

THE

RAINMAKER

by N. Richard Nash



PLAYGUIDE

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THE RAINMAKER Playguide

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Note from the Producing Artistic Director | 1 |
| Forward from the Playwright | 1 |
| About the Playwright | 2 |
| Interview with Linsey Page Morton | 3 |
| Timeline of 1930s in America | 4 |
| “The Greatest Rainmaker” by Martin Schwartz | 5 |
| “You Going to Be an Old Maid?” by Jean Potuchek | 7 |
| “Drought” by James T. McKay | 10 |
| Cast of <i>The Rainmaker</i> | 11 |



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Note from the Producing Artistic Director

Welcome to American Blues Theater's 30th Anniversary season "Seeing is Believing". Working in Ensemble theater demands collaboration, self-awareness, and an unwavering belief that the collective is stronger than its individual members. It also requires unconditional love and trust from both its artists and supporters.

A revival of *The Rainmaker* is the perfect way to celebrate our incredible existence. During an interview, playwright N. Richard Nash said, "There is beauty in reality, beauty in the balances of nature, no matter how brutal the imbalances; beauty in the togetherness of people, which sadly, must sometimes be measured by loneliness; beauty in seeing the fact and naming it the fact."

During the past three decades, we experienced fruitful harvests and debilitating droughts. At times we struggled to pay our bills. We've been nomads and held homesteads. We planted roots in five different venues around Chicago and returned to our original location. Our first production in 1985 was housed in this very venue. We dream of more than we have; we live on less. We've redefined our identity, and most importantly – we renewed our faith in each other. This is the essential Chicago storefront theater credo.

Let *The Rainmaker* inspire you to find beauty in your life; your family. Name both the abundant and difficult times as facts. Allow yourself to dream as a child and yet live realistically as an adult.

As Lizzie and Starbuck teach us - "It's no good to live in your dreams. It's no good to live outside [your dreams] either. Somewhere between the two."

- Gwendolyn Whiteside



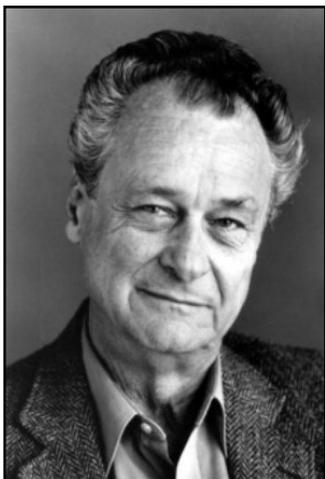
Forward by N. Richard Nash

From the Samuel French print edition of *The Rainmaker* (1954)

When drought hits the lush grasslands of the richly fertile west, they are green no more and the dying is a palpable thing. What happens to the verdure and vegetation, to cattle and livestock can be read in the coldly statistical little bulletins freely issued by the Department of Agriculture. What happens to the people of the west—beyond the calculable and terrible phenomena of sudden poverty and loss of substance—is an incalculable and febrile kind of desperations. Rain will never come again; the earth will be sere forever; and in all of heaven, there is no promise of a remedy.

Yet, men of wisdom like H.C. Curry know to be patient with heaven. They know that the earth will not thirst forever; they know that one day they will again awaken to a green morning. Young people like Lizzie, his daughter, cannot know this as certainly as he does. Bright as she is, she cannot know. She can only count the shooting stars, and hope.

About the Playwright



N. RICHARD NASH (1913-2000) was born in Philadelphia. As a teenager he was a fairly successful boxer until he dropped his gloves for good to attend the University of Pennsylvania, majoring in English and Philosophy. His first published works of play-writing came in the 1940s, leading to a 1946 Broadway production of *Second Best Bed*, a Shakespearean-

themed comedy inspired by the Elizabethan playwright's curious choice of bequest to his wife, Anne Hathaway, in his will. The success of this play launched Nash into a full-fledged writing career which would ultimately include screenplays, novels, and more plays.

