

Getting to Room Temperature

Playwright: Arthur Milner

Performed by: Robert Bockstael

Date of performance: Friday, March 24th, 8 pm at the Capitol Theatre

Promo clip: <https://vimeo.com/143483442>

Website: <http://www.roomtemperaturecollective.com/>

CBC news material: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/assisted-suicide-getting-to-room-temperature-1.3441911>



The play, about end-of-life issues in Canada and the right to die, is based on a true story and promises audiences laughter through tears.

Audience feedback:

“What seemed apparent to me was the need for us to have our stories told and listened to. It was remarkable how many people participated in the talkback. The dialogue underscored how facing the unknown around death and dying is so difficult. So, thank you Arthur and Bob. You are helping us with your work, which was vulnerable, funny, entertaining and educational, and allowed Rose, Arthur's mother, to have some voice.”

Description:

Based on a true story, this hard-hitting, sentimental and funny one-person play is about dying.

At 93-and-a-half, playwright Arthur Milner's healthy and active mother Rose took a turn for the worse. He accompanied her to the doctor where her request for assistance in dying was respectfully refused. Rose's decline and polite quest for euthanasia takes us on an emotional journey into grudgingly explored territory.

Canada is currently embroiled in a conversation about the right to die. Inspired by this debate, our own experiences, our need to laugh in the face of death, The Room Temperature Collective has set out to develop Milner's beautiful exploration of the death of a parent. Getting to Room Temperature is timely and vital, a response to a question that lies at the heart of our lives: "What makes a good death?"

Getting to Room Temperature charts the beautiful life and poignant death of Milner's mother, while engaging audiences in a daring, personal, and great debate of our time. In a tour-de-force performance, Bockstael guides the audience through a minefield of emotional and ethical turmoil, and brings a much-needed conversation to the Canadian stage.

There will be a talkback session following the performance with actor Robert Bockstael, Arthur Milner, Kim Bater from Kalein Hospice Society and Jane DiGiacomo from the Nelson & District Hospice Society.

Q&A with playwright/director Arthur Milner, assistant director Jenny Salisbury, and production dramaturg Maureen Labonté.

What can audiences expect to see?

Maureen: "The play is a solo piece for an actor. It tells a powerful, intimate and very personal story about how a man deals with his mother's death and her request that he help her die. She's 94 and tired. Very tired. She believes it's time to go. He's an intelligent, mature man who takes her request seriously and starts investigating how he would do it. More importantly, he starts asking himself questions about how we die and how we would like to die."

What is the significance of the title?

Jenny: "Well, one of the reasons why this play is so important is that we, as people, are bad at talking about death. It makes us uncomfortable. As part of the play says, the more uncomfortable something makes us, the more euphemisms we have for it. Death has a wide variety of pseudonyms: Kicked the bucket. Shuffled off this mortal coil. Gone to a better place. Getting to Room Temperature. Can we have conversations about death, without being embarrassed?"

... (Q&A con't)

What sort of conversation are you hoping to spark with this production?

Arthur: "I want people, even young people, to talk to each other about how they would like to die."

Why is it important to tell this story? What about it grabbed your attention?

Jenny: "Right now, our country is engaged in a new debate about aging, mortality, and the right to die. This year, for the first time, Canada has more people over the age of 65 than under the age of 15. The Supreme Court of Canada has declared that desperately suffering patients have a constitutional right to doctor-assisted suicide. I have held the hand of people as they have prepared for death. And I found extraordinary humour and warmth in those moments, as well as grief and sorrow. Arthur has found that energy with this play. And as Arthur says, "It's a play for our time — for everyone who's going to die or knows someone who will.""

More audience feedback:

"It's beautiful. Honest, simple, artful, truthful."

"What seemed apparent to me was the need for us to have our stories told and listened to. It was remarkable how many people participated in the talkback. The dialogue underscored how facing the unknown around death and dying is so difficult. So, thank you Arthur and Bob. You are helping us with your work, which was vulnerable, funny, entertaining and educational, and allowed Rose, Arthur's mother, to have some voice."

"This is to tell you how much I enjoyed your wonderful new play last night. Undoubtedly it was by far the best piece of theatre I have seen in a very, very long time. I found it deep, challenging, thought provoking, humorous, and really well written. It was also beautifully performed by Robert Bockstael, but I felt the material was so very good that I could have performed it successfully myself. You tackled a very difficult subject and handled it superbly."

"Generous, timely, intelligent, funny, heartfelt and always engaging."

"I saw Getting to Room Temperature by Arthur Milner this past Saturday afternoon, along with the Talk Back. It was a wonderful, painful, thought-provoking experience. Went with two other friends and we agreed this is a terrific play, that should be seen widely. The theatre was sold out for this last performance and most stayed behind for the talk back. That says a lot and the comments, questions indicated how the play resonated with a wide variety of people, background and ages."

Arthur Milner: Playwright, Director



Robert Bockstael: Performer

