

After *King Lear*, Laughton's health deteriorated drastically. Once home in the United States, he suffered with gall bladder problems, followed by a heart attack. When he recovered sufficiently, he began filming *Advise and Consent* (1962), directed by Otto Preminger. Laughton played Seab Cooley, the homophobic southern senator, with subtlety, "creat[ing] a character at once sly and childlike, devious and amusing, ruthless and charming" (Higham, 226). Ill throughout filming, Laughton nevertheless later attempted a reading tour with Bruce Ashe but had to be hospitalized after a fall in the bath. Doctors discovered cancer, which soon became pervasive. Laughton was flown home and died in Los Angeles on December 15, 1962.

See S. Callow, *Charles Laughton: A Difficult Actor*, London, 1987; K. Carter, "Lear's Terrible Journey: Charles Laughton at Stratford, 1959," *New Theatre Quarterly* 4 (November 1988): 315–20; C. Higham, *Charles Laughton: An Intimate Biography*, Garden City, N.Y., 1976; E. Lanchester, *Elsa Lanchester Herself*, New York, 1983; and M. C. Mills, "Charles Laughton: Adaptation of *The Night of the Hunter*," *Film Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (1988): 49–57.

Lionel Walsh

LAURENTS, Arthur (1918–), playwright and director, was born July 14, 1918, in Brooklyn, New York. After receiving a bachelor's degree in English from Cornell University in 1937, he returned to the city to work briefly in nightclub revues and then on several radio plays. In 1941, he was drafted into the U.S. Army and was soon writing for military training films and radio programs. His research among the wounded for one of his radio dramas developed into the subject matter for his first Broadway play, *Home of the Brave* (1945), a psychological drama that centers on the hysterical paralysis of a Jewish soldier.

In 1947, Laurents moved to Hollywood and wrote the screenplay for *The Snake Pit* (1948), another story featuring insanity (Kramer, 52). His next assignment was polishing the script of Alfred Hitchcock's *Rope* (1948). *Rope* is unique for being presented in one uninterrupted take (actually eight ten-minute takes). The story, based on the Leopold and Loeb murder case, centers on two homicidal homosexuals. Although Hitchcock's treatment was "indirect," it was clear enough to frighten **Montgomery Clift** away from one of the roles, which was later cast with John Dall (Spoto, 305). **Farley Granger** played the pianist of the two-some. By the time filming began, Granger and Laurents were living together (Laurents, 122). Their affair lasted four years (Kramer, 53).

During the Hollywood blacklistings, which he calls "seminal in my

life” (Kramer, 50), Laurents left Hollywood for New York, where he wrote *The Time of the Cuckoo* (1952), starring Shirley Booth. This tale of a spinsterish schoolteacher trying to accept love during a Venetian vacation is Laurents’s most successful straight play. It was filmed in 1955 as *Summertime*, with Katherine Hepburn, and was transformed into the musical *Do I Hear a Waltz?* in 1965.

In the mid-1950s, Laurents turned to the stage work that over the next fifteen years would define his career. He also embarked on a relationship that would define his personal life. On January 10, 1957, *A Clearing in the Woods* opened. This psychological drama of one woman confronting her earlier selves did not last long on Broadway. However, Tom Hatcher, a good-looking, well-built, blond from Oklahoma was cast as “The Boy.” Hatcher, who was twenty-six, and Laurents, thirty-eight, had already begun their still ongoing relationship, of which Laurents said in 1995: “He is more to me than he ever was, and I’m happier than I ever was” (Kramer, 56). Hatcher later played the role of Schuyler Grogan in Laurents’s *Invitation to a March* (1960) before retiring from acting to become a contractor (Laurents, 408).

Laurents’s next project had been bandied about in discussions with Jerome Robbins and **Leonard Bernstein** before Laurents got the idea of setting Robbins’s update of the Romeo and Juliet story against a background of urban gangs (Loney, 36). This became *West Side Story* (1957). It was Laurents who invited **Stephen Sondheim** to write the lyrics for the piece (Sondheim had previously auditioned for him). Laurents and Sondheim became friends and worked together on five more projects over the next fifteen years, both musicals (*Gypsy*, *Anyone Can Whistle*, and *Do I Hear a Waltz?*) and straight plays (Sondheim wrote incidental music for *Invitation to a March* and *The Enclave*).

