



The Adding Machine

Elmer Rice

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The Adding Machine Details

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Author : Elmer Rice

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People are given numbers according to their social standing. Zero quite literally is a zero. He has no future. His life consists solely of adding numbers at a desk, day in day out, he is the adding machine of the play's title. On his days off he has church and has to suffer endless moaning from his unsympathetic and bored

wife. Stabbing his boss after 25 years of unappreciation is the only unpredictable thing he'd ever done, the only time he'd been ruled by his repressed passions when Zero is told he's to be sent back to Earth to 'do it all again' and has some stark truths about his situation pointed out to him. He is petrified and clings to the table screaming 'Why did you have to tell me ?' His memory is erased and he goes back to being a baby so he can be innocently alienated all over again , i liked it so much

Kristan says

This is my favorite play, I really enjoyed it.

pha gocyte says

Wow!! So many themes and tones in this short play.

It starts out as a classic house play, but turns into an interrogation of mortality, souls and eastern-influenced symbolism. Very surprising and engaging.

Steven says

An early gem of American expressionism - way ahead of its time in its portrayal of human alienation.

Victoria says

went to go see the play in seattle. tight. tight. tight.

Lydia says

This was the first play I read for my 20th Century American Drama class, and I thoroughly enjoyed it overall as well as the message Rice implanted into his work. There's confusion in Mr. Zero's monologue in the middle of the play, but it's purposefully done so by the author to show the true insanity of Mr. Zero and what drove him to it.

Greg Wise says

8 In my effort to read a play a week this year (thanks for the inspiration Jason Richards), this was a pleasant surprise. Some of the theatricality and ideas seem as surprising and fresh as any modern day piece, though some of the language and phrases remain colloquial to the 1920's. I found the most compelling scene

to be in Dinner scene when all of Mr. & Mrs. Zero's friends come over for a party. How they are staged in their respective circles and the incisive dialogue is a thrill. Equally, the cemetery scene with the strange character of Shrdlu evokes great mood like a good night watching the nonmusical parts of Michael Jackson's Thriller video from the 80's. Now, that might sound a condescending, but it's not meant to... I found the ending a tad hard to swallow, but fascinating to through in all the Eastern philosophy of reincarnation and perpetuity. A landmark piece of American Expression and easy to see how this could have been a great influence on Wilder's Our Town or a number of Tennessee Williams' work.

S?orouk Nasr says

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Jessica says

Gar nicht mal so schlecht. War amüsiert, vor allem weil es so bitterböse Szenen im Himmel gibt (-:

Mohamed Osman says

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Shane Westfall says

A really great work and a quick read too.

Betty O says

This play was adapted as a movie in the fifties or sixties starring Milo Oshea and Phyllis Diller. It is brilliant. I recently saw it done as a play and there were a few elements that were not in the movie (racism, for example) as the main characters symbolize what is wrong with humanity. I would highly recommend it.
