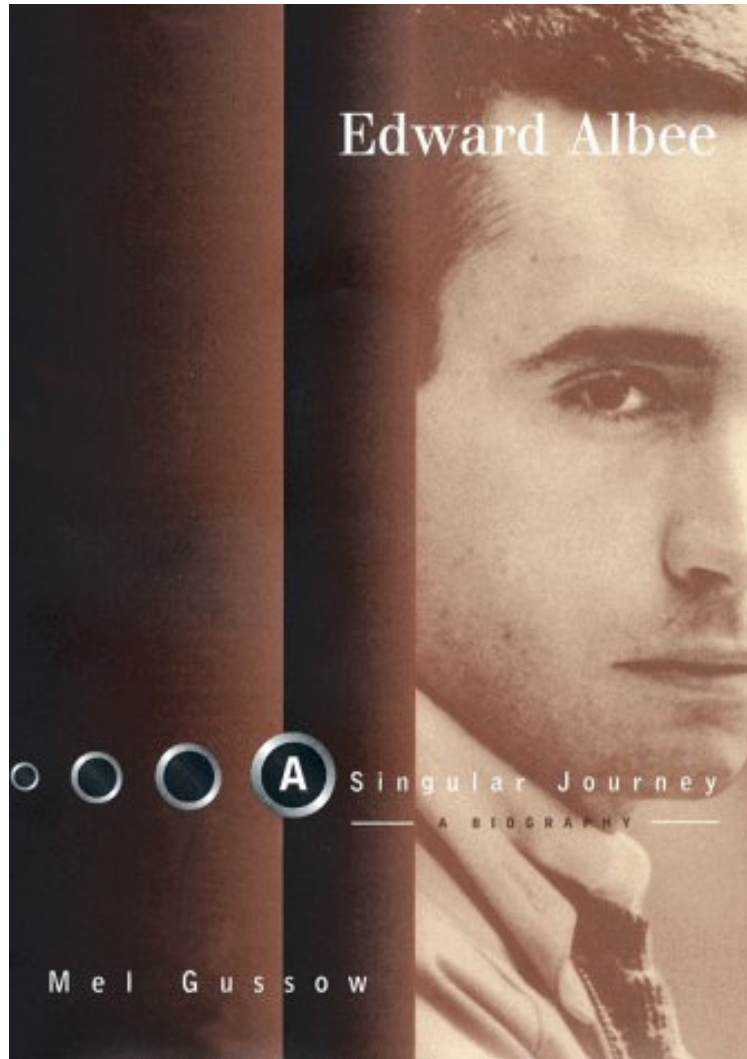


(Download pdf) Edward Albee: A Singular Journey: A Biography

Edward Albee: A Singular Journey: A Biography

Mel Gussow

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Mel Gussow : Edward Albee: A Singular Journey: A Biography before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Edward Albee: A Singular Journey: A Biography:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Bonnie F. Hill Very helpful understanding Albee, and a number of his plays. Really interesting read! 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Informative page-turner for an Albee fan By C. Boyce Albee is without doubt my favorite living playwright, so I'm a little biased, but I read and enjoyed this book, and felt like I got to know Albee a lot better in the process, without losing any of my respect for him. Since his plays are so much about family and the pursuit of "success", it's worthwhile to know about how Albee-- who was adopted--grew up. I recommend this to anyone who admires Albee's plays, and also to sceptics who want

more insight on the ideas and the man behind them. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. FIRST RATE!
By mastersall
An excellent bio of one of America's most important playwrights. A must for anyone interested in theatre. After reading Mr Gussow's book I reread many of Albee's plays and marveled at his talent.

