Agnes and Tobias’ precarious suburban lives are shaken when they find themselves facing unexpected houseguests—who plan to stay indefinitely. Edward Albee (*Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf; Me, Myself & I*), one of American theater’s most influential writers, pens this scorching masterpiece, which won him his first of three Pulitzer Prizes. Albee continues his long collaboration with McCarter’s Artistic Director, Emily Mann, in this stylish, bold, and profoundly touching social comedy.

Featuring:

**KATHLEEN CHALFANT; FRANCESCA FARIDANY; PENNY FULLER; JOHN GLOVER; ROBERTA MAXWELL; JAMES A. STEPHENS**

“EDWARD ALBEE, THE LEADING AMERICAN PLAYWRIGHT OF HIS GENERATION, HAS BEEN CONFOUNDING, CHALLENGING AND STIMULATING THEATER AUDIENCES FOR ALMOST HALF A CENTURY.”

- *The New York Times*

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**EMILY MANN ON A DELICATE BALANCE**

Dear Patrons,

Once again, it is an enormous pleasure to share with you the work of Edward Albee, one of the world’s finest living playwrights and a national treasure.

The first play of Edward’s that I read was *The Zoo Story*, in high school. We did a small production of it in my school’s after-school theater program—and I loved it. Throughout college and my early years as a director, I devoured all of Edward’s plays—and the one that I loved the most (then as now) was *A Delicate Balance*.

I didn’t meet Edward Albee in person until the early 1980s. My play, *Still Life*, had opened and I was broke and had a very young child. Edward was going to teach at Rutgers-Camden, and he liked to team teach in those days. He invited me and another young
playwright, Albert Innaurato, to teach his class with him. It was a long trip by train from Nyack to Camden, but it paid a lot of money—too much money for me to turn down. And I had the opportunity to speak with Edward Albee! I asked him about what he was teaching and what I should do, and he said, “Well, just do what you want. I’m going to do it my way—you can’t do it my way—you do it your way.” I soon learned this was vintage Edward. We stayed in touch over many years and soon became friends and collaborators—and I often think back on his first words to me, especially as I prepare to direct one of his plays.

One of the great joys of working with him is our profound respect for each other. We are brutally honest with each other and have a great admiration for each other’s work. I think he trusts me because he knows he can: we are fellow playwrights. It is one of my great joys as Artistic Director of McCarter Theatre that Edward Albee has been a guest of this theater for so many collaborations, from Marriage Play (which he directed) and through All Over and Me, Myself & I (both of which I directed here and in New York). We were eager to work on another project together—and I realized it was finally time for me to wrestle with A Delicate Balance.

Every time I’ve re-read this play over the years, I’m struck by how present tense it is for me no matter what stage of life I’m in. How do we face our terror? How do we handle despair? What does it mean to be family? How far does friendship go? How do we confront our own mortality? Our being alone? Edward’s writing forces us to grapple with these profound questions, the questions that define what it is to be human. And he does it with wit, humor, and a wicked compassion.

I’m profoundly grateful to have yet another opportunity to collaborate with Edward Albee and to be able to share this new production with you. Please enjoy A Delicate Balance.

Yours,

[Signature]

BIOGRAPHY OF EDWARD ALBEE

Edward Albee, one of America’s most revolutionary and celebrated playwrights, was born on March 12, 1928 in Washington, DC. Albee was adopted two weeks later by Reed and Francis Albee of Larchmont, NY. His adoptive grandfather and namesake, Edward Franklin Albee II, was a founder of the Keith-Albee organization, which dominated theater ownership in the US from vaudeville through the early days of moving pictures. While Albee’s childhood included wealth and privilege, his relationship with his parents was never warm. As a teenager, he was expelled from Lawrenceville Academy and Valley Forge Military Academy, but finally graduated from Choate. After three semesters at Trinity College, he left for New York City at the age of twenty, where he joined the Greenwich Village set of bohemian writers and artists, and cut off his communication with his parents.
Albee's recognition by the international theater world began in 1959 with the Berlin premiere of *The Zoo Story*. It opened off-Broadway in 1960, on a double bill with Samuel Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape*. The string of plays that followed in the early 1960’s, including such works as *The Sandbox, Fam and Yam, American Dream*, and *The Death of Bessie Smith*, proved that Albee was a literary force to be reckoned with and earned him the title of “The King of Off-Broadway.” Any remaining doubts regarding Albee’s reputation within the New York theater establishment were definitively dispelled by the great Broadway success of *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* in 1962. Considered by many to be his masterpiece, this play secured Albee’s standing as one of the great dramatists of his time.

He received a Tony Award, a Drama Critics Circle Award and a Pulitzer Prize nomination. *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* startled mainstream audiences out of their comfortable notions of the American Dream and brought challenging theater back to Broadway.

