

Art more relevant every year

"There's a darkness in this town that's got us too/But they can't touch me now/And you can't touch me now/They ain't gonna do to me/ What I watched them do to you" - Bruce Springsteen.

The corrupt core of the American dream was laid bare last night in an enthralling production of Arthur Miller's classic "Death of a Salesman."

Death is a word too precise and final to describe the wasting process at work in this play, surely one of Stoke-on-Trent's Rep 's finest presentations. Witness Willy Loman, a salesman imbued with the "can do" mentality in a mythical world of boundless frontiers, where the only limitations are those of individual capability. But ground between the inexorable millstones of an unfeeling society, with memories of lost opportunity and his own worm of guilt polluting his personal dream, Willy — passionately played by Richard Masters - starts to come apart.

Would it were a clean end, but Willy, without real hope or idealism left, grasps for straws of his own creation. These he thrusts upon his devoted but bewildered wife, movingly portrayed by Joan Bennett, and his two sons. One is a rat-race competitor with the sensitivity of an android, Kelvin Hall, and the other is the disillusioned Biff, his conflicts and loyalties convincingly brought out by Brian Hadley - who also designed the glowering and claustrophobic set. Like a crazed rollercoaster the play tracks the self-induced highs and the sickening plunges to despair of Willy Loman.

Excellent and committed performances within a tremendous play - more relevant each year —

"Death of a Salesman" is not to be missed. It runs until May 29 at the College Road theatre at Stoke.