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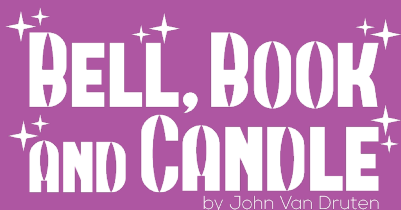


BELL, BOOK AND CANDLE

by John Van Druten



Compiled by Jurnee Neeko



Presented by special arrangement with SAMUEL FRENCH, INC.

November 29 - December 23, 2018

The Vault Theater

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BAG&BAGGAGE STAFF

Scott Palmer

Founding Artistic Director

Beth Lewis

Managing Director

Cassie Greer

Associate Artistic Director

Arianne Jacques

Patron Services Manager

Alec Lugo

Marketing Assistant

TS McCormick

Event Manager

Jim Ricks-White

Technical Director
Resident Lighting Designer

Melissa Heller

Resident Costume Designer

Ephriam Harnsberger

Company Stage Manager

CAST

Gillian Holroyd	Jessi Walters‡
Miss Holroyd	Kymerli Colbourne‡
Nick Holroyd	Norman Wilson†*
Shep Henderson	Peter Schuyler‡
Sidney Redlitch	Joey Copsey†

CREW/PRODUCTION TEAM

Director	Scott Palmer
Costume Designer	Melissa Heller
Lighting Designer & Technical Director	Jim Ricks-White
Scenic Designer	Tyler Buswell
Projection Designer	Lawrence Siulagi†
Stage Manager	Ephriam Harnsberger
Master Carpenter & Master Electrician	Gabe Costales
Assistant Stage Manager & Props Master	Darwin Pringle^
Sound Designer	Kai Hennig^

‡ = Member of the Bag&Baggage Resident Acting Company,
generously sponsored by Linda Morrisson and Andrew Hoffmann

† = Bag&Baggage Associate Artist

* = Member of Actor's Equity Association, the Union of
Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States,
appearing under a Special Appearance Contract

^ = Bag&Baggage Emerging Artist, generously
sponsored by Brad & Linda Needham

BELL, BOOK AND CANDLE

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INTRODUCTION

Gillian Holroyd, a witch living in Greenwich Village in New York City, has fallen in love with her neighbor... a serious problem for witches, who must give up their powers if they fall in love with a mere mortal! When Gillian finds out he is going to marry an old college rival, she casts a love spell on him which (of course) backfires! Will Gillian give up her powers for a shot at happiness, or will she lose her last chance at love?

John Van Druten's 1950 play inspired the hugely popular film of the same name starring Kim Novak and Jimmy Stewart, and one of the most popular television shows in history, *Bewitched*!

"John Van Druten's frothy romantic comedy casts a potent spell... clever, cunning, and filled with otherworldly sophistication...thoroughly enjoyable!"

— Leah Frank, The New York Times



Kymerli Colbourne, Peter Schuyler, and Jessi Walters play Miss Holroyd, Shep Henderson, and Gillian Holroyd in Bag&Baggage's production of Bell, Book and Candle

BELL, BOOK AND CANDLE

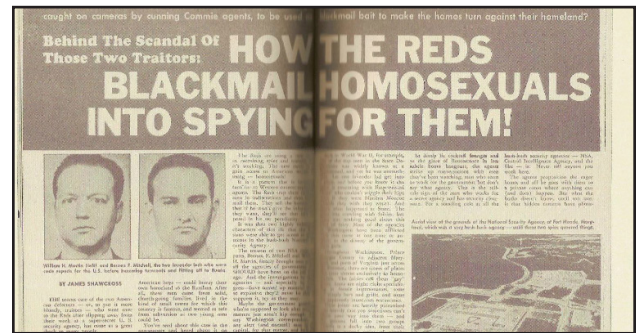
by John Van Druten



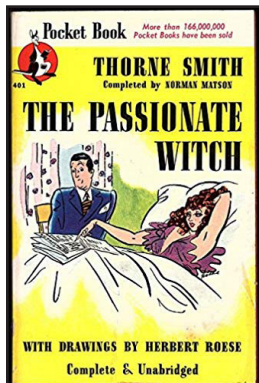
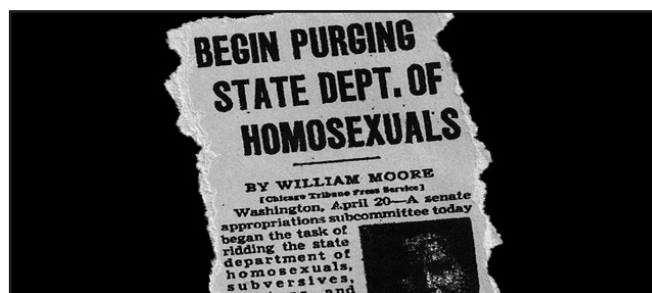
HISTORY & INFLUENCES