In the years following the success of *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, Albee continued to pursue an ever deeper understanding of the individual's relationship to the modern world. In 1966’s *A Delicate Balance* he explored the nature of man's increasing detachment, and received his first Pulitzer Prize. Throughout the 1960s and 70s Albee continued to produce plays of note including *All Over* in 1971 and *Seascape* in 1975, which were originally written as a pair of one act plays entitled *Life and Death*, and later expanded. With *Seascape*, a play about a retired vacationing couple who meet a pair of sea lizards at the beach, he earned his second Pulitzer Prize. His work during this time extended to helping other artists as well: in 1967, with the proceeds from *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, he established the Edward Albee foundation, which provides space and time for writers and visual artists to pursue their work without distractions.

By the 1980s Albee regularly taught at various universities, maintaining his residence in New York and continuing to write. He was awarded the Gold Medal in Drama from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters in 1980. In 1994 Albee’s third Pulitzer Prize-winning play, *Three Tall Women*, was produced. This delicate and moving play, which depicts one woman at three different stages of her life, won Albee several theater awards that season, including Best Play awards from both the New York Drama Critics Circle and the Outer Critics Circle. In 1996 Albee received both the Kennedy Center Honors and the National Medal of Arts.

Albee has had an active 21st century as well. *The Play About the Baby* premiered off-Broadway in 2001 and was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, and the Broadway production of *The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?* won the 2002 Tony Award for Best Play. In 2005 Edward Albee was presented with a Special Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement, recognizing him as America’s greatest living playwright.

Adapted from McCarter’s audience guide for Edward Albee’s *Me, Myself & I*, where it was originally adapted from an article by Laurie Sales that appeared in McCarter’s *All Over* resource guide.
KATHLEEN CHALFANT (Agnes)
Broadway: Angels in America (Tony and Drama Desk noms), Racing Demon, Dance With Me. Off-Broadway: Red Dog Howls (NYTW), Painting Churches (Keen Company), Wit (Drama Desk, Obie, Lucille Lortel, and Outer Critics Awards), Nine Armenians (Drama Desk nom.).

She has received the Drama League and Sidney Kingsley Awards for her body of work and was recently Artist in Residence in the Graduate Theatre Program at The New School. Kathleen is a founding member of the Women’s Project and sits on the boards of The Vineyard Theatre, Broadway Cares/Equity Fights Aids, and the advisory board of the New York Foundation for the Arts.

FRANCESCA FARIDANY (Julia)

PENNY FULLER (Claire)
began her Broadway career starring in Barefoot in the Park, three Shakespeare-in-the-Park productions, and in Cabaret, Rex, and Applause (Tony nom.). Her TV work garnered 6 Emmy nominations and an Emmy Award for ABC’s The Elephant Man. Other Broadway credits include: Dividing the Estate, The Dinner Party (Tony nom.). Off-Broadway: Love, Loss, and What I Wore, Beautiful Child (Vineyard); Southern Comforts (Primary Stages); Three Viewings, New England (MTC).

With William Finn’s A New Brain at Lincoln Center, she returned to musical theater and starred in productions of A Little Night Music, Do I Hear a Waltz, Sail Away (London). She has since embarked on a new career phase as cabaret artist in New York clubs and theaters. Most recently, she starred in the premiere of a solo musical 13 Things About Ed Carpolotti written and composed by Barry Kleinbort.
JOHN GLOVER (Tobias)
Theater: Death Of A Salesman, Love! Valour! Compassion! (Tony Award), Waiting for Godot (Tony and Drama League noms), The Marriage of Bette and Boo, The Paris Letter (Drama Desk, Lucille Lortel, and Drama League noms), Give Me Your Answer Do, The Royal Family, The Drowsy Chaperone, Design For Living, Whodunnit, Frankenstein, The Importance of Being Earnest, Holiday, The Visit, Don Juan, The Great God Brown (Drama Desk Award), Secrets of the Trade, Oblivion Postponed, Rebel Women, and the original House of Blue

ROBERTA MAXWELL (Edna)
Broadway: Our Town, Equus, Othello, Henry V. Off-Broadway: The Cherry Orchard, Ivanov (CSC); Uncle Vanya (Soho Rep); The Public Theater; MTC. Regional: Hartford Stage, Long Wharf, Mark Taper Forum, The Old Globe, Guthrie Theater, Alley Theatre, Stratford Connecticut, Stratford Ontario. Film: Dead Man Walking, Brokeback Mountain, Popeye, Philadelphia, Last Night, Sudden Disclosure, Scar Tissue. TV: Law & Order, Another World, Mourning Becomes Electra (PBS), Airwaves (CBS Series), What Makes A

JAMES A. STEPHENS (Harry)
Leaves at the Truck and Warehouse. TV: An Early Frost, Nutcracker: Murder, Money, and Madness, Brimstone (as the Devil), Smallville, and Heroes. Glover has received five Emmy nominations and has appeared in over 35 films including Payback, Batman and Robin, Love! Valour! Compassion!, Gremlins II, Scrooged, The Chocolate War, Masquerade, 52 Pick-Up, White Nights, Melvin and Howard, Julia, and Annie Hall.

