as she buries herself with help

from a hunky beach boy (Jesse Williams).

The production benefits from snappy design, Albee's smart direction, and solid acting, though Markle, a last-minute replacement, seems too hearty for her role. On the other hand, Ivey is an ideal Mommy. Her acidly funny performance is enough for me to urge seeing this double bill double-quick.

[jdziemianowicz@nydailynews.com](mailto:jdziemianowicz@nydailynews.com)

**'Edward Albee's  
The American Dream  
and The Sandbox'**

Through April 20

Cherry Lane Theatre, 38 Commerce St.  
Tickets: \$60; (212) 239-6200