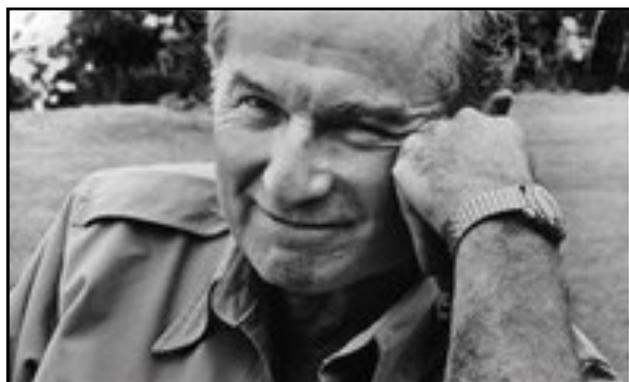
The play for which Nash is best known for is *The Rainmaker*, originally written in 1953 as a one-act television production. The role of Lizzie, played the following year on Broadway by Geraldine Page, was inspired by Nash's older sister, Mae, whom he credited with helping to overcome a problem with stuttering by being a tirelessly patient listener.

The story was quickly adapted for the movies starring Burt Lancaster and Katharine Hepburn (in an Academy Award-nominated performance) and into a popular musical, *110 in the Shade* (music by Harvey Schmidt and book by Tom Jones).



a scene from "The Rainmaker" film (1956)

The original Broadway production ran for 125 performances and was revived on Broadway in 1999 starring Jayne Atkinson and Woody Harrelson.



Mr. Nash at home.



Mr. Nash at Opening of Broadway revival (1999)

"Faith is...knowing with your heart."

-N. Richard Nash

Interview with Linsey Page Morton

LINSEY PAGE MORTON (*Lizzie*) is happy to make her American Blues Theater debut. Other Chicago credits include: Northlight Theatre's production of *Lost in Yonkers* (Jeff Award nomination - Actress in a Principle Role); *The Iceman Cometh* and *Joan Dark* presented at the Linz '09 Festival in Austria (Goodman Theatre); *The Dresser* (Steppenwolf Theatre); *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Another Part of the Forest*, *Bus Stop* (Jeff Award nomination- Actress in a Supporting Role), and *Spite for Spite* (Writers Theatre); *The Crucible* and the world premiere of *Hannah and Martin* (Timeline Theatre). Regionally, she's appeared in *Enchanted April* (Milwaukee Rep) and *Our Town* directed by David Cromer (Kansas City Rep). Television and film credits: *Chicago Fire*, *Joshua*, *The Quiet* and *Freudian Slip*. Linsey is represented by Grossman and Jack Talent and is a proud member of Actor's Equity and SAG/AFTRA.



What draws you to this play and to the character Lizzie Curry?

I am very excited to be a part of this production. This was my favorite play in high school. For class we were required to keep a book of monologues to be used for auditions, character work etc. Every one of Lizzie's monologues went in that book. The Curry family dynamic is beautiful - how clearly they love and protect one another. Since high school, and more so now, I appreciate Lizzie's strengths, her honesty, and belief in herself even in the midst of heavy external pressures and internal questions. She refuses to compromise. She wants to be loved for who she is. Ultimately this is a story of self-actualization and the dreamers of dreams large and small, who refuse not to let them go. I learned from Lizzie that people who remain true to themselves can find freedom and sometimes your dreams come to you.

In what ways do you think this play is still relevant to contemporary audiences?

Obviously the social context has changed since this work was written but the themes Nash presents are timeless. Many women can connect to Lizzie's strength and will, demanding she be able to live her life on her terms. She sends a clear message to never to let pride stand in the way of your dreams and not to give up on them. The characters remind us that we need to take risks, get out of our comfort zones in order to create

change and grow. We are asked to consider pride and how it affects the decisions we make, even whether it is a mask for insecurity and self-doubt. H.C states in Act II, regarding Starbuck "I gotta take a chance on him - the whole chance - without fear of getting hurt, or getting cheated, or getting laughed at, as far as he'll take me."

Do you think Lizzie is a feminist?