**EDWARD ALBEE** (Playwright)
Edward Albee was born on March 12, 1928, and began writing plays 30 years later. His plays include The Zoo Story (1958); The Death of Bessie Smith (1959); The Sandbox (1959); The American Dream (1960); Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf? (1961-62, Tony Award); Tiny Alice (1964); A Delicate Balance (1966, Pulitzer Prize; 1996, Tony Award); All Over (1971); Seascape (1974, Pulitzer Prize); Listening (1975); Counting the Ways (1975); The Lady From Dubuque (1977-78); The Man Who Had Three

**EMILY MANN** (Director) Multi-award-winning Director and Playwright Emily Mann is in her 23rd season as Artistic Director of McCarter Theatre. Under Ms. Mann’s leadership, McCarter was honored with the 1994 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theater. Most recently at McCarter, Ms. Mann directed the world premieres of The Convert by Danai Gurira (also at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago and CTG in Los Angeles; six Ovation Awards, including Best Director of a Play and nominated for thirteen; also nominated for three Jeff Awards including Best Production), Phaedra Backwards by Marina Carr, Sarah Treem’s The How and the Why, and Edward Albee’s Me, Myself & I (also at Playwrights Horizons). Among the plays she directed at McCarter are: Nilo Cruz’s Pulitzer Prize-winning Anna in the Tropics (also on Broadway), the world premiere of Christopher Durang’s Miss Witherspoon (also off-Broadway at Playwrights Horizons), All Over (also off-Broadway at The Roundabout; 2003 Obie Award for Directing), Three Sisters, A Doll House, The Glass Menagerie, and Mrs. Warren’s Profession. Last spring, Emily directed A Streetcar Named Desire on Broadway with Blair Underwood, Wood Harris, Nicole Ari Parker, and Daphne Rubin-Vega. Emily’s plays include Execution of Justice (Guggenheim Award for Directing) and The Language Archive (Outer Critics Circle Award for Directing).
Arms (1981); Finding the Sun (1982); Marriage Play (1986-87); Three Tall Women (1991, Pulitzer Prize); Fragments (1993); The Play about the Baby (1997); The Goat or, Who is Sylvia? (2000, 2002 Tony Award); Occupant (2001); At Home at the Zoo: (Act 1, Homelife. Act 2, The Zoo Story.) (2004); and Me, Myself & I (2008). He is a member of the Dramatists Guild Council and President of The Edward F. Albee Foundation. Mr. Albee was awarded the Gold Medal in Drama from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters in 1980. In 1996, he received the Kennedy Center Honors and the National Medal of Arts. In 2005, he was awarded a special Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement.

JENNIFER VON MAYRHAUSER (Costume Design) has designed over 20 productions with Emily Mann, including Mrs. Warren’s Profession; Me, Myself & I; A Seagull in the Hamptons; Mrs. Packard; The Birthday Party; All Over; The Cherry Orchard; Meshugah; A Doll’s House; Miss Julie; Cat on a Mat. 

Opera); *Glorious Ones* (Lincoln Center); *Durango* (The Public); *Pain and the Itch* (Playwrights Horizons); *Lookingglass Alice* (New Victory); *Metamorphoses* (Broadway - Tony nom., Second Stage); *Measure for Measure* (NYSF); *Arabian Nights*, *Galileo* (BAM). Regional: *White Snake* (Berkeley Rep, Oregon Shakespeare), *Black & Blue Boys* (Berkeley Rep, Goodman), *Elizabeth Rex* (Chicago Shakespeare), *Candide* (The Huntington, Goodman, Shakespeare Theatre); *Endgame* (A.C.T./SF), *Verona Project* (California Shakespeare). International: *Donmar Warehouse, Barbican* (London); Melbourne Theatre. Ensemble member at *Lookingglass Theatre, Chicago*. Associate Professor at Northwestern University in Evanston.