Although they had had a falling out during *West Side Story*, Robbins insisted that Laurents write the book for his next project, which was based on the memoirs of Gypsy Rose Lee. Laurents felt “too grand” for such “trash” until he heard one woman say: “My first lover was Gypsy Rose Lee’s mother” (Kramer, 54). As he learned more about Gypsy Rose Lee and her mother—both lesbians, according to Laurents—he became more interested and eventually focused the story on Mama Rose. Highly successful, *Gypsy* (1959) is heralded for its strong drama, just as *West Side Story* is for its riveting dance.

Laurents next wrote *Invitation to a March* (1960). This fairy tale of a play featured a bride who falls asleep at a convention and finds her Long Island prince in a shorter man (Laurents himself is short). Laurents

directed for the first time, because “there was a great paucity of directors” (Raymond, 22). He claimed: “If I direct and it fails, at least it will have been closer to what I meant . . . and I’d rather blame myself” (Loney, 34).

Laurents had met David Merrick during *Gypsy*, which Merrick produced. Now that he was a proven director, Merrick hired him to direct the musical *I Can Get It for You Wholesale* (1962), which is now best known for introducing Barbra Streisand as Miss Marmelstein.

Laurents wore the director and librettist hats for *Anyone Can Whistle* (1964), an absurdist-influenced musical that ran only nine performances but is legendary for the cast album of Sondheim’s score. Laurents’s second original libretto was for *Hallelujah, Baby!* (1967), which garnered him a Tony Award. Laurents’s book followed a black woman (played by Leslie Uggams) and her two lovers (one black, one white) through the panorama of musical styles and racism from the turn of the century to the 1960s, while the leading characters did not age.

Laurents got the idea for *The Way We Were* while looking at Barbra Streisand, to whom he was pitching another movie (Laurents, 247–48). Streisand would star in the film with Robert Redford. Both the film (1973) and the novel (1972) call on Laurents’s background at Cornell and during the McCarthy era in Hollywood.

In 1973, Laurents went to London to direct a revival of *Gypsy* with Angela Lansbury playing Rose. He doctored the script slightly to show the maturation of Gypsy in her strip sequence, a task he says he only perfected in the 1989 revival (Laurents, 392). The production was well received, especially Lansbury’s performance, and moved to Broadway on September 23, 1974.

On November 15, 1973, *The Enclave*, written and directed by Laurents, opened Off-Broadway. In this play, one man, leading his friends into an enclave to protect themselves from the city, reveals his homosexuality and watches his friendships disintegrate. The potential for parallels with Laurents’s own life and relationships seems obvious. The play’s lead and his boyfriend are forty and twenty-four years old, respectively; Laurents and Hatcher have a twelve-year age difference and were approximately the same ages when they met. The leading role’s homosexuality was known but unspoken of by his friends; Laurents’s homosexuality was known to his friends but not acknowledged by the press. However, these and other parallels in *The Enclave* have not been commented on, not even by Laurents in his autobiography.

His next Hollywood screenplay, *The Turning Point* (1977), starring Anne Bancroft and Shirley MacLaine, had been suggested by his onetime romantic partner and longtime friend Nora Kaye (a former ballet dancer)

and was directed by her husband, Herbert Ross. Set in the world of ballet, the inclusion of homosexual material had been planned by Laurents but was mostly excised by the director and cast (Russo, 227–30).

Laurents's greatest success as a director, and his most overt affiliation with a gay project, came with *La Cage aux Folles* (1983). He was "eager" to work with librettist Harvey Fierstein (who was just coming off his successful *Torch Song Trilogy*) and composer/lyricist **Jerry Herman** ("Laurents, Arthur," 223). Laurents threw every theatrical trick he knew into the production. He says of the highly successful musical: "I thought that to have two men sing a love song and hold hands and kiss onstage in a musical was a big step. . . . At the end of every performance, straight people would get up applauding two men dancing together into the sunset. I thought that was a big accomplishment" (Kramer, 55).

