



Cast	
Leroy Hamilton	Chris Firth
Patricia Hamilton	Ruth Herd
Karen Frick	Anne Houston
John Frick	John Fenner
Patient	Jane Flavelle
Crew	
Director	Richard Warren
Production Assistant	Amanpreet Ahluwalia
Movement	Debbie Relton-Elves
Stage Manager	Karl Stafford
Set team	Alan Fenn/Sam Pylyp
Props/Set dressing	Les Rahilly
Lighting/Sound	Karl Stafford
Wardrobe	Maureen Liggins
Music editor/composer	Joe Bennett
Artwork Design	Melissa Harvey/Chris Townsend
Technical Adviser	Jane Flavelle

One has five children but not the material benefits that she feels entitled to. The other has no children but what Harry Enfield used to call "loadsamoney". Both are profoundly depressed. So much so that Patricia Hamilton and Karen Frick are sitting side by side in a New England psychiatric hospital. Welcome to Miller-land, otherwise known as the American Nightmare.

Like so many literary giants from "across the pond", Arthur Miller has revelled in exploring the American Dream and where it all went wrong. Here, in a play penned in his 78th year, he appears to be exploring the cost of trying to live up to the dreams, or rather the expectations, of those closest to you.

Karen's husband is easily identifiable as the cause of her problems. John Frick is a successful businessman, proud of his "conservative" views. Within a few minutes of meeting Patricia's husband in the waiting room, he's confiding at full volume that there's an awful lotta coloureds in this place.

Leroy Hamilton is an altogether more complex character. He's a carpenter by trade. No ordinary carpenter, mind you. This is a craftsman capable of complex work. What he finds difficult is asking the right price for it, much to his wife's frustration. He's well dressed, however, flicking through Time Magazine when we first catch sight of him. Turns out to be directly descended from Alexander Hamilton, one of the founding fathers of America, if you please.

Leroy is the last Yankee. He loves New England. His Swedish wife does not. She's more concerned about the rust on the family's ageing Chevrolet than the colour of autumnal leaves in "the Fall".

Patty, as he calls her, is played with suitably twitchy edginess by Ruth Herd. Chris Firth cleverly captures the complexity of Leroy, easy-going and understated one minute, deeply frustrated the next. John Fenner also gets right into the soul of Frick as he struggles to restrain his voluble bombast, his frustration and sheer impatience with his wife's condition.

As for Anne Houston, she's simply superb as Karen Frick. The scene at the end where she tries to tap dance like Ginger Rogers is almost unbearably poignant. Her costume glitters with all the false promise of an escapist movie from 1930s Hollywood as her eyes gleam with tears. This is a short, studio-style production with little plot but plenty of symbolism and substance. The only person left on stage at the end is a sedated patient who has managed to sleep through all the shouting. She's not having a nightmare, one assumes, as the light slowly fades on the dark, stark set and, by implication, the American Dream.

Chris Arnot.



