

American MASTERS

20
years

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WNET NEW YORK

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press information

THIRTEEN/WNET NEW YORK'S *AMERICAN MASTERS* CASTS NEW LIGHT ON THE BLACKLIST ERA WITH AN EXAMINATION OF A CRUSHING RIFT BETWEEN TWO ARTISTS IN *ARTHUR MILLER, ELIA KAZAN AND THE BLACKLIST: NONE WITHOUT SIN*, A SPECIAL ENCORE PRESENTATION THIS AUGUST ON PBS

A Production of
Thirteen/WNET
New York for PBS



Highlights Include Never-Before-Seen Photos Of Elia Kazan, 1960s Footage Of Arthur Miller And Interviews With Actor/Director Lee Grant, The Crucible Actor Madeleine Sherwood, Screenwriter Walter Bernstein, And Actor Kim Hunter

The 1999 Academy Awards won't go down in Hollywood history for the film that was named Best Picture or for the actress who was wearing the hottest outfit. The seminal issue was applause – who would and who wouldn't clap when legendary director Elia Kazan received a Lifetime Achievement Award for his remarkable contribution to filmmaking. Fifty years after the fact, there were many who still remained furious at Kazan for naming names when he appeared before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). But, an unlikely defender emerged – Kazan's old friend, playwright Arthur Miller, who had defied the committee and faced jail time. "My feelings toward that terrible era are unchanged," Miller wrote, "but at the same time history ought not to be rewritten. Elia Kazan did sufficient extraordinary work in theater and film to merit acknowledgement."

Considering the history between the two men – once regarded "like brothers," their friendship was irrevocably torn when Kazan named names – the statement was exceptionally significant. Thirteen/WNET New York's *AMERICAN MASTERS* examines the famous rift in an encore presentation of *Arthur Miller, Elia Kazan and the Blacklist: None Without Sin* airing Wednesday, August 23 at 9 p.m. (ET) on PBS (check local listings). The film was written, directed and produced by Michael Epstein and co-produced by Elizabeth McNeil for *AMERICAN MASTERS*, a five-time winner of the Emmy for Outstanding Primetime Non-Fiction Series and a recent recipient of its

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seventh Peabody Award. The film is part of the 20th anniversary celebration of *AMERICAN MASTERS*.

Work on the film began in earnest during the days following September 11, 2001. “Suddenly, I intimately understood the fear that gripped this country in the late 1940s and early 1950s,” said Epstein, who also produced and directed the *The Battle Over Citizen Kane* and the *AMERICAN MASTERS* film *Hitchcock, Selznick and the End of Hollywood*. “The blacklist became an important cautionary tale of what can happen when fear starts to dictate morality. But what really excited me was the chance to look at this era through the art and the friendship of two men whose works I greatly admire.”

AMERICAN MASTERS creator and executive producer Susan Lacy believes the film presents viewers with an important opportunity. “*AMERICAN MASTERS* is dedicated to providing unflinching examinations of our cultural history,” she said. “And this film, in particular, raises poignant questions that are especially relevant in today’s world. In the end, the audience must draw their own conclusions.”

AMERICAN MASTERS Arthur Miller, Elia Kazan and the Blacklist tells the story of the blacklist by looking at the disintegration of a friendship between two artistic soul mates, Miller and Kazan. The film explores the origin of the blacklist, the key agents of the Red Scare and the damage done not only to those subpoenaed, but to America as a nation.

Through stock footage, film clips of Kazan’s work, readings of Miller’s plays, never-before-seen photographs, interviews with scholars and those who were blacklisted, as well as excerpts from Miller and Kazan’s memoirs, the documentary offers a thorough examination of a disturbing time in American history.

“It’s impossible to understand how difficult those times were for everybody. I think it was difficult for you whether you were left or right,” says Madeleine Sherwood, who appeared in the original Broadway production of Miller’s *The Crucible* in 1953. “Very good people that just couldn’t face the fact that they might lose their livelihood, their families, their dignity. Because that’s what they’ve robbed you of.”

Actor Lee Grant was blacklisted for 12 years and deplored Kazan’s actions. Yet in *None*

Without Sin, she says of his directing skills: “There was a visual sense of excitement, of the camera being into the actor’s soul. It had an immediacy that most theatrical productions and films didn’t have.”