Yes, I think Lizzie is a feminist. She is a woman of great fortitude and determination. She wants it all. She works hard and dreams of having a home with a family of her own, and most importantly to meet her equal in a partner, someone who can love her in a way she has come to expect. She declares in Act I, "I don't *want* a man to keel over! I want him to stand up straight - and I want to stand up straight to him!" She won't settle for anything less than equality in love or her life. Since first reading this play, I have wanted the same things from love that Lizzie struggles for - someone to love me completely, without tricks or games, as an equal.

Last question! If you were in Lizzie's shoes, would you fall for Starbuck's charms? Or would you be more drawn to File's groundedness?

Oooh that's a tough one! I don't want my answer to reveal any outcomes in the story. Hmm... enjoy the show and see who Lizzie chooses. I think she makes the choice I would make. Now, who would you choose?

Timeline of the 1930s in America

OCTOBER 24, 1929

The stock market crashes when Wall Street investors take their money out of the market.

MARCH 1930

Unemployment rises in the United States. Over 3.2 million Americans are unemployed, more than twice as many than in October 1929.

MAY 1, 1931

The Empire State Building opens.

MAY 22, 1932

Amelia Earhart is the first woman to fly alone over the Atlantic Ocean.

NOVEMBER 1932

Franklin Roosevelt is elected President over Herbert Hoover.

MARCH 9, 1933

The Emergency Banking Act is passed.

DECEMBER 5, 1933

Prohibition ends with the 21st Amendment.

APRIL 1935

The Works Progress Administration is created.

APRIL 14, 1935

"Black Sunday" causes 20 massive dust storms.

SEPTEMBER 30, 1935

President Roosevelt dedicates Hoover Dam.

AUGUST 3, 1936

Jesse Owens wins the first of four Olympic gold medals.

MAY 6, 1937

The Hindenburg catches on fire and crashes in New Jersey.

MAY 27, 1937

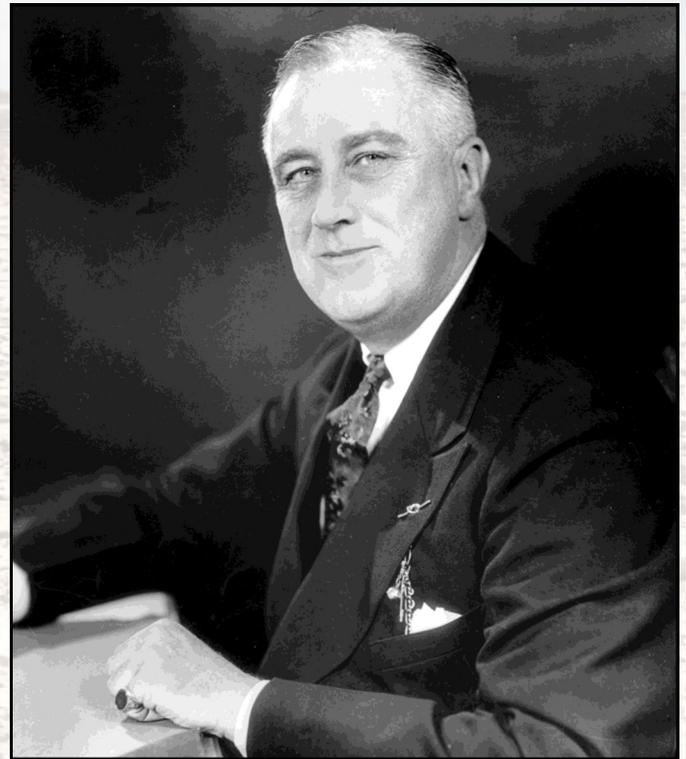
The Golden Gate Bridge opens in San Francisco.

APRIL 14, 1939

The Grapes of Wrath is published.

SEPTEMBER 1, 1939

World War II begins.



President Franklin D. Roosevelt



Unemployed lumber worker goes with his wife to the bean harvest. Note social security number tattooed on his arm.