**LAURA STANCZYK, CSA** (Casting Director) has been casting at McCarter since 2005. Broadway: *Follies, Don’t Dress for Dinner, Lombardi, Ragtime, Impressionism, The Seafarer, Radio Golf, Translations, Coram Boy, Damn Yankees* (Encores! Summer Stars), *Urinetown*. In addition: *Ghost Brothers of Darkland County* (Alliance Theatre), *Cotton Club Parade* (Encores! in association with Jazz at Lincoln Center); *Master Class, The Lisbon Traviata, The Golden Age, Broadway: Three Generations* (Kennedy Center); *Harpers and Angels* (CTG); *The Glorious Ones* (LCT); *Dirty Dancing* (national tour); *Long Day’s Journey Into Night, The Cripple of Inishmaan* (Druid/Atlantic); *The Shawshank Redemption* (Dublin/West End). Six Time Artios Nominee and winner for last year's production of *Follies*. 
EDWARD ALBEE: ENEMY OF COMPLACENCY

It is almost impossible to imagine contemporary theater without Edward Albee. “He grabbed hold and shook us out of our complacency when he was a 30-year-old playwright…and he never let go,” New Dramatists artistic director Todd London explained in a speech in 2007. And since that first occasion, the first production of *The Zoo Story*, complacency has been an enemy of Albee’s work. *A Delicate Balance*, written relatively early in Albee’s career, was further confirmation that while the form and details may change, Albee’s work always requires attention.

After drawing American attention off-Broadway with plays like *The Zoo Story* (1960), *The Sandbox* (1961), and *The American Dream* (1961), the 1962 Broadway production of *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* ensured Albee’s place in theater history, but not without controversy. *Virginia Woolf* was recommended for the 1963 Pulitzer Prize by the drama sub-committee, but the full Pulitzer committee declined to give it the award. (The drama advisors, John Mason Brown and John W. Gassner, resigned in protest.) Albee followed *Virginia Woolf* with a pair of adaptations (*Ballad of the Sad Café* and *Malcolm*), and the original play *Tiny Alice*, none of which achieved the same degree of critical or commercial success. In 1966, Albee set off traveling—first to St John, and then through Europe. He worked on *A Delicate Balance*, a play he’d begun in 1965, on that trip and finished it on the boat home. The result is a play critic Thomas Adler called “the pivotal American drama of the second half of the twentieth century.”

The setting is familiar enough for the average theater-goer, “a well-appointed suburban home,” inhabited by characters easily recognizable as members of a family—husband, wife, sister, daughter. Some of the facts of the play—daughter Julia is getting divorced, sister Claire is an alcoholic—are familiar dramatic fare. Scholars have detected a whiff of the autobiographical in the wealthy, suburban setting, reflecting Albee’s upbringing in Larchmont, NY. (During rehearsals for the original production, Albee brought Jessica Tandy and her real life husband, Hume Cronyn, the first Agnes and Tobias, out to Larchmont to meet his mother.) But beneath the genteel suburban surface is something much more radical. Critic Anne Paolucci called *A Delicate Balance* “the most deceptively conventional of Albee’s plays to date.” The real questions of *A Delicate Balance* are existential, abstract, and dangerous—an unnamed fear haunting the friends who arrive at Agnes and Tobias’s door, and Agnes and Tobias’s response to it—creating “an exquisite fandango of despair,” according to Kenneth Tynan. “The play is concerned with the isolation of people who have turned their backs on participating fully in their own lives and therefore cannot participate fully in anyone else’s life,” explained Albee to biographer Mel Gussow.

For Gussow, in his review of the first production, “*A Delicate Balance* is Edward Albee in a reflective mood. It is full of Albee bits, bountiful bursts of colorful invective, repartee, and shorthand character
analyses, but the root of the play is something a lot more tender than anything he has ever attempted before...”. In spite of some mixed reviews at the time, *A Delicate Balance* won the Pulitzer Prize in 1967, along with the Tony Award for Best Play.

While Albee’s career and Broadway’s interest in serious theater ebbed and flowed over the decades, *A Delicate Balance* remained visible, with productions in regional theaters around the country, including McCarter in 1983. A major revival in 1996 produced by Lincoln Center, shortly after the off-Broadway success of *Three Tall Women*, was Albee’s return to Broadway after a thirteen year absence. A greater critical success than the play’s original run, Gussow notes that “by the 1990s...the themes of the play—fearfulness, the test of friendship, the family as a nuclear unit—were far more relevant.” Albee observed in the program notes to that production: “The play does not seem to have ‘dated’; rather, its points seem clearer now to more people than they were in its lovely first production....No time has passed; the characters have not aged or become strange. (The upper-upper-middle-class WASP culture has *always* been just a little bizarre, of course.).” Sixteen years later that remains true—timeless and uncompromising, *A Delicate Balance* demands our attention.

**A TRIBUTE TO EDWARD ALBEE**

*By Todd London, Artistic Director, New Dramatists*

In May 2007 New Dramatists honored Edward Albee with its Lifetime Achievement Award. This is a reprint of Artistic Director Todd London’s presentation speech.

Edward Albee is famous for despising being eulogized. So here goes: a salute to the living, breathing, writing Edward Albee.