The film also offers new insight into the relationship Miller and Kazan shared with the same woman, actress Marilyn Monroe, which even by Hollywood standards was an odd threesome. Though Monroe professed her love for Miller, she apparently could not break from Kazan, who continued to sleep with her.

At the time of Kazan’s testimony in 1952, no one was closer to the director than Miller. Kazan had directed two of Miller’s plays: *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman*. And, Miller had written a screenplay about the Brooklyn waterfront, *The Hook*, for Kazan to direct. According to both men, they were “the same fellow.”

“It was one of those wonderful symbiotic relationships where one and one added up to eleven,” says Kazan biographer Jeff Young in the film. “I mean, they really did augment each other in beautiful ways, complemented each other – and both of them knew it.”

Unlike Kazan, Miller had never been a member of the Communist Party but he did come under attack. Right-wing groups like the American Legion charged Miller with writing anti-American plays and called for boycotts of his work and the actors who appeared in his plays. It was Kazan’s decision to appear as a friendly witness before HUAC that propelled Miller to write *The Crucible*.

“Miller had suddenly got a parallel, in his own mind, between the events of 1692 in Salem, Massachusetts and what he saw going on around him in America of the 1950s,” says Miller biographer Chris Bigsby in the film. “So Miller went round to Kazan’s on a kind of double errand. One is to hear the terrible news, as it turned out from his point of view, that Kazan was going to name names, and the other was to explain that he was on his way to Salem to do the research for *The Crucible*.”

In the woods behind Kazan’s house, the two men took a walk. Fifty years later both men recalled this conversation in their memoirs. Not surprisingly, their versions differ greatly.

According to *None Without Sin*, Kazan remembers warmth and reassurance from his friend.

In his diary he wrote that Miller put his arm around him and said, “Don’t worry about what I’ll think. Whatever you do will be okay with me, because I know your heart is in the right place.”

But Miller remembers feelings of dread, not forgiveness. He saw a tragedy taking shape and while he had sympathy for Kazan, he was also afraid of him. “Had I been of his generation,” he wrote, “he would have had to sacrifice me as well. And finally that was all I could think of. I could not get past it.”

When Kazan did name names, Miller broke off their friendship. For 10 years the two men did not speak and barely acknowledged one another’s existence. “There was a rift. I mean, it was like a chasm. They were not friends any more,” says Sherwood. “They were not working companions any more, and weren’t for a long, long time.”

According to the film, Kazan and Miller came to embody the deep divisions of the blacklist era. One was pilloried, the other praised. But by each man’s account, the truth is far more complicated, for no one who survived the blacklist emerged unscathed. Morals were compromised, friends were turned upon, lives were ruined.

None Without Sin ends with a quote from Dalton Trumbo, who was awarded the Laurel Award, the Writers Guild’s highest honor, in 1970. In his acceptance speech, Trumbo said of the blacklist era: “Some suffered less than others, some grew and some diminished, but in the final tally we were all victims because almost without exception each of us felt compelled to say things he did not want to say, to do things he did not want to, to deliver and receive wounds he truly did not want to exchange. That is why none of us – right, left, or center – emerged from that long nightmare without sin.”

Arthur Miller, Elia Kazan and the Blacklist: None Without Sin was written, directed and produced by Michael Epstein and co-produced by Elizabeth McNeil for *AMERICAN MASTERS*. Susan Lacy is the creator and executive producer of *AMERICAN MASTERS*. Barry Schulman is director of cultural and arts programs for Thirteen/WNET New York.

To take *AMERICAN MASTERS* beyond the television broadcast and further explore the themes, stories, and personalities of masters past and present, the companion Web site

(<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters>), created by Thirteen/WNET New York, offers interviews, essays, photographs, outtakes and other resources.

AMERICAN MASTERS is produced for PBS by Thirteen/WNET New York. This acclaimed series, now celebrating its 20th season, has become a cultural legacy in its own right. The AMERICAN MASTERS film library is one of the most highly honored in television history with profiles of more than 140 artistic giants. In addition to seven Peabodys, an Oscar and two Grammys, AMERICAN MASTERS has won 16 Emmys, including Outstanding Primetime Non-Fiction Series for 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003, and 2004.

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