In 1989, Laurents directed another revival of *Gypsy*, this time with Tyne Daly, whom he preferred of the three leading ladies. In 1991, he wrote and directed *Nick & Nora*, a noted flop. A subplot of this "Thin Man" musical mystery involved a lesbian bookkeeper. The collapse of *Nick & Nora* freed Laurents to work on several plays. In 1995, *Jolson Sings Again*, about theater people facing the betrayal of the McCarthy era, played at the Seattle Repertory Theatre. It was during this production that Laurents was unintentionally outed by *New York Times* columnist Frank Rich. Laurents later revised *Jolson Sings Again* for a 1999 George Street Playhouse production in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Also in 1995, *The Radical Mystique*, which was based on the infamous cocktail parties for militant racial causes of the late 1960s, played at the Manhattan Theatre Club. It featured a young man discovering his sexual identity after witnessing the Stonewall Riots (Raymond, 21).

Laurents's plays have not endured as well as his musical librettos. His straight plays show his talent for writing three-dimensional characters and fully realized theatrical creations. His best plays are marked by strong female voices (Shirley Booth in *The Time of the Cuckoo* and Celeste Holm and Eileen Heckart in *Invitation to a March*). As he notes in his autobiography, this should come as no surprise: "It's men that homosexual men can have trouble writing" (Laurents, 411). However, Laurents has always considered himself a "social playwright" ("Laurents, Arthur," 220); his need to *tell* what should be said—instead of demonstrating it—leads to the most disappointing moments in his scripts. On the other hand, his librettos are noted for their mature approach to an often juvenile form; his direct messages are served well in the broad strokes required for adumbrated dialogue. Also he usually works with the best composers available, and their music draws continued productions.

Laurents's ability to direct is more often lauded than his writing. He regularly unites all elements of the production—music, voice, setting, movement, and picturization—to create vibrant dramatic moments. The understanding of structure and character honed in his writing assists in drawing out fully human characterizations. His ability to find new or underutilized talent—Jane Fonda in *Invitation to a March*, Lansbury in *Anyone Can Whistle*, George Hearn in *La Cage aux Folles*—signifies an astute eye and ensures his lasting influence.

A very sexual man—his first gay experience was at thirteen and he was more interested in quantity of partners than quality for many years—Laurents struggled with his homosexuality in psychotherapy, keeping it out of his play *Heartsong* (1946) and claiming that he would have excluded it as a subtext from *Home of the Brave* (Laurents, 65, 53). At the same time, he accepted his homosexuality and is proud of how “truthfully” it was treated in his first movie, *Rope* (1931). There are biographical aspects of his work to explore (particularly in *The Enclave*), as well as thematic obsessions, such as the figure of the complicated, boyish blond (i.e., the major in *Home of the Brave*, the disillusioned artist in *Time of the Cuckoo*, the characters played by Hatcher, and Robert Redford's Hubbell in *The Way We Were*). Laurents has identified his own recurrent themes as discovery, acceptance, prejudice, and betrayal (4)—themes with which any homosexual can empathize. Although he struggled with it, he has never denied his homosexuality. He wrote that, even while carrying on physical relationships with women, “I didn't believe the ability to have sex with a woman made me heterosexual” (55). Homosexuality's impact on his life—his relationship with Hatcher and his friendships—and his working relationships with gay men is clear. However, it is also clear that the media ignored this man's personal life until 1995, denying many a role model whose mainstream career unashamedly included gay material.

See L. Kramer, “His Brilliant Career,” *The Advocate* 681 (May 16, 1995): 49–56; A. Laurents, *Original Story By: A Memoir of Broadway and Hollywood*, New York, 2000; “Laurents, Arthur,” in *Current Biography Yearbook, 1984*, edited by C. Moritz, New York, 1984, 220–23; G. Loney, “Arthur Laurents Is High on Comedy,” *After Dark* 6 (November 1973): 34–36; G. Raymond, “Arthur Laurents: Back to the Future,” *Theatre Week*, June 26, 1995; V. Russo, *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies*, rev. ed., New York, 1987; and D. Spoto, *The Dark Side of Genius: The Life of Alfred Hitchcock*, Boston, 1983.

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Le GALLIENNE, Eva (1899–1991), actress, director, producer, author, and translator, was born in London. Her parents traveled in the popular artis-