Today we are celebrating a playwright who has done everything wrong. He has written the wrong plays at the wrong time for the wrong kind of stages. He has imagined for himself the wrong kind of career—one that can never exist in the American theater. He has staked his money on a sucker’s bet, supporting a profession that has, by many accounts, been dead or dying for years. Today we are celebrating Edward Albee—a man who never got the memo.

Here’s the memo he didn’t get. Date: 1958. To: Young Master Albee. Re: “The Playwrights Life—Rules to Live By.”

1. **Avoid experiment.** American audiences have no stomach for it.
2. **Avoid other writers.** The playwright is a solitary beast. No good can come from helping them. They only want what you have anyway.
3. **Find a style of writing that works for you, and stick to it.** Longevity in the arts is our ongoing love affair with the familiar.
4. Exercise moderation when writing about reality. Sure, everybody knows the world can be brutal and harsh, but it doesn’t help to dwell on it. The Greeks were the biggest dwellers of all, and what have they done lately?

5. Avoid, when possible, unpleasant characters. Particularly avoid the following: vulgar, mouthy drunks—especially women; aggressive strangers who hang around park benches; unforgiving, unloving mothers; and married men who fornicate animals.

6. Forget about animals altogether. Nothing bores an audience quicker than long speeches about people and dogs or cats or, whatever, goats.

7. And for God’s sake, stay away from dressing actors up as animals. Someday someone’s going to write a play about lizards and then we’ll know it’s all over.

8. Leave ideas to the Europeans.

9. Leave Broadway to the British.

10. Simplify, clarify, and explain. It’s even good to have a character spell out the meaning of the play—a friendly narrator type, you know, voice of the playwright kind of thing.

The memo goes on, this list of the rules that Edward Albee missed. And then there’s one final one: There are no second acts in American life, especially in the theater. Once you’re written off, it’s impossible to write yourself back on.

Today we celebrate Edward Albee because he has done everything wrong, because he missed the memo. He is the counter-example as great example, the artistic contrarian in an age of corporate sameness. We celebrate him because he grabbed hold and shook us out of our complacency when he was a 30-year-old playwright and because he never let go.

A carelessly dressed guy, fallen from physical grace, approaches a man on a bench, head buried in a book. “Mister, I’ve been to the zoo.” It’s the ur-Albee moment: the stranger from nowhere forces the complacent man to look up and take notice, forces all of us to take notice. Can you remember the impact of those words the first time you heard them?

Will you ever shake the hangover from that angry, debauched exorcism of a party that leaves George and Martha alone—guests gotten and gone, imaginary son dead? Or can you drown the quiet echo of their final moment, as George sings, “Who’s afraid of Virginia Woolf...” and Martha responds, “I...am...George..I...am.”

Can you lose the sad chill of the moment in A Delicate Balance when Harry and Edna show up on their best friends’ doorstep, frightened, terrified of, precisely, nothing, and move in, with their terror, with their nothing?

One of the revelations of rereading Edward’s plays in the past few weeks has been how deeply they run in me, how physical the memory of them is. They seem to travel under the skin, through the blood, along the frayed ends of nerves. Where, in us, do plays live?
A woman, who is three women, at 26, 52, and very old, watches her own death, denying it, accepting it, welcoming it all at once, until it seems that death is in the room with us, too. A missing maybe baby, a slaughtered lover/goat, a lady who claims to be a dying woman's mother—his plays work on us like personal traumas, sending out after shocks of recognition. Recognition of ourselves.

Edward Albee’s dramatic problems—the ones the plays set out to tackle—are never less than problems of existence. Death is everywhere in the plays. Our days are played out in its waiting room. Palpable, literal death and its cousins: silence, absence, emptiness, loss. How do we live in the presence of death? And how do we love? Edward’s plays are crammed, mangled with love. This phrase from *A Delicate Balance* hangs over his work for me: “love and error.” Think about his characters—couples, lovers, sisters, friends, parents, children, even strangers and animals. They drive the ones they love away or love them too little, too meanly, too distantly, destructively, or just wrongly. Love and error. It is, as the woman says in *The Play about the Baby*, “a wangled teb.” Edward Albee is our great anti-romantic poet of love, its rhapsodist and coroner, performing his playful, furious autopsies on it—revealing the existential terror of our intimate relations.

Today we celebrate Edward Albee in a room full of playwrights and I have to ask—because it’s the job of [New Dramatists](http://www.newdramatists.org) to ask—how can we make it possible for more writers to do what he has done, to do so much wrong so well—to make such an impact? How can we help them range this widely and freely for this long? How can we embolden them to build bodies of work this varied, probing, vital, and fine? At [New Dramatists](http://www.newdramatists.org) our answer is seven years of free space and time and the company of their peers, an extraordinary staff devoted to letting writers be the artistic directors of their own experimental laboratory. Our answer is yes, and what else? And where do you want to go next?