Oregon, 1939 by Dorothea Lange

The Greatest Rainmaker

From “A Short History of Pluviculture in the American West” by Martin Schwartz

As in so many genres, the rainmaker who enjoyed the widest acclaim and power—the man who epitomized his medium—was the last of his kind. Though the journalist and historian Carey McWilliams calls Charles Mallory Hatfield—or Hatfield the Rainmaker, as he was popularly known, or simply the Great Rainmaker—“the first popular folk-hero” of Southern California, he lacked the unpolished braggadocio of the midwestern huckster of the 1890s: Hatfield was a professional. This “moisture accelerator,” whom nearly every Southern California municipality contracted between 1903 and 1928 “for fees ranging from \$50 to \$10,000,” was described in the San Diego Union as “a quietly dressed, slender man of middle height with square shoulders, who is crowding forty.” Well versed in the scientific literature, Hatfield peppered his sentences with scientific-sounding phrases, called himself a specialist in “meteorology, the science of the atmosphere,” and referred to his métier as creating “a chemical attraction or an affinity working in harmony with natural forces that make rain.”

While his language and appearance may have been more refined than those of his midwestern brethren, his means were similar. When contracted by a community, he would typically have several towers (or “evaporating tanks”) built, generally between 12 and 20 feet high, topped with platforms. These tanks gave the distinct impression that the rainmaker was hard at work, with the added benefit of ensuring that the public could have no clear idea of what exactly he was doing. On each platform, there were, “galvanized iron pans about 3 feet square and 9 inches deep containing Hatfield’s chemicals”—or, as Hatfield himself put it, “certain chemicals the character of which must necessarily remain secret.” Hatfield’s true methods, however, were the very soul of western rainmaking; as McWilliams writes:



Charles Hatfield in 1916

“Hatfield was a close student of weather charts. His usual technique was to wait until the dry season was far advanced and the people were beginning to despair of rain. Then he would appear upon the scene, sometimes as late as mid January, and obtain a contract to produce rain within, say, thirty or sixty days. And of course he never missed.”

Dependent as rainmaking is on the vagaries of climate, most men who set themselves up as rainmakers were able to celebrate a triumph or two. Unlike most rainmakers, however, Hatfield almost never failed, and his successes were fantastic. “One of his last great feats,” reports McWilliams, “was to produce forty inches of rainfall in three hours on the Mojave Desert near Randsburg.” Impressive though his desert deluge may seem, it pales in comparison to his San Diego flood of 1916. *continued on p 6*

continued from p 5, "The Greatest Rainmaker"

"The most potent test I ever made," Hatfield called the flood, and the damages it incurred ran into the tens of millions of dollars. The San Diego Union of December 14, 1915, records: "The city council signed a contract yesterday with Hatfield, the Moisture Accelerator. He has promised to fill the Morena reservoir to overflowing by December 20, 1916, for \$10,000." Hatfield immediately began setting up his "evaporator tanks" at Morena. By January 20, writes Tuthill, "Black headlines screamed, 'San Diego in State of Flood.'" The next day, Hatfield was reputed to have called City Hall, saying, "I just wanted to tell you that it is only sprinkling now. So far we have encountered only a couple of showers. Within the next few days I expect to make it really rain."

The torrents continued, with brief respites, for weeks, breaking the Otay dam, leaving thousands homeless, many dead, and San Diego entirely cut off from the rest of the country. This was rainmaking on a grand scale, and Hatfield became an instant national celebrity. When he showed up at City Hall, demanding his \$10,000, the City Attorney told him that he would give him credit for the water in the reservoir only if he accepted the \$6,000,000 in suits filed against the city for flood damages. Practical rainmaker that he was, Hatfield declined.

Contracts in California stopped coming in once the Boulder Dam Act was passed in 1928, guaranteeing a secure source of water, and since the Great Rainmaker's retreat into private life, large-scale weather modification has been undertaken almost entirely through government offices.

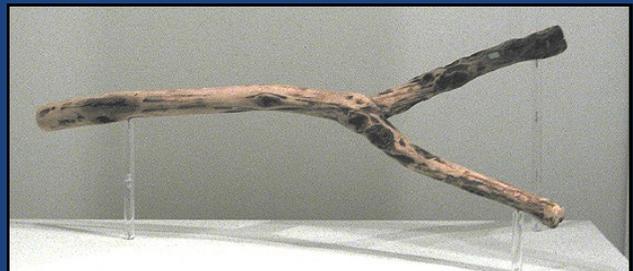
While rainmaking might not have been the model of contemporary scientific thought for Nash and his audience, they would have had several powerful ideas to draw from on the subject. The archetypes of the government scientist, the itinerant Plains rainmaker, and the modern, miracle-working "moisture accelerator" would all have enriched the original audience's appreciation of *The Rainmaker*.

