



Unease: Kevin Spacey and David Hayman in the film Ordinary Decent Criminal, released in 2000. Right, Hayman today

IT'S an American classic, the story of a man's unraveling that will bring seasoned Scottish actor David Hayman back to Dublin for work for the first time since 1998.

The star of *Protection*, *Sid And Nancy*, *Trial And Retribution*, *The Boy In The Striped Pyjamas* and many more screen and theatre classics is returning to hit the stage in *Death Of A Salesman* at the Gaiety Theatre from Tuesday, the first role he's done here since playing Tony Brady in *Ordinary Decent Criminal*.

As the world feels like it's disintegrating around us, the tale of travelling salesman Willy Loman is all the more poignant. It was a role Hayman, 77, has always wanted to play so when he and celebrated director Andy Arnold were asked to choose another production following their successful collaboration, Arthur Miller was the one that sprung to mind.

"Last year we did *Cyprus Avenue*, David Ireland's wonderful play about the North," says David. "It was a huge success. So they came to us and Andy and I had always wanted to do an American classic, this was our favourite and they jumped at the chance.

"Things have been going great, we've been playing to packed houses and getting standing ovations from Glasgow to Birmingham to Edinburgh - it has been a joyous tour so far. The audiences seem to be really knocked out by it, which is wonderful."

Though written by the great American playwright Arthur Miller in 1949, it's a story that still resonates today, given the current difficult times.

"It's a bit of a brutal world we're living in and I think *Death Of A Salesman* really encapsulates that, about a man who is getting to the end of his life and the end of his usefulness," says David. "He is living in a fantasy world and he has dementia, which creates many problems within the family. His old colleagues have retired or are dead and he has lost all the connections he once had."

"He has to borrow money from his good pal Charlie to just exist so it is a difficult time for him and he is putting extraordinary

by Maeve Quigley

pressure on his sons to succeed and be successful, to buy into the American dream."

Loman is tortured by the fact that his sons would prefer essentially to be poor but happy rather than strive like he has. As an actor, Hayman chose the creative world, the demands of which often separated him from his wife Alice and three sons when they were growing up.

"It's always a difficult choice," he says. "You still have to make a living and produce for your family but at the same time you have to be loyal to your family and be there for them. There were many times when I was away from home for months on end and that's kind of heartbreaking. But you manage to do it, you manage to find a balance that makes sense to yourself and to the rest of the family."

"I'm very proud of my three sons and my four grandchildren. We're all fine and healthy and happy."

Unlike Willy Loman's brood, all three of David's sons have followed him into the business - one works in film and TV production, one is a director and the other is an actor too.

As a father, he was never worried about what they might do or how they might turn out - apart from one thing.

"I have complete faith in them," he says. "What is important to me more than anything else is that they are good human beings and kind humanitarians."

"What is great about the play is that it seems to affect so many members of the audience. So many people have stopped me outside afterwards and said: 'This has made me challenge how I've lived my life, my relationship with my sons and my daughters, my family and I am going home now to sort out all the things I

haven't had time to sort out in the past.' That is terrific, it shows you man's life as it slowly crumbles lives and affect lives."

So powerful is Miller's play that Hayman can often hear the audience gasping and sometimes weeping from the stage.

"The message is still very powerful," he says. "Normally tragedies are about kings and queens and tyrants and despots. This is a tragedy about an ordinary working man who piles his trade on the coast of New England, selling his wares out two suitcases. And he's struggling, he's failing miserably. That's why he lives in his fantasy world and he has huge mood swings because of his dementia."

"He adores his wife but treats her really badly. He adores his sons but treats them badly, the same as his next door neighbour and best pal Charlie. He's a very complex character but fascinat-

ing to play and fascinating to watch. It's the last 24 hours of this man's life as it slowly crumbles before your eyes."

Although David is looking forward to getting back to Dublin, here I was filming *Ordinary Decent Criminal*, a film with Kevin Spacey," he says. "It was a strange film to make."

"Kevin Spacey is not a nice human being, as you can imagine, so that set the tone for a lot of it in a way. I didn't really enjoy it when I saw it. It was meant to be a comedy and I don't really think it's very funny."

"I have completely based on the life of The General, gangster Martin Cahill, was directed by Thaddeus O'Sullivan and written by Gerard Stembridge. It starred Spacey as gangster Michael Lynch with Hayman playing henchman Tony Brady."

Off-camera though, he says the set was tense and while Hayman didn't bear the brunt of Spacey's behaviour, he certainly didn't approve of it.

"It wasn't difficult but I just couldn't understand him," Hay-

man says. "He was being terrible to everyone so I took him out for a pizza one night. I said, 'Why are you behaving so badly?' And he said: 'Ah man, I didn't want to do this movie' and so on."

"So I said, 'Why did you do it? You are ruining everyone's lives, you are not being supportive and you are reducing people to tears, you are chasing young men around Dublin, you're not being professional.' But I couldn't get through to him. He is so self-centred and selfish that it just didn't ring with him at all."

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