The Lavender Scare

In 1950, playwright John Van Druten published his charmingly bewitching play, *Bell, Book and Candle*. That same year, as the Cold War was taking hold, and Senator Joseph McCarthy had vowed to rid the United States of all Communists, the Federal Government went on a “witch hunt” for gays and lesbians working in the State Department.

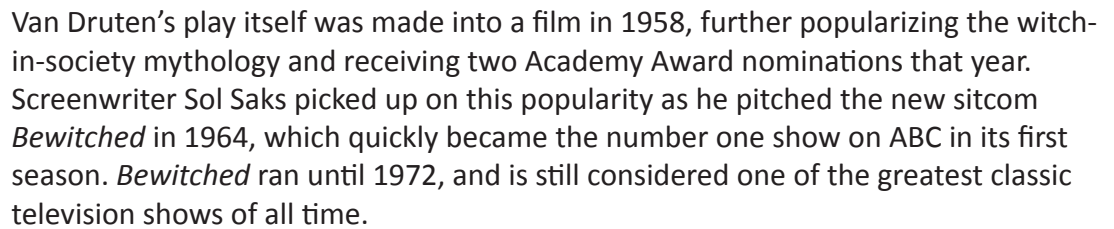


Republican National Chairman Guy George Gabrielson led the cry for these government firings, very publicly claiming that “sexual perverts who have infiltrated our government in recent years” were “perhaps as dangerous as the actual Communists,” and setting the stage for mass firings due to the “security risk” posed by homosexuality. So called “lavender lads” - a derogatory term used by some senators to refer to gay men - were seen as likely communist sympathizers because they faced a far higher potential for falling victim to blackmail in a society that was unaccepting of anything that deviated from the heterosexual norm. At the end of the day, both homosexuals and the communist parties were thought to be “threats to the American way of life” and over 400 men and women lost their jobs during the Lavender Scare of 1950.



A Culture of Witchcraft

The idea of a young witch bewitching a man to make him fall in love with her has been used in art and literature throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. One of the most direct inspirations for John Van Druten’s play is Thorne Smith’s novel *The Passionate Witch*. In this story, a shy, young, rich man who saves a naked woman from a fire soon finds himself married to her, only later discovering that she is a witch and has cast a spell upon him and his secretary. During its release in 1941, *The Passionate Witch* was criticized for being scandalous and crude, yet gained enough popularity to be made into a film in 1942, under the title *I Married a Witch*.



NO MAN CAN RESIST HER!

"I Married a Witch"

and she'll conquer you!
and you'll love her!

Fredric March
Veronica Lake

ROBERT BENCHLEY SUSAN HAYWARD
CECIL DE MILLE A ROSE CLARK PRODUCTION

THE GREAT DICTATOR



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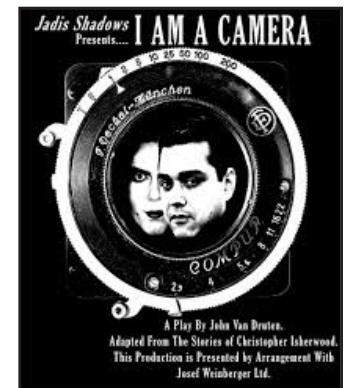


THE PLAYWRIGHT: JOHN VAN DRUTEN



Born in 1901 in London to a Dutch father and an English mother, John William Van Druten showed a love for writing from an early age. His parents were unsupportive of his passion, and encouraged him to pursue a law degree instead, so John entered the University of London, intent upon becoming a lawyer. In the midst of this pursuit, John rekindled his first love, writing a play titled *Young Woodley*, which ultimately launched his successful career as a playwright. *Young Woodley* explored the story of a young student becoming infatuated with his headmaster's wife, and was banned by the Lord Chamberlain's office in London for being "too scandalous". Despite this censure, the play became a huge success in the United States, and put Van Druten on the map.