DOWSING

Ancient technologies often involved natural, or perceived, forces that were little understood. Modern technologies are ever grappling with a limited understanding of physical properties and forces. Where a society has need for a solution, it often turns to the supernatural when it can not find it in the natural world.

Dowsing is a form of metal, water, or guilt detection that has roots traceable to nearly every continent. The stereotypical Western form of the divining rod is the forked stick, which is used by a "sensitive" operator to find underground water sources. Individuals and governments practice this method even today.

By combining the traditional device and modern electronic hygrometry, here is constructed a divining rod that embodies both supernatural and equivalent scientific technologies.



from marksoderstrom.com

Acrylic, thermo-hygrometer, *Umbellularia californica*, wood putty.



a selection from

You Going to Be an Old Maid?

Single Women, Stigma, & Gender Inequality

by Jean Potuchek



Americans simply take it for granted that they will be asked to label both gender and marital status on all kinds of “official” forms – from applications (for jobs, credit cards, organizational membership) to medical records to opinion surveys. In discussing singleness as a legal category, Karin (divorced, white, 47) noted that “you’ve got a label on you.” Sharon (never married, white, 37) pointed to the negative connotations of the label when I asked her if “single” was a word she would use to describe herself, replying that “...I would if I didn't want to avoid defining myself that way.”

The women in this study understood that labeling led to experiences of stigma because of the negative stereotypes associated with labels. These women tended to dismiss the stereotypes of the old maid or the spinster as old-fashioned and not to be taken seriously. Karin described the old stereotype this way: “I think in the '50s and '60s, immediately a label was put on. You were a spinster; ... you were not someone of very high character; or you were just sort of ..., ‘poor thing,’ living at home with mother still – God.” Anna (never married, white, 29) attributed her relatives’ use of the old maid stereotype to the very traditional nature of her large Italian-American family. But this did not mean that the negative images that made up these stereotypes have disappeared.

On the contrary, images of single women as sad, lonely, unfulfilled and socially isolated came up repeatedly in the interviews. Nor were these the only negative stereotypes attached to singleness. Several women mentioned the difficulties of being seen by others as unattractive, undesirable, or rejected as marriage partners. For divorced women, negative stereotypes included a sense of having failed at the one most important “womanly” accomplishment. Emily (divorced, white, 68) explained: “the messages that I pick up are, that it's a bad thing to be, it's not a good thing to do, ... it's a failure, it's immoral, and so forth.”



a scene from “Fatal Attraction” (1987)

Some women reported stereotypes that attributed bad behavior or negative intent to them. The most common of these seemed to be the stereotype of the woman who is out to steal another woman’s man. Sharon described the stereotype in popular films like “Fatal Attraction” and “The Hand that Rocks the Cradle” of “the single woman [who] kind of, you know, wreaks havoc on this wonderful family life.” Divorced women were particularly likely to report personal experience with this stereotype, and their reports of such incidents were usually accompanied by a sense of amazement. As Bonnie (divorced, white, 57) put it, “God, how could I be a threat to any woman who's married?”

continued on p 8



Another stereotype that attributed negative action or intent to single women saw them as actively avoiding the responsibilities of marriage and family life in order to pursue their own selfish interests. One version of this stereotype is that of the driven career woman who

has subordinated all other concerns to her own ambitions, or as Diane (never married, white), put it: "the woman ... you know, who's climbed the corporate ladder and spent all that time on her career and now is saying, 'Oh my God, I forgot to have children' kind of thing." Another version sees single women as avoiding personal responsibilities of all kinds. Karin expressed the frustration of many women: "They're under some assumption that ... life is carefree; there are no responsibilities, because you don't have a husband and children, regardless of the kind of job you have... And I have literally had to sit down and say to my family and friends... 'Hey, you're wrong.' ... You know, maybe there are some people out there they do whatever they damn well please. I don't live like that.."

