

ARENA'S PAGE

STUDY GUIDE



the mead center
for american theater

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THE PLAY

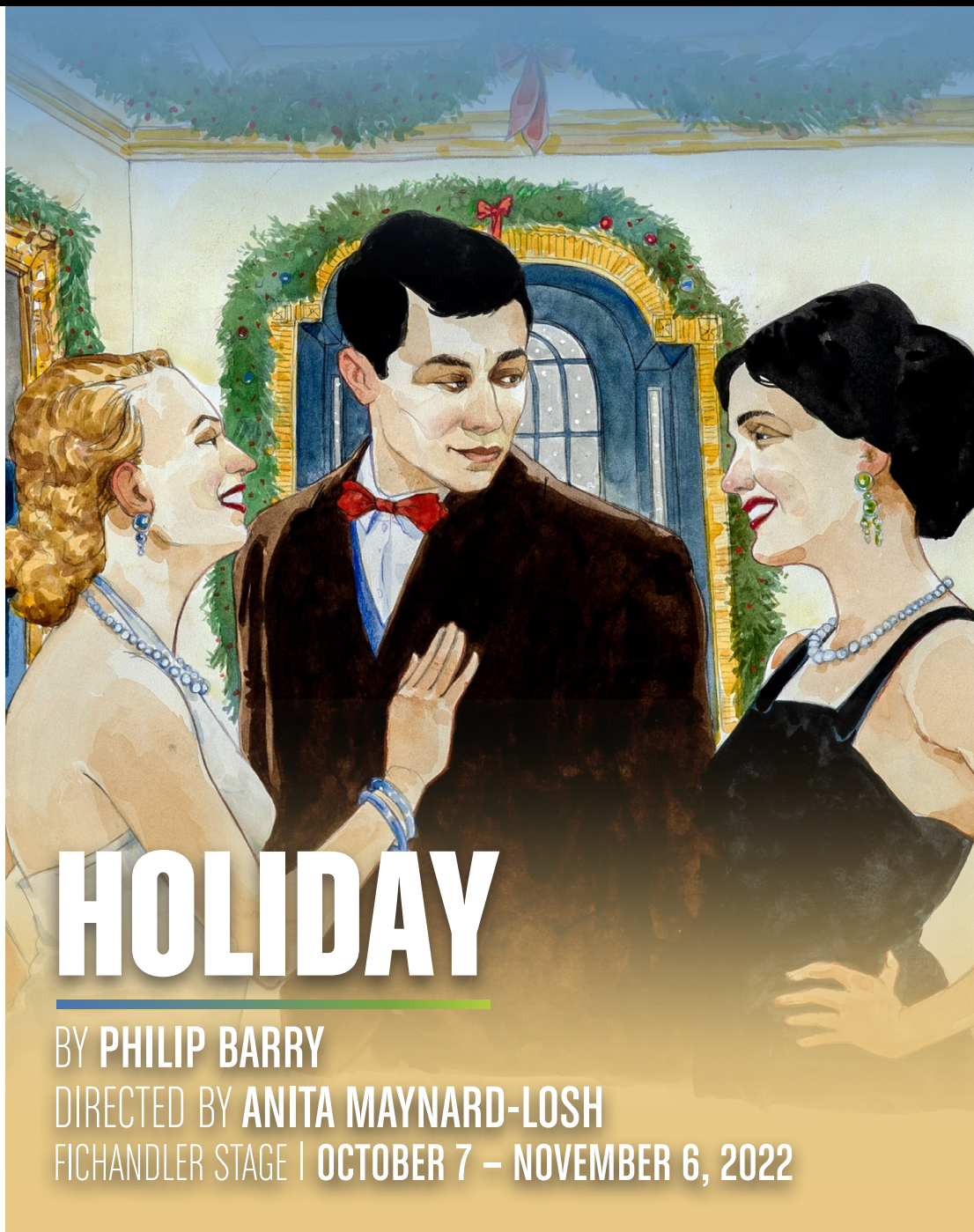
The setting is 1928 in the home of the rich – very rich – Seton family in New York City.

Johnny Case is a young lawyer who has worked his way up from nothing and is on his way to making a killing in the stock market. But Johnny has an unusual point of view when it comes to money. Once he's made enough money early in his career, his dream is to stop working and explore life while he is young and then return to work when that money runs out. In other words, "retire young and work old."

Then he meets **Julia Seton** on a Lake Placid vacation, and they become engaged. Julia comes from an extremely rich and powerful banking family, headed by her father **Edward**. The couple hope to receive his blessing despite Johnny's poor background. Julia knows Johnny's promising financial prospects will convince her father.

However, when Johnny reveals his plan, only Julia's unconventional sister **Linda** supports him.