After writing a handful of successful plays in London throughout the 1930s, Van Druten emigrated to the United States, where he became a fixture on Broadway. Van Druten directed the original Broadway production of *The King and I*, and his name has been in every program for *Cabaret* since it premiered in 1966, as Joe Masteroff's book of that musical was based on *I Am a Camera* - Van Druten's stage adaptation of Christopher Isherwood's *Berlin Stories*. He also adapted and directed *I Remember Mama* from Kathryn Forbes' book *Mama's Bank Account*, which was a major hit in 1944 (and featured the Broadway debut of Marlon Brando). And his 1943 comedy *The Voice of the Turtle*, after all these years, still ranks as the 9th longest running play in Broadway history with 1,557 performances. Those are just a few of the highlights of the nearly thirty plays he influenced, in what was, sadly, only a twenty-seven year career.



Known as a "witty, urbane observer of modern society," Van Druten spent the late 30s and early 40s in a relationship with Carter Lodge, the manager of the AJC Ranch that the two of them bought together with British actress Auriol Lee in Coachella Valley, California. Van Druten died tragically early of heart failure in 1957, leaving the vast majority of his estate to Lodge.

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TERMS TO KNOW

The Kinsey Report: a set of books on human sexual behavior published in 1948 and 1953 by Alfred Kinsey. Together they sold 250,000 copies and were translated into 13 languages. He interviewed thousands of men and women to gather data about human sexuality; as Kinsey and his colleagues tabulated the data, they used a novel approach to defining human sexuality and employed a graded scale to define a person's sexuality. Prior to Kinsey, people were generally considered to be either heterosexual or homosexual. Instead of this binary approach, Kinsey saw sexual behavior on a continuum which rarely described individuals as either strictly homosexual or heterosexual.

Phonograph: a record player

Unguent: a soft, greasy, or viscous substance used as an ointment or for lubrication. In *Bell, Book and Candle*, Aunt Queenie receives a magical unguent as a Christmas present from Nicky that makes her able to "feel" colors.

Operator: also known as switchboard operators, these were the employees of the phone company who would manually connect phone lines by plugging in the right phone plugs into the switchboard. You would sometimes have to call the operator to "report a line" which meant you had a faulty phone plug associated with your number. Until it was repaired or replaced, it would keep you from receiving or making calls.



an RCA portable phonograph from the late 1950s



switchboard operators

Bell, Book, and Candle: in Roman Catholicism, a ceremony formerly used in pronouncing the "major excommunication" or "anathema". Its origins are not clear, but the ceremony dates back certainly to the late 9th century. The bell represented the public character of the act; the book the authority of the words spoken by the presiding bishop; and the candle was believed to symbolize the possibility that the ban might be lifted by the repentance and amendment of its victim.

Luminous Paint: paint that exhibits luminescence. In other words, it gives off visible light. In *Bell, Book and Candle*, Gillian receives luminous paint from Nicky that allows her to magically summon any person whose image she happens to paint it on.

Saints: people who are recognized as having an exceptional degree of holiness, or likeness or closeness to God. In the world of *Bell, Book and Candle*, saints are typically viewed as the polar opposite to witches.

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OUR PRODUCTION

John Van Druten was heavily criticized in his time for writing beautiful, charming pieces without substance or deeper themes. We at Bag&Baggage disagree: while there is a lighthearted and charming feel to much of Van Druten's work, it is by far not without meaning. *Bell, Book and Candle* has a sophisticated wit found throughout the play, along with a heart-wrenching loneliness stemming from not knowing where you belong or if you belong anymore. Director Scott Palmer describes his thoughts on the underlying themes found in this bewitching classic:



As you might suspect, John Van Druten was gay, with only a few people in his closest circle aware of his sexuality. But that doesn't mean that Van Druten's work wasn't heavily - if not almost exclusively - influenced by his position as an outsider in a heterosexual world that scorned him. As with most gay men of the period, a direct assault on homophobia would likely have ended badly, so Van Druten, like hundreds of gay playwrights and writers before him (Noël Coward, Truman Capote, Oscar Wilde, etc.), used the only weapon he had to hand: wit.