What more can we in this room, this theater community, do to encourage the early attempts of our playwrights? What more can we do to sustain them as they write their ways from their own *Zoo Story* or *Death of Bessie Smith* toward a *Virginia Woolf* or *Delicate Balance*? What can we do to ensure that they have a second act or third or fourth to reap the fruits of their artistic maturity?

Frankly, I look at the example of Edward Albee, like that of O'Neill before him, and worry that such a career isn’t possible anymore, certainly not on Broadway, not even on regional stages. I fear that we’re too adventure averse, too nervous to commit to more than one play at a time, too apron-tied to the thickest critics and the conservatism of an aging audience. But we want to make it possible. It’s why we’re gathered here.

What’s the answer? Again, Edward’s singular career offers one: produce more new plays, more early-career playwrights. From 1963 to 1971, with two producers, Richard Barr and Clinton Wilder, Edward did something that I’m not sure has been done before or since. He sunk profits from his Broadway hit *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf* into producing the plays of other young writers. And so, through the Albarwild Playwrights’ Unit, the world was introduced to the brilliant idiosyncrasies of Sam Shepard,
LeRoi Jones, Adrienne Kennedy, Terrence McNally and New Dramatists alumni—John Guare, Frank Gagliano, Lanford Wilson, Lee Kalcheim, Megan Terry, and others. Albarwild—it sounds like some art-radical jungle beast, and it was.

As if that wasn't enough, Edward Albee, the very model of the playwright at his most individualistic, started a foundation for writers and artists of talent and need. He fixed up a barn for them to work in, a center for “creative persons.” He runs it to this day.

I haven't seen a memo from Edward Albee or anything like his rules for writers, but I can pluck some principles from the examples of his art and life. Try these:

1. Never stop exploring, even at the precipice.
2. Defy expectations, especially your own.
3. Don’t accept no.
4. Write about big things, even if you set your plays in living rooms.
5. Write great roles, then find great actors to fill them.
6. Find producers who believe in you—not just in one play, but in all your plays past and future. Stay with them.
7. Let your subconscious be your guide.
8. Read great plays and then write them.
9. Read great playwrights and then become one.
10. Hang out with composers, poets, painters, sculptors and other writers.
11. Love form and play with it.
12. If you make any money, spend it to support writers you believe in.
13. There are writers around the world being silenced. Visit them. Hear their stories. Fight for their freedom.
14. Tell your truth.
15. And this from from The Play about the Baby: “Always be precise: saves time, saves paper.”

Today we celebrate Edward Albee in all his phases, in all his fullness. We are in this room with him and, so, we are in the room with others who came before: Ibsen, shatterer of illusions; Chekhov, anatomist of our interior lives; Beckett, vaudevillian of silence and death; Ionesco, the unregenerate absurdist; and O’Neill, America’s first great explorer. Edward is heir to all these writers and to none of them; and he’s an influence on nearly every writer who has followed him, including the writer at your table.

This is what floors me: the image of the Great American Playwright traipsing from coast to coast, from New York to Houston to San Diego, talking to young playwrights and younger ones, kids, teenagers, college students, early professionals. This idea of Edward Albee, living playwright, despiser of eulogies, teaching, mentoring, giving back. This room full of playwrights is what he’s wrought.
I have this D.H. Lawrence quote on my door: “It is hard to hear a new voice, as hard as to listen to a new language. Why? Out of fear. The world fears a new experience more than it fears anything.” Edward Albee’s voice was new in 1958, and it’s new in 2007. He is the always New Dramatist, the ever-new. We can’t pigeonhole him, because he offers us a real and new experience every time. We’re right to fear his voice, the way we fear raw electricity or fire.

In the last minutes of The Zoo Story, Jerry provokes Peter to pick up the knife he tosses him. Then he runs onto the knife in Peter’s hand. It is, like so many Albee endings, a moment of intense, quiet intimacy. Jerry thanks Peter for comforting him and, we suspect, for the sheer contact, this last stab at something like love. You have to start somewhere, he has explained, if not with people, then with animals. If not in life, then at the moment of death. Jerry is death’s suitor, and he’s chosen Peter to show him to the door.

This is where Edward Albee started—his pen, Jerry’s knife. And we will run onto the blade again and again for as long as he chooses to put work into the world. On behalf of the writers, staff, and board of New Dramatists, I want to thank you for showing us the edge and for the cold comfort of its cut. Thank you for stretching the possible in every direction, for tying your fortunes to ours and, so, helping grow a brave new generation of playwrights. And most of all, thank you for insisting on contact, especially with ourselves, for the gift of our own fear.