As New Year's Eve and the party where Johnny and Julia will publicly announce their engagement approach, Johnny has a decision to make. What responsibility does he have to fulfill other people's expectations? What is he willing to sacrifice for his dream?



HOLIDAY

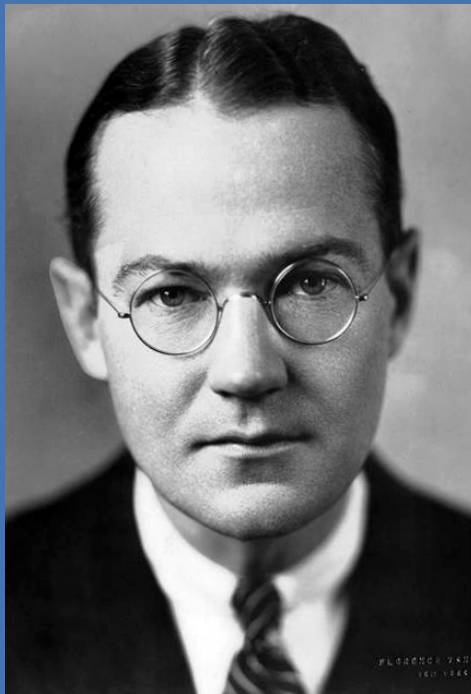
BY PHILIP BARRY

DIRECTED BY ANITA MAYNARD-LOSH

FICHANDLER STAGE | OCTOBER 7 – NOVEMBER 6, 2022

“You wouldn’t expect it of a man in Father’s position,
but the fact is, money is our god here.”

— Linda Seton, *Holiday*



MEET THE PLAYWRIGHT: **PHILIP BARRY**

When *Holiday* opened on Broadway in 1928, Philip Barry was 32 years old. It was his eighth Broadway show.

Born in Rochester, NY in 1896 to a wealthy Irish immigrant family, Barry started writing at age 9. After studying at Yale, he was accepted into a famous play workshop program at Harvard called English 47, starting his playwrighting career.

Although Barry's plays include dramas, a mystery, and religious, political and experimental pieces, his best-loved work is about the world he knew best: the world of the wealthy. While these plays are comedies, he hoped they revealed something deeper beneath the sparkly surface.

In all, he had 21 plays on Broadway. His most famous works are *Holiday* and *The Philadelphia Story*, both of which were made into movies. He wrote the lead role in *The Philadelphia Story* for actress Katharine Hepburn, which was credited with revitalizing her career.

Barry, his wife and children split their time between their three homes in New York City, the countryside in Upstate New York and Cannes in France. He died suddenly from a heart attack at age 53.

Philip Barry's plays are known for their *repartee* (pronounced rep-par-tay). Repartee is speech with quick and witty responses.



FROM THE **DIRECTOR'S NOTEBOOK**

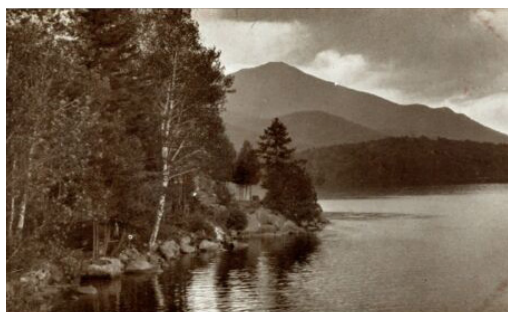
Director Anita Maynard-Losh first fell in love with the play *Holiday* when she was 15 years old. She still has the copy she bought then from a used bookstore in San Francisco.

"*Holiday* is about making a choice, but the choice is not one of the typical rom-com tropes of a man choosing between two women, or two women competing for one man. The choice is between making and living your life on your own terms or living it to conform to the expectations of others...*Holiday* is also about insiders and outsiders and finding your people."



MEET THE **REAL-LIFE POTTERS**

In the play, Nick and Susan Potter are friends of Linda Seton. They are the smart, attractive couple everyone wants to know and be like. The Potters are based on the playwright's friends Gerald and Sara Murphy. The Murphys were Americans who lived in France and were known for "making an art of living." They were friends with writers and artists like F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Pablo Picasso and Cole Porter.



LAKE PLACID

Julia and Johnny meet in Lake Placid, which is a resort town in Upstate New York. It was a popular getaway for the wealthy in both winter and summer.

WOMEN IN THE ROARING TWENTIES

The 1920s marked a time of increased freedom and rights for women in the U.S. In 1920, the 19th Amendment granted women the right to vote. As the 20's progressed, more women began working outside the home (though they were paid less than men). Women also participated in the growing consumer culture with companies advertising products to women. New inventions, like washing machines, allowed women to do housekeeping tasks more easily.