In Link and Phelan's (2001) analysis of stigma processes, labeling and stereotyping provide a platform for the process of separating "us" (in Goffman's terminology, "normals") from "them" (the stigmatized). Women in this study focused primarily on the separation of the coupled from the uncoupled, commenting on the way that recreation and socializing are organized around couples. The result of this "couples culture" was that single women sometimes felt awkward if they engaged in solitary recreational activities or like an unwanted appendage if they joined in these activities with couples. As Deborah (never married, African-American, 40) noted: "I think that socially you can often be at a disadvantage because of the coupling of society and the uncomfortable third wheel that you make if you

are friends with couples." A number of women reported being excluded from couples-based social activities, such as Cheryl (divorced, African-American, 40) who observed: "I have friends who are married and I notice that ... maybe I'm not included, because I have very good friends that will say, even in common, you know, "We're having a dinner and a lot of good friends who are couples are coming over."

In these reports, separation always involved Link and Phelan's fourth stigma process, status loss and discrimination, especially status loss. Because marriage is a rite of passage into adulthood, one way that never-married women experienced status loss was in being treated as though they were not fully adult. Anna noted that her family simply assumed that she would remain living at home with her parents until she married. Christina, a never-married single mother (white, 30) who had established her own household experienced her not-yet-adult status in a different way: "[My family] just ignore that I'm in a relationship, and a very serious one. And so they continue to try to fix me up with people, and that really bothers me. And I feel like I'm still treated as though I'm 19 or 20, a young single girl. And I'm not; I'm a mother and a strong woman, and I don't want that." And Janet, a never-married professional woman (white, 37) told the story of the time that her sister and brother-in-law invited her to go with them on a vacation to a ski resort – and then assumed that she would share a room with the married couple's two young children!

continued on p 9



Katherine Hepburn in "The Rainmaker" film (1956)

For many women, the experience of status loss occurred when others felt sorry for them because they were not married. These reports of being treated as objects of pity were most often accompanied by feelings of humiliation, annoyance, irritation, or anger.

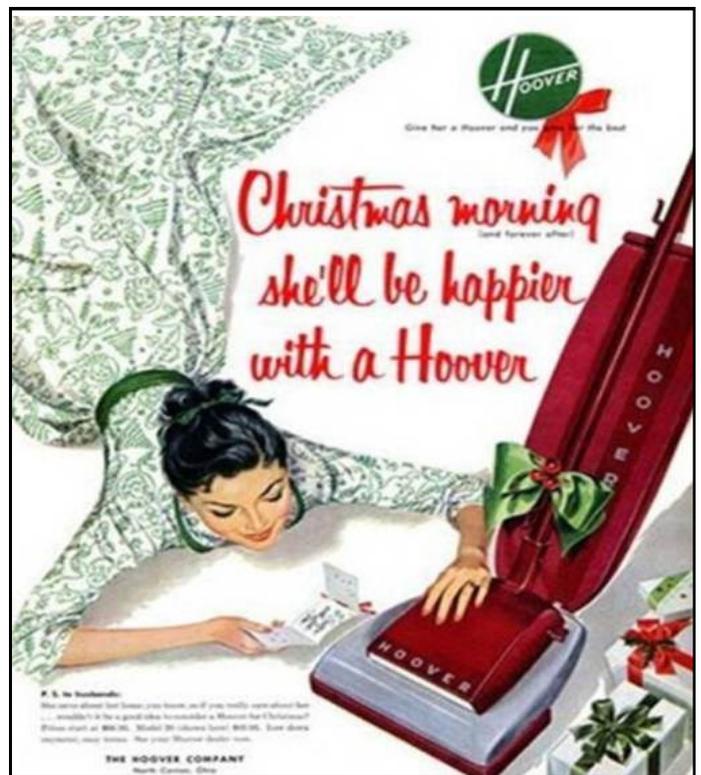
Women who had previously been married were particularly likely to be conscious of status loss that accompanied the end of their marriages. Some gave specific accounts of "demotions" in social relations as a result of their single status. Celine (divorced, white 53) reflected: "You know, I'm just trying to find words. We live in a world for couples. All of a sudden, I was not invited to their social functions. I was kitchen company; I could come for tea ... and the husband would just breeze through."

