

<https://www.tribute.ca/news/cheers-star-george-wendt-discusses-canadian-theater-project/2017/08/23/>

tribute.ca

August 23, 2017



George Wendt, best known for playing Norm on the hit sitcom *Cheers* (1982 to 1993), spoke to us about his upcoming role as Willy Loman in a Canadian production of Arthur Miller's iconic play *Death of a Salesman*.

The production runs from Oct. 18 to Nov. 4, 2017 in the Waterloo Region village of St. Jacobs. Further details can be found at the end of the interview. ~Yanis Khamisi

Why this role? Why *Death of a Salesman*?

Why not? I'm the right age, I can relate to a lot of Willy's issues. I love doing theater and I've never done an Arthur Miller play, and Willy Loman is the great white whale old-geezer role.

How will modern audiences respond to a play from the 1940s? Is *Death of a Salesman* relevant in 2017?

It's a classic. It's like all the classic myths. They're all relatable to everyone all the time.

What do you want out of the experience?

It's really fun to put a piece together, if we can make it work. That's our goal, it's what we do. A carpenter would love to build a beautiful house and there's tremendous satisfaction from that.

You're known as a comedian. How do you think your fans will respond to seeing you in a dramatic role?

Well, we're doing a comic version of *Death of a Salesman*... nah I'm just joking. I don't think they'll have much problem accepting it. We're in very good hands with director Marti Maraden. It'll be what it'll be, and I can't imagine that Marti's going to let it down. [Marti Maraden has 30 years of theater experience at the Stratford and Shaw festivals.]

You've worked in Canadian theater before, what keeps you coming back?

Everyone you get to play with is top-notch. There's nothing that different about Canada from working in the States. Theater is theater and you get a lot of dedicated people, you put a piece together and you try to make it work. And then you go out and have a beer and take another whack at it the next day. It's fun!

We're a movie website, which movies or performances do you love?

[Al Pacino](#) as Michael Corleone in *The Godfather*. There are so many, but that one stands out.

You're a Second City alum, any thoughts on Second City today?

I'm sure it's wonderful to this day. I love Second City, both in Chicago and Toronto. It gets better and better. The kids are just sharper and funnier, and smarter and faster than ever.

Why is Chicago often referred to as the Second City?

Well it started out because it was the second largest city in the States. It's the third now after Los Angeles.

You're a proud son of Chicago, so I have to ask: Best deep dish pizza in Chicago?

There's Lou Malnati's, Uno Pizzeria, Pizzeria Due, Gino's East, and Giordano's. They've all mastered it. That's a special thing that people visiting Chicago could try, but most Chicagoans would vote for their local place down the street.

You've famously represented Chicago on *Saturday Night Live* with the legendary Superfans sketch. *SNL* has a tradition of hiring talent from Chicago, mainly through Second City. How has *SNL* represented Chicago?

Well, you know we had these broad, stereotypical Chicago sports fans [Superfans], but Chicago culture... I think *SNL* is more reflective of national culture, but the thing we did was really broad, stereotypical stuff. They certainly are bringing a Second City sensibility to *Saturday Night Live*. Lorne Michaels really figured out how to bring a Second City type experience to television. People tried before Lorne Michaels, and it never quite worked. He blended sketch comedy with television sets and it finally worked.

It's been a real honor getting to speak with you. Any plans for the future?

I'm doing the world premiere of a new musical right before *Death of a Salesman* at Bucks County Playhouse in Philadelphia [September 12 to October 1] and it's called *Rock and Roll Man: The Alan Freed Story*.

Regular performance tickets for *Death of a Salesman* are \$46 for adults and \$27 for youth under 20 years of age; \$37 tickets are also available for select Discount Dates. Tickets can be purchased in person at the St. Jacobs Country Playhouse, online at www.draytonentertainment.com or by calling the Box Office at (519) 747-7788 or toll free at 1-855-DRAYTON (372-9866).