**CHRONOLOGY OF PLAYS BY EDWARD ALBEE**

**WORLD, UNITED STATES, AND NEW YORK CITY PREMIERES**

- *The Death of Bessie Smith*. April 21, 1960, Schlosspark Theater, Berlin, Germany; March 1, 1961, York Playhouse, New York City.
• *Box and Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung.* March 6, 1968, Studio Arena Theater, Buffalo, New York; September 30, 1968, Billy Rose Theatre, New York City.
• *All Over.* March 27, 1971, Martin Beck Theatre, New York City.
• *Seascape.* January 26, 1975, Shubert Theatre, New York City.
• *The Lady from Dubuque.* January 31, 1980, Morosco Theatre, New York City.
• *The Lorca Play.* April 24, 1992, Houston, Texas.
• *Fragments.* October 10, 1993, Ensemble Theatre of Cincinnati, Ohio; April 8, 1994, Signature Theatre Company, New York City.

**INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR EMILY MANN**

When McCarter produces Edward Albee’s *A Delicate Balance* in the Berlind Theatre in January, it will mark the fourth production of an Albee play at McCarter during Emily Mann’s tenure as artistic director, and the third directed by her. *A Delicate Balance* is the classic 1966 masterpiece in which a suburban couple finds their best friends at their door, terrified, unable to explain or leave. This fall, literary director Carrie Hughes spoke to Emily about her relationship with Edward Albee and her thoughts on the play.
Carrie Hughes: Can you talk a little bit about your history with Edward Albee at McCarter?
Emily Mann: When I was appointed artistic director here, there were two calls I made immediately. One was to Athol Fugard and one was to Edward Albee. I asked Edward if there was anything in his body of work that he wanted produced. At that time he was still out of favor in this country—this was before *Three Tall Women* and the numerous awards for that play which brought him back to national stature. I thought, he’s one of the great living American playwrights, if I’m going to run a theater he should be part of it, if he would deign to be so. So I called, and he said, “come on over.” I went to his loft in New York and we had a great talk. He held two new scripts in his hands. One was *Marriage Play* and the other was *Three Tall Women*. And he said, “hmmm…which one should I give to you?” And guess which one he gave to me? *Marriage Play*! But it ended up being a great experience and started our extraordinary working relationship.

So that was the first time out. He directed it. And then the second time out, I asked him, could I direct *All Over* and he said, “well, of course.” I realized then how 95% of a show for Edward—the other 5% is the design—but 95% is the casting. He feels, and I’ve come to realize that he’s right, not everyone can act well in his plays. Those who are good at Shakespeare often can do Edward’s plays. It’s all about language; the language is a musical score, including the punctuation. Working on *All Over* he whispered in my ear about the flawless Rosemary Harris’s delivery of a line: “Emily, I didn’t hear the comma!” That’s now my favorite line of his. It makes me laugh.

Then we commissioned him. Edward was the first Ford Foundation playwright with the University. He came in on time with *Me, Myself & I*. I directed. It went on to New York to Playwrights Horizons. And now I’m directing *A Delicate Balance*.

**CH:** Why is Edward Albee one of the great American playwrights?
EM: That’s a whole book! … Why I admire him, and why most playwrights admire him, is because he never stopped writing. No matter what the critics said, no matter how people responded, he kept on going and he tried never to repeat himself. Every one of his plays is different from the last one and breaks the rules of the one that came before. That’s one thing that I find extraordinary.

Second, he has something to say. He says he wants to write ‘necessary’ plays. That’s an incredible mantra for a playwright. Do we need to have this play? Does this play need to exist? Does this story need to come out? Does this break of form need to occur? He’s as much a formalist and a structuralist as he is a storyteller. He’s fantastic with character. He understands women. His language is articulate and tough; there’s not an extra word or punctuation mark anywhere in his writing. And he’s written some of the unforgettable images and characters of the last century. I find him, without a doubt, one of the greats.

**CH:** Could you describe *A Delicate Balance*?
EM: I could probably do it in words and broken sentences. “Why did you come? We got frightened.” All my life, even when I was a young woman, I’ve known what that meant. I knew what it meant to me then, I know what it means to me now, although some of it’s too scary to even look at. To have such real people with such real relationships, people I really recognize and know and care about, grappling with this existential fear, it’s just very profound to me, and mysterious.

CH: Can you talk about what makes *A Delicate Balance* relevant?
EM: Well, there’s a lot to be frightened of right now. There are lots of things we don’t understand, and we’re really scared. We’re all afraid of dying, and sometimes when you face mortality for real, the terror just keeps rippling down deeper and deeper and deeper until you’re just in a panic of despair. I think at a certain point in one’s life, we’ve all come up against it. So that will always be there.

And on a personal level, how far does friendship go? How far does family go? At the end of the day, even if you’re at each others’ throats, is it blood that really matters at the end of the day? These things come up as you work with this play, profound questions, no answers, about who we are as human beings. It’s really, really deep. He’s stripped away all the excess; we’re right at the big stuff.

You were talking earlier about structure, playwriting structure. It’s perfect. It really is. It’s all there and you can’t really disturb it. All you can do is keep unearthing every syllable, every comma.