Reports of being treated as objects of pity were most often accompanied by feelings of humiliation, annoyance, irritation, or anger.

The women in this sample varied in the extent to which they experienced the stigma processes of labeling, stereotyping, separation, and status loss. This is not surprising; if stigma is a mechanism of social control, we should expect those whose singleness poses a greater threat to the gender order to report stronger experiences of stigma. Thus, the youngest women in the sample were least likely to experience stigma. These women generally regarded themselves and were regarded by others as "not married yet"; their singleness was a temporary and normal part of the life course. Shanna (never married, white, 25), the youngest woman in the sample, talked about stigma in hypothetical terms, as something she might experience in the future if she didn't marry.

Older women often looked back at their twenties as a time when they hadn't really defined themselves as single, but as in a transitional pre-marriage state. At the other end of the age spectrum, elderly widows also experienced relatively little stigma. Their single status, too, is normalized as part of the life course and thus is not a threat to the heterosexual gender order; after all, these are women who have actually lived out the ideal of remaining married "until death do us part".

Many of them did not label themselves as "single" reserving that label for never-married women, whose experience they contrasted with their own. When I asked Ella (widowed, white, 81) about her associations with the phrase "single woman" she responded, "It still makes me a little sorry. It shouldn't, but I think that's simply a mark of my age group. I admire single women. Now my next door neighbor, I think she's splendid, but I feel she has missed out and somehow has something left out of her life."



Drought

by James T. McKay (1883)

The old cry beats upon the out-stretched heaven:

"How long, O Lord, how long wilt Thou deny?
In wearied hearts fear works its sickly leaven,
As one by one the water-springs go dry."

The throats that call on Thee are choked with trouble,
And faint for impotence to reach Thine ear;
The cattle gnaw fog-blackened dust and stubble;
The corn untimely crackles and grows sere.

"Hast Thou forgotten, Majesty Unbounded,
Thy thirsting creatures in Thy ashen land,—
With clouds and darkness all Thy ways surrounded.
And ocean's waters in Thy hollowed hand?"

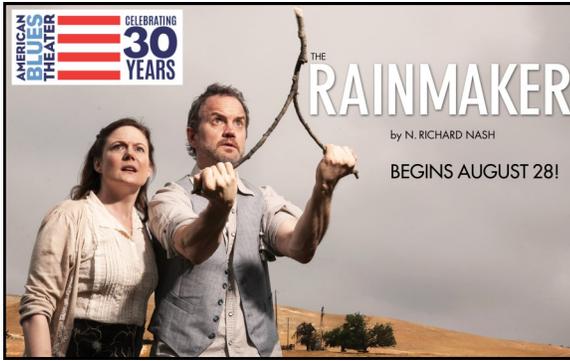
Forgotten? He, who planned from everlasting
The awful convolution of the spheres;
To whom are one, remembrance and forecasting.
And one day even as a thousand years;

Within whose vast design, the sparrow falling
Is counted as the meteor's gleaming race;
The favoring breeze, the hurricane appalling
That turns the deep sea to a burial-place;

One valley panting for the rain in season,
And one uptorn by floods that leave it strewed
With wreck of lives and homes. O futile reason,
With fathom-line to sound Infinitude!

Yea, as the heavens than the earth are higher.
So are His ways. His thoughts, to those of man:
To Him a breath, ten Sabbaths dry and dryer;
Ten years of thirsting spirit but a span.





PERFORMANCES RUN AUGUST 28—SEPTEMBER 27, 2015

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FEATURING



Linsey Page Morton
as *Lizzie Curry*



Steve Key
as *Bill Starbuck*



Vincent Teninty
as *Noah Curry*



Danny Goldring
as *H.C. Curry*



Matt Pratt
as *Jim Curry*



Howie Johnson
as *File*



Robert Breuler
as *Sheriff Thomas*