

## Stage classic reflects the struggles many face today

### ■ Cast and crew feel the relevance as they prepare to present “Death of a Salesman.”

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He's been laid off after many years with the same company.

He's scared he's too old to find a new job.

He's worried about the mortgage, the car, things bought on credit.

Family issues weigh on him. He's depressed. And he's angry at how corporate culture has chewed him up and spit him out.

That sounds like someone familiar to most people these days.

It also describes Willy Loman, a character playwright Arthur Miller created 61 years ago for “Death of a Salesman.”

The Pulitzer-winning show, which earned a best-drama Tony in 1949, opens Friday at the Omaha Community Playhouse.

Willy's relevance today has not been lost on the cast and director. It won't be lost on audiences either, said Carl Beck, the playhouse's artistic director.

“I'd love to say we foresaw the hard times when we chose that show” in fall 2008, Beck said. “The truth is we were planning a relatively light, audiencefriendly season, and we wanted a classic American drama to anchor it.”

“Salesman” fit the bill. And soon its fit with current hard times was inescapable to director Kevin Lawler and his cast.

“The struggle you see his family having financially, the epic journey of the salesman, it resonates into every facet of what we're going through today,” Lawler said.

Unemployment, the struggle to find a job and make ends meet, the fear and desperation occurring around us daily — it's all there in the script, Lawler said.

“Everybody is bringing, naturally, into the rehearsal process the weight and experience of their own family histories,” Lawler said of the cast and crew. “They're sharing their own stories as they relate to the play.

“I think every person in the audience will do the same, will relate in some deep way See *Play*: Page [2](#)



**Ber nie Clark plays Willie Loman in the upcoming production of “Death of a Salesman” at the Omaha Community Playhouse.**

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