In 1960, Edward Albee electrified the theater world with the American premiere of *The Zoo Story*, and followed it two years later with his extraordinary first Broadway play, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Proclaimed as the playwright of his generation, he went on to win three Pulitzer Prizes for his searing and innovative plays. Mel Gussow, author, critic, and cultural writer for *The New York Times*, has known Albee and followed his career since its inception, and in this fascinating biography he creates a compelling firsthand portrait of a complex genius. The book describes Albee's life as the adopted child of rich, unloving parents and covers the highs and lows of his career. A core myth of Albee's life, perpetuated by the playwright, is that *The Zoo Story* was his first play, written as a thirtieth birthday present to himself. As Gussow relates, Albee has been writing since adolescence, and through close analysis the author traces the genesis of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *Tiny Alice*, *A Delicate Balance*, and other plays. After his early triumphs, Albee endured years of critical neglect and public disfavor. Overcoming artistic and personal difficulties, he returned in 1994 with *Three Tall Women*. In this prizewinning play he came to terms with the towering figure of his mother, the woman who dominated so much of his early life. With frankness and critical acumen, and drawing on extensive conversations with the playwright, Gussow offers fresh insights into Albee's life. At the same time he provides vivid portraits of Albee's relationships with the people who have been closest to him, including William Flanagan (his first mentor), Thornton Wilder, Richard Barr, John Steinbeck, Alan Schneider, John Gielgud, and his leading ladies, Uta Hagen, Colleen Dewhurst, Irene Worth, Myra Carter, Elaine Stritch, Marian Seldes, and Maggie Smith. And then there are, most famously, Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton, who starred in Mike Nichols's acclaimed film version of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* The book places Albee in context as a playwright who inspired writers as diverse as John Guare and Sam Shepard, and as a teacher and champion of human rights. *Edward Albee: A Singular Journey* is rich with colorful details about this uniquely American life. It also contains previously unpublished photographs and letters from and to Albee. It is the essential book about one of the major artists of the American theater.

.com With his off-Broadway success *The Zoo Story* in 1960 and the Broadway smash *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* in 1962, Edward Albee announced himself as his generation's great American playwright. He had an unhappy childhood as the adopted son of wealthy suburbanites with no interest in his feelings or talents, and later immersed himself in the flourishing (but still closeted) New York gay scene of the 1950s. These seminal experiences gave Albee a sardonic, essentially bleak view of human relations that suited the questioning spirit of the '60s, as did his plays' absurdist tone and often experimental techniques. Alcoholism and bad reviews plagued him through much of the 1970s and '80s, but he emerged triumphant and sober in 1994 with the play *Three Tall Women*, which marked his mature understanding of his mother's life and won him a third Pulitzer Prize. Mel Gussow observed much of this personal and professional journey as a theater critic and an acquaintance; his book is a traditional biography based on research and interviews--with colleagues and friends as well as Albee himself--that also judiciously uses the author's firsthand experiences. (A section about the playwright's drunken rudeness at a dinner party and subsequent apologetic letter to Gussow is particularly revealing.) Gussow limns his subject's life with candor, but without prurience, and lucidly conveys Albee's importance in the American theater. --Wendy Smith
From Publishers Weekly
The American playwright Edward Albee's greatest glories came early in his career. When his first play, *The Zoo Story*, debuted in Provincetown, Mass., in 1960, he was called, as Gussow (cultural writer for the *New York Times*) puts it here, "our homegrown equivalent of Beckett." After his masterpiece, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* was staged in 1962, Albee was heralded as the voice of his generation. Then came two decades of debilitating alcoholism and commercial and critical flops. However, his most recent play, 1997's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Three Tall Women*, has returned him to the spotlight. In this biography, Gussow demonstrates that Albee's life has always been riven with contradictions. The playwright's youth
Born in 1928, he was the adopted son of an extremely laconic owner of a chain of vaudeville theaters
Was unhappy. Perhaps as a result, Albee has always been drawn to idyllic images of family life in literature. Still, in his extensive interviews with Gussow, he describes his own escape from marriage and "two-and-a-half kids" with great relief. "What did I think I was doing?" Albee asks of his brief engagements. "I was going to bed with boys from age thirteen on and enjoyed it greatly." Nonetheless, Albee is still fuming about '60s critics who questioned his ability to understand family life, pigeonholing him as a "homosexual" writer whose female characters are either misogynistic travesties or stand-ins for male lovers. A friend and ex-lover of Albee's once complained of "forever trying to penetrate your iron curtain." Here, Gussow adroitly accomplishes that feat, never shying away from the complexities of the elusive playwright's troubled personality and his still potent artistic vision. (Aug.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.
From Library Journal
For most readers, the name Edward Albee immediately evokes the play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Fortunately, Gussow, the drama critic and cultural writer for the *New York Times*, goes well beyond that one title and explores Albee's entire output, beginning with the spectacular 1960 debut of *The Zoo Story* and ending with his 1995 comeback hit *Three Tall Women* and his 1996 smash revivals of *A Delicate*

Balance on Broadway and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* in London. The focus of the book, however, is biographical, illustrating how Albee's life both informs and enriches his plays. His drinking, drug abuse, and suicide attempts are covered honestly but without the gossipy tone that so often accompanies biography. Of particular interest is Gussow's attention to the actors who appeared in the plays and what they brought to the productions. Recommended for all academic collections and libraries with theater holdings. (Photos and index not seen.) ASusan L. Peters, Emory Univ. Lib., Atlanta Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.