In addition, while most women still wanted or needed to get married, attitudes to marriage started to shift. Women's fashion reflected these social changes. Women gave up corsets for looser clothing made of more flexible fabrics, allowing them to move more freely.



Costume design by Ivania Stack

THE WORLD OF *HOLIDAY*

By the 1920s, World War I and the 1918 Flu Pandemic had ended. The world had endured millions of deaths and was ready for a new beginning. *Holiday* is set in 1928, the end of the decade known as the "Roaring Twenties," the "Jazz Age" or "The Big Party."

In the 1920s, the economy grew wildly, mass production spread new goods into households across the country (ex. radios, refrigerators and vacuum cleaners), the modern car and airline industries began, and the electricity boom revolutionized transportation, communication, housekeeping and entertainment.

There was also exuberant investment in the stock market by people of all backgrounds. In his article "Looking Back at the First Roaring Twenties," Robert Shiller notes that from 1919 to 1929, the total return on the stock market averaged 20% a year and a six-fold increase in real value over the decade. That means if you invested \$1,000, at the end of one year you would have made \$200. At the end of 10 years, you would have made \$5,000, transforming your \$1,000 investment into \$6,000.

At the time of the play the stock market is going up, up, up. However, less than a year after the play premiered, the stock market crashed, starting the Great Depression. Millions of Americans, including people like the Setons, lost everything.

The play is set during Prohibition, a time from 1920-1933 when making, selling or transporting alcohol was illegal in the U.S. However, it wasn't illegal to drink. Right before Prohibition started, wealthy people bought the stock of entire liquor stores to ensure they would have access to alcohol.

ART, INNOVATION AND WONDERS IN THE 1920S



1920:

The Harlem Renaissance, a rich period of African-American art and culture, begins in New York City.



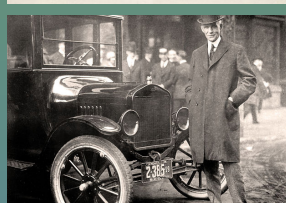
1922:

King Tut's tomb is opened.



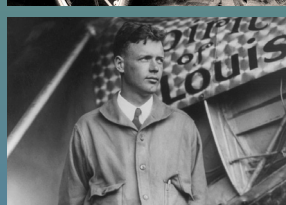
1924:

The first Winter Olympics is held.



1926:

Automaker Henry Ford adopts the 40-hour work week.



1927:

Charles Lindbergh is the first person to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean.



1928:

Alexander Fleming discovers penicillin.



1928:

The first color motion pictures are exhibited. Sliced bread, Gerber baby food, Reese's Peanut Butter Cups and Scotch Tape are invented.



SPOTLIGHT ON PROPS

How does a stage become another place in a different time? Costumes, lights, sound, props and sets: all of these production elements work together to create the world and tell the story of a play. The Production Department at Arena Stage is made up of all the teams that create these elements. Learn more about how one of these teams, the Props Team, uses an amazing range of skills, creativity, problem-solving, artistry and teamwork to help make some of the theater magic you see on stage.

MEET THE PROPS TEAM

(Left to Right) Jenn Sheetz, Jonathan Borgia, Niell DuVal, Grace Trudeau, Kyle Handziak, Lance Pennington and Alekx Shines

WHAT IS A PROP?

A prop, short for “property,” is an object used in a play. There are three different types: hand props, set props and set decoration. Hand props are items that actors handle, such as a newspaper. Set props are objects on stage like furniture. Set decorations are items such as a painting over a fireplace or curtains on windows.

PULL, BORROW, BUY AND BUILD

Jenn Sheetz and Lance Pennington, the properties director and associate properties director, read the script and meet with the designers and director of the show to determine what props are needed. After making the list, the Props Team needs to gather the props by pulling, borrowing, buying or building.

Pull

Arena Stage has a warehouse full of props like furniture, phones, rugs and light fixtures from past productions. If we can reuse an item we already have, we will.

Borrow

Local theater companies often share various props with one another. The dollhouse in *Holiday* was borrowed from Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company.

Buy

Shopping is also part of props. Our team buys props from many places, such as websites, antique stores or thrift stores. The prop van goes all over the D.C. area and is called “The Chicken” because there is a rubber chicken on the key chain.

Build

Sometimes a prop is so specific, special or expensive that it would be difficult to find. That is when the team uses all their creativity and problem-solving to build a prop in our Prop Shop. Every day the team is working with different materials and using different skills and tools. The team agrees that this makes the job fun and challenging.

Once the props are assembled, they are placed on stage or given to the actors to tell the story of the play. Grace Trudeau, properties assistant, said, “The best part of making a prop is when an actor gets excited for their role because of the ingenuity we’ve used to make it.”