During his lifetime, Van Druten was well-thought-of, but not esteemed; his works were often overshadowed by more "artistically ambitious" plays and playwrights - plays with "themes" and "statements." In Best Plays of The American Theatre, John Gassner writes, "Van Druten happens to be one of those playwrights who do not evoke lengthy critical ponderings. This is the case because, instead of heaving with the world's problems and proffering political or philosophical comment, he has been content to study people and set them down for what they ARE rather than what they may be worth as symbols."



And yet...throughout his plays, Van Druten does have symbolism. He does weave substance and commentary into his works, particularly about women and by using female characters to speak about silenced cultures, and about sexual and personal identity. He was interested in how institutions and societal structures impact individual lives, about personal choices, and about how individual people search and struggle for meaning and value in their lives.

Brooks Atkinson of The New York Times writes of Van Druten's work as "amusing, touching plays, written lightly and expertly, and with beguiling style," and I agree that that is true. What I don't agree with is the idea that something that is lightly touched, beguiling, or stylish must necessarily be empty of meaning.

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I feel connected to Gillian, and her family; to the archness, the quick dismissive wit, the high style and rollicking camp – but I also know what it means to be afraid to be seen for who I really am, what value I place on the few people in my life who are like me, and what it means to wonder if love is real, or if love should be the end goal. I know about what it means to feel incomplete, to feel like there is something bigger out there, if only I knew how to find it, and if only I wasn't too afraid to show the world who I really am.



THEMES

Social Exclusion

Witches, because of the nature of their abilities, need to hide amongst us - they need to separate their social lives from ours. Throughout the play we see Gillian's desire to be a part of our "humdrum" world, but in order for that to be achieved, she must lose everything that is her identity. When the author Redlitch talks about "witches among us," he illustrates the fear of being discovered that underlies all of witch culture, and the terror that comes from the possibility of your loved ones finding out who you really are and the secrets you are keeping. This feeling of being kept from the world around you is not an accident in John Van Druten's writing; rather, this feeling of exclusion and hurt mirrors the feeling of being a closeted gay man in the 50s. Gillian's confusion and frustration following the events of the play mirror emotions that Van Druten certainly must have experienced in his life as a gay man in a culture that was unwilling to accept his sexuality.

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Human Fragility

Being a human means accepting promises from other people and trusting that other people will be good to you. When that is too much to bear, it is always possible to retreat into the thought, "I'll live for my own comfort, for my own revenge, for my own anger, and I just won't be a member of society anymore." That really means, "I won't be a human being anymore."

- philosopher Martha Nussbaum

We see selfishness, anger, and hunger for revenge in the witches and warlocks throughout *Bell, Book and Candle*, as their more fragile human emotions have been drained in exchange for their magical powers. After Gillian falls in love with Shep, instead of running to him, trusting him, and spilling out all her newly-discovered emotions, she hides, ashamed and afraid to tell him what has become of her. She pushes the man she loves out the door rather than face him as an open and vulnerable human being. When she finally comes to terms with her new reality, embraces his presence, and trusts him, Gillian reaches a point of balance; with the help of the person she loves she accepts her human fragility.

Social Protest

More thoughts from director Scott Palmer on the theme of social protest:

Van Druten wrote the play as a protest work; by using the metaphor of witches and warlocks, and by putting his perspective into that of a female protagonist, Van Druten was able to say a number of specific things to his audience: first, that gays have a right to exist; second, that homosexuality is a community even if the broader world doesn't understand it; third, that being closeted, and the treatment of queer culture by straight culture, creates deep loneliness and emotional shallowness; and, fourth, that being gay (or a witch) is actually really pretty fun.



image featured in the 2017 documentary The Lavender Scare

Love

We see two very strong ideas of love in *Bell, Book and Candle*: the magic-imposed love that has taken over Shep's life, and the slow growth of true love within Gillian. Shep loses himself, his goals, his relationships, and his willpower amid his intense infatuation with Gillian. He seems to know on some level that this type of love isn't real, as the magical twitterpated feeling is almost too good to be true — almost unbelievable, as Shep expresses multiple times. Comparatively, we get to watch Gillian's true love for Shep develop and come to light over the course of the play: we see her grow fond of him, risk losing her power for a life with him, and finally lose him because she loves him too much to lie to him. The loss of Shep illuminates Gillian's true feelings, as well as the guilt that surfaces with her regained humanity and emotions. The immorality of the love spell is without question: she took away his ability to choose for himself, and in the process has caused the destruction of his life. The end of the play allows this conflict to resolve, as Shep can finally "see" without the cloud of magic, and choose love under his own powers.