CH: And what are you most excited about working on *A Delicate Balance*?
EM: One of the great joys of my life is having a working relationship with Edward Albee. My admiration and respect for him is unshakeable. It’s an incredible privilege to be working on Edward’s masterpiece with him still here and very, very, clear in his needs, feelings, and desires for the play. He and I don’t mince words with each other. We’re honest with each other. We have good banter, a good relationship, and also I learn so much from him. *A Delicate Balance* is one of the greatest American plays. Can you imagine the privilege of directing it with the playwright in the room?

**CHARACTER PROFILES**

**AGNES**

A woman in the latter half of her life. She is a self-described wife, mother, lover, and homemaker. She believes that she is the thing holding her well-to-do family together, and maintaining the balance in the household.

**AGNES**

‘To keep in shape.’ Have you heard the expression? Most people misunderstand it, assume it means alteration, when it does not. Maintenance. When we keep something in shape, we maintain its shape –
whether we are proud of that shape or not, is another matter – we keep it from falling apart. We do not attempt the impossible. We maintain. We hold.

(II, ii)

**TOBIAS**

Agnes' husband, and a few years older. He is a retired businessman. He has a tendency to avoid anything confrontational or emotional.

**JULIA**

I thought you were a marvel—saint, sage, daddy, everything.... And then, as the years turned—poor old man—you sank to cipher, and you've stayed there, I'm afraid—very nice but ineffectual, essential, but not-really-thought-of, gray ... non-eminence.

**TOBIAS**

Unh-hunh...

(II, i)

**CLAIRE**

Agnes' younger sister. She has stopped attending Alcoholics Anonymous meetings because she believes she has nothing in common with the people there. Of everyone in the house, she is most likely to speak her mind.

**AGNES**

Claire could tell us so much if she cared to, could you not, Claire. Claire, who watches from the sidelines, has seen so very much, has seen us all so clearly, have you not, Claire. You were not named for nothing.

(II, ii)

**JULIA**

The daughter of Agnes and Tobias. She is 36, and has returned to her childhood home after leaving her fourth husband.

**JULIA**

...Aren't I a good old girl?

**TOBIAS**

Either that or slow.
JULIA
Great Christ! What the hell did I come home to? And why? Both of you? Snotty, mean...

(II, i)

HARRY AND EDNA

Longtime friends of Agnes and Tobias from the club. They have been overcome by a nameless fear, and ask Agnes and Tobias to take them in.

TOBIAS
You don’t need to ask me, Harry, you don’t need to ask a thing; you’re our friends, our very best friends in the world, and you don’t have to ask...You come for dinner don’t you come for cocktails see us at the club on Saturdays and talk and lie and laugh with us and pat old Agnes on the hand and say you don’t know what old Toby’d do without her and we’ve known you all these year and we love each other don’t we?

(III)

PRE SHOW QUESTIONS

Educators: We recommend that you use one or more of the assignments and activities in this document to introduce your students to A Delicate Balance and its context, and themes, as well as to engage their imaginations and creativity before they see the production.

CORE CURRICULUM STANDARDS

According to the NJ Department of Education, “experience with and knowledge of the arts is a vital part of a complete education.” Our production of A Delicate Balance and the activities outlined in this guide are designed to enrich your students’ education by addressing the following specific Core Curriculum Content Standards for Visual and Performing Arts:

1.1 The Creative Process: All students will demonstrate an understanding of the elements and principles that govern the creation of works of art in dance, music,
theatre, and visual art.

1.2 **History of the Arts and Culture:** All students will understand the role, development, and influence of the arts throughout history and across cultures.

*Performance:* All students will synthesize those skills, media, methods, and technologies appropriate to creating, performing, and/or presenting works of art in dance, music, theatre, and visual art.

1.3 **Aesthetic Responses & Critique Methodologies:** All students will demonstrate and apply an understanding of arts philosophies, judgment, and analysis to works of art in dance, music, theatre, and visual art.

Viewing *A Delicate Balance* and then participating in the pre- and post-show discussions and activities suggested in this audience guide will also address the following Core Curriculum Content Standards in **Language Arts Literacy**:

3.1 **Reading:** All students will understand and apply the knowledge of sounds, letters, and words in written English to become independent and fluent readers, and will read a variety of materials and texts with fluency and comprehension.

3.2 **Writing:** All students will write in clear, concise, organized language that varies in content and form for different audiences and purposes.

3.3 **Speaking:** All students will speak in clear, concise, organized language that varies in content and form for different audiences and purposes.

3.4 **Listening:** All students will listen actively to information from a variety of sources in a variety of situations.

3.5 **Viewing and Media Literacy:** All students will access, view, evaluate, and respond to print, non-print, and electronic texts and resources.