RESEARCH AND RECREATE

Careful research into the time period is an important part of making props. In Act 1, there is a newspaper on stage. The Props Team found a digital version of the *New York Times* for Sunday, December 23, 1928, the actual date of the scene. Kyle Handziak, props artisan, carefully cleaned up and formatted the image in Photoshop, and then printed, trimmed and folded it so it looks like it was delivered to the Setons’ home that morning. “The details we use help immerse the actors in the world of the play and their characters,” said Kyle.

ECO-FRIENDLY

As assistant properties director, Jonathan Borgia may shop, research, upholster or do bookkeeping. Another part of his job is making sure that the team is keeping the planet in mind when creating props. Props that are pulled, borrowed or built from existing materials help Arena Stage be more green.



PROPS TRANSFORMATION

In *Holiday*, everything in the Setons' home needs to look expensive. This metal fireplace was pulled for the show. Alekx Shines, properties assistant, spent over two days cleaning, shining and restoring the piece with careful attention to detail.

PROPS HISTORY

Lance has worked at Arena Stage for 40 years and is the unofficial historian of the Prop Shop and Arena Stage. Lance can look at a piece of furniture and tell you what show it was in, how it has changed and who sat on it. For example, the dining room chairs in the play were bought for *Hamlet* more than 40 years ago. While the chairs have been in many plays, this is the first time the table has been on stage. The golden brown chair has been in two other shows. It was once red and has been reupholstered by Lance himself.

BACKSTAGE

After a show starts, the Props Team's job continues. As properties assistants, Alekx and Grace are backstage caring for the props and fixing anything that breaks. For example, the newspaper may need to be ironed after shows so it looks like new. If there are any rips, they melt tape into the paper to fuse it together. There are four copies of the newspaper to last over 42 performances. Working backstage during a show is also called "running a show." Alekx said, "I'm a night person, so the later the show, the happier I am."



DETAILS AND TEAMWORK

The Props team renovated the dollhouse as if it were an actual house! In a true team effort, they landscaped, created new furniture, painted the walls and added tiny items like miniature perfume bottles, trays and lamps. Adding small details like these is important because in the Fichandler Stage the audience is close to the stage and can see the house from every angle.

MAGIC ON STAGE

When the show opens, the efforts of the full production team, the actors, director and creative team come together.

"I love sitting in the theater on opening night and seeing all the work on stage. **I can see everyone's individual part and how we all worked as part of the bigger production team.** I am proud of everyone and their unique talent."

- Jenn Sheetz



MAKING THE MUSIC BOX

The music box in Act 2 is a combination of buy and build. Jonathan found the music box in an antique store in Richmond, VA. However, the inside elements needed work. Niell DuVal, head properties artisan, shined it up and used gears and lamp parts to make the music box a work of art. Niell said, "It's satisfying meeting challenges and contributing to the bigger picture and knowing that your work will be seen by thousands of people."

CHALLENGE ACCEPTED



Whether they are recreating a 200-year-old chair or building a fiberglass plane, the team agrees that each prop is a new challenge. Choose one of our team's skills and come up with a prop you could make using that skill:

BUILD	SKETCH
CARVE	STITCH
DARN	THRIFT
DISTRESS	UPHOLSTER
PAINT	VARNISH
RENDER	WELD
REFINISH	3-D PRINT
SAW	
SCULPT	



(back, l-r) Sean Whiberg, Olivia Hebert, John Austin, (front, l-r) Baize Buzan, Todd Scofield, for *Holiday*. Photo by Tony Powell.

THREE BIG QUESTIONS

1

What are you willing to sacrifice for your dreams?

2

What is a good life?

3

How do other people influence the choices you make?

HELPFUL HINTS FOR THEATER AUDIENCES

As an audience member at the theater, YOU are part of the show! Just as you see and hear the actors onstage, they can see and hear you in the audience.

To help the performers do their best, please remember the following:

- Arrive early.
- Visit the restroom before the show starts.
- Sit in the seat indicated on your ticket.
- Ushers are there to help you!
- Before the show begins, turn off your phone, watch alarms and any other electronic devices. If anything rings by accident, turn it off immediately.
- Do not use your phone for texts, calls, games or pictures.
- You cannot take pictures or make recordings in the theater, even before or after the play.
- There is no food allowed in the theater.
- If you must leave, wait for a scene change and exit quietly and quickly.
- Respond to the show; you can laugh, cry and gasp. However, don't talk to the performers on stage.
- Be sure to applaud at the end! During a musical, audiences sometimes clap after a song or dance. If you love the show or a performer, you can give a standing ovation. The actors bow to thank you.

RESOURCES

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CREDITS

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Visit www.arenastage.org for more information on Arena Stage productions and educational opportunities.