BELL, BOOK AND CANDLE

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & WRITING ACTIVITIES

Before you see the show:

1. Discuss what you know about the history of gay rights in the United States. What are the attitudes that you observe surrounding sexuality in our culture today? How are those attitudes similar to or different from what you know about cultural attitudes in past decades and centuries?
2. Think about a moment when you have tried to keep a secret of some kind. How did your desire to keep this secret affect the way you interacted with the world around you? Consider internal thought process as well as physical interaction, emotional state, and verbal communication.
3. Are there universal elements of human happiness? Consider what elements in life make you feel fulfilled: for example, love, success, education, family, etc. Could any of these be identified as universally true or necessary for all human beings?

After you see the show:

4. At one point in the show Gillian asks Shep what it means to be in love and he responds with the line: "Could you go on without me?" Is this a valid definition of love: being unable to go on without another person? Why or Why not? If you don't like Shep's answer, offer a statement that is indicative of your own personal definition of love.
5. It is possible to view *Bell, Book and Candle* as a protest piece, using magic as a metaphor for sexuality, and rising up to face the discrimination of the 1950 Lavender Scare. Do you think this is a valid interpretation of John Van Druten's play? Why or Why not?
6. John Van Druten used the 1950s pop culture phenomenon of "witches among us" as the backdrop for his story. Imagine if Van Druten was writing this piece today. Is there a current pop culture phenomenon that might also work well as a vehicle for this story about love, social exclusion, and the things that make us the most human? Explain your answer.
7. Consider the five characters in *Bell, Book and Candle*: Gillian, Shep, Nicky, Aunt Queenie, and Redlitch. Which of these characters do you sympathize with most, and why? What was it about the way these roles were performed that caused you to feel that way?
8. Consider all of the design elements at play in *Bell, Book and Candle*: the set, lighting, projections, props, costumes, and sound. Select one design element and discuss how it helped highlight the action of the script and tell the story of the show.
9. Why do you think Bag&Baggage chose to present *Bell, Book and Candle* around the holidays — aside from the obvious scene in which the witches celebrate Christmas at Gillian's house? Does this story speak to us in any particular way at this time of year? Explain your answer.



SOURCES AND FURTHER READING

John Van Druten

“John Van Who” by Ron Fassler from *Theatre Yesterday and Today*:
<http://www.ronfassler.org/single-post/2018/06/01/JOHN-VAN-WHO>

“Van Druten, John” from *snac cooperative* (a collection of biographies):
<http://snaccooperative.org/ark:/99166/w6js9xp8>

The Lavender Scare

“The ‘Lavender Scare’: Homosexuals at the State Department”
from *The Association for Diplomatic Studies & Training*:
<https://adst.org/2015/09/the-lavender-scare-homosexuals-at-the-state-department/>

“McCarthyism, the Lavender Scare, and the fight for full LGBT equality” by Warren J. Blumenfeld
from *LGBTQ Nation*:
<https://www.lgbtqnation.com/2016/10/mccarthyism-lavender-scare-fight-full-lgbt-equality/>

“The Lavender Scare: The government persecution of the LGBT” from *Lesbian News*:
<http://www.lesbiannews.com/lavender-scare-government-persecution-lgbt/>

Bell, Book and Candle Themes and Terms

“Hag, temptress, or feminine icon? The witch in pop culture” by Chloe Germaine Buckley
from *The Conversation*:
<https://www.murdermostqueer.com/>

“The Kinsey Reports” from *The Rockefeller Foundation: a digital history*:
<https://rockfound.rockarch.org/kinsey-reports>

“Bell, book, and candle” from Encyclopedia Britannica:
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/bell-book-and-candle-Roman-Catholicism>

“Philosopher Martha Nussbaum on How to Live With Our Human Fragility” by Maria Popova
from *Brainpickings*:
<https://www.brainpickings.org/2014/03/14/martha-nussbaum-bill-moyers-world-of-ideas/>

Media

Watch the trailer for *The Lavender Scare* (2017):
<https://youtu.be/4CuMkTSiB1A>