

## Show Submission

### **Contact Information:**

Name

Email Address

Phone Number

### **Show:**

“American Buffalo” by David Mamet

Three male roles

### **Rights Information:**

Samuel French Inc.

\$50 for the first performance, \$40 per subsequent performance

Scripts are \$6.50; however, the JHU Library has two scripts that we can photocopy

Rights are listed as “Slightly Restricted”; however, I called Samuel French, and was assured that the play could be performed in the Baltimore area in September. (“Slightly Reserved” means that it cannot be performed near NYC when the play is being performed there.)

### **Synopsis:**

“American Buffalo” is a critically acclaimed drama, written in 1967, achieving success on Broadway in 1977 as well as during a revival in 1983. The play was also adapted for the big screen in 1996. The play takes place in current time, with Act I in the morning, and Act II during the night of that same day. Each Act consists of one scene, in the same location: a pawnshop.

“American Buffalo” examines the daily struggle to achieve goals, whether they be fraudulent or not, and escape poverty-ridden life. Don Dubro owns a thrift store and makes plans with two other friends - a selfish, bragging poker buddy named Teach and a younger, naïve but beaten man named Bobby (to whom Don serves as a father figure) - to rob a man of his coin collection. The valuables they steal will then be sold in their pawn store for profit. The men view themselves as legitimate businessmen in pursuits of free enterprise and honest business. Yet really they are inept hustlers with hypocritical views on life and plans that amount to little (due to distrust and stupidity) but vulgar excuses.

I have attached a brief excerpt of the play. The short, quick dialogue is a little challenging to follow, but truly delivers onstage. This excerpt is of Don, the shop owner, telling the story of a customer purchasing a buffalo nickel (of unknown value to Don) from his pawnshop. This encounter leads the characters to develop their scheme. The parentheses signify Mamet’s directions to “mark a slight change of outlook on the part of the speaker” (from footnote).

I believe that this is an incredible production piece for our Orientation Show. This show is ideal for the Swirnow blackbox, with its dank and dark setting in the thrift shop. In addition, this play would resonate with the new Freshmen getting their first taste of Barnstormers – it is modern and fresh, slightly comedic, vulgar yet mature (a far cry from typical high school theatre), and delivers a strong although somewhat depressing message to the audience. The small cast is not typical of Barnstormers shows, but has strengths in giving the director and cast members an opportunity for character study. It would truly be a production about understanding the script – which is deceptively complex despite its vulgar language - rather than quickly memorizing lines

## Show Submission

and staging the play. A relatively lengthy production schedule (unlike the other student-directed productions) would facilitate this process and allow the production to mature over time.

### **Vision:**

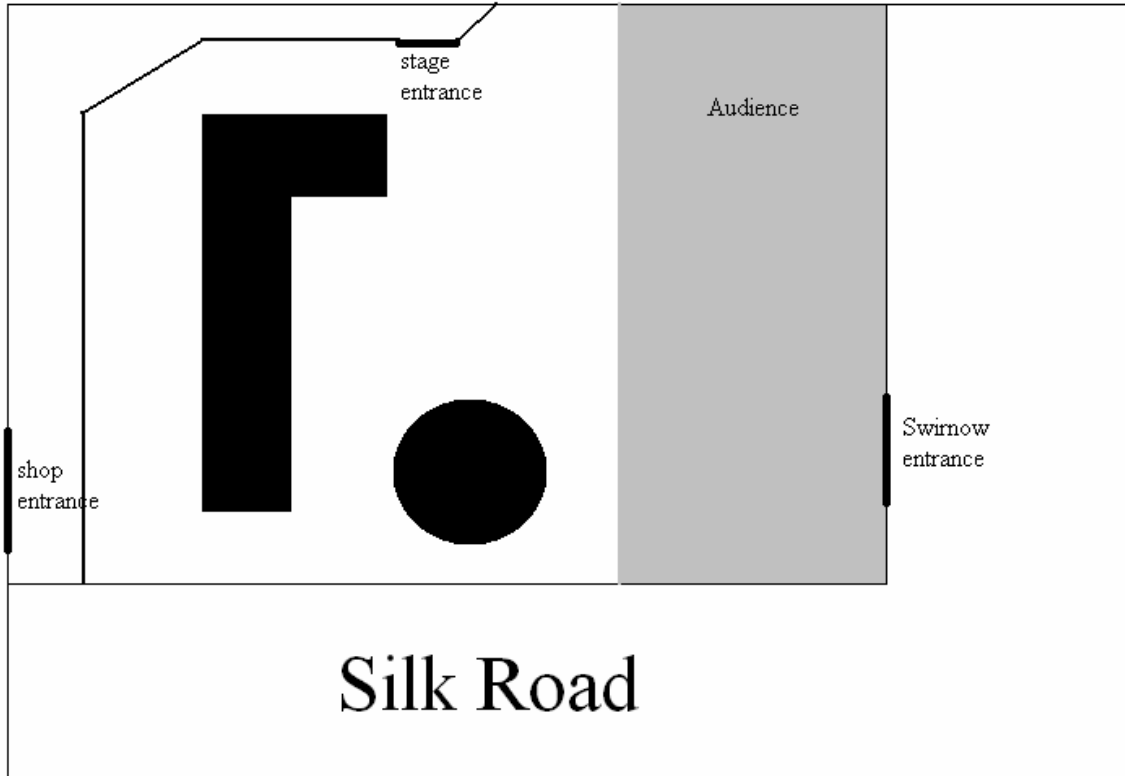
For the technical aspects of this show, I am envisioning using the black box without enclosing the area with flats, hanging the black curtains instead, to give a feeling of the space being less defined, and seemingly infinite. In this same vein, I would like to be minimal on the set pieces, and rather focus attention on the set dressing, creating a believable pawnshop look with many props. I would like to blur the lines between a pawnshop and a coin store (think jewelry store that displays coins instead of jewelry), referencing what the characters hope will become of the pawnshop. To this end, I would like to build a long “L”-shaped glass countertop that would display the junk owned by Don. This piece would be the main element of the set, and used as a countertop as well as a structure that the characters could lean against and sit on as well. If this could be built to allow the audience to see into the glass countertop, that would be preferred. In addition, there is much talk about poker, so I also envision a green felted circular table in the room as well, used as a sitting area. There would need to be a well-defined entrance into the shop, with a door. I made a quick sketch, which is attached. The major expenses and technical challenges to the production would be the building of the countertop. I believe there are plenty of props in the barn that would naturally be found in a pawnshop. For costumes, I am sure that things can be pulled from closets and the barn. I am not well versed in light design, so I would consult our TDs, who are more knowledgeable. I like the idea of using colored filters, like always, and using our new spotlight to be on the poker table.

### **Personal Experience:**

<< Summarize your relevant theater experiences and thoughts. You may also include a brief description of your work ethic and/or goals if you feel so inclined. >>

# Show Submission

Set Sketch (yes, it's quite elementary)



## Show Submission

### Excerpt (pg 29-30):

Don: He comes in here one day, like a week ago.

Teach: What for?

Don: Just browsing. So he's looking in the case, he comes up and with this *buffalo*-head nickel...

Teach: Yeah . . .

Don: From *nineteen* something. (I don't know. I didn't even know it's there . . .)

Teach: Uh-huh . . .

Don: . . . and he goes, "How much would that be?"

Teach: Uh-huh

Don: So I'm about to go, "Two bits," jerk that I am, but something tells me to shut up, so I go, "You tell me."

Teach: Always good business

Don: *Oh* yeah.

Teach: How wrong can you go?

Don: That's what I mean, so then he thinks a minute, and he tells me he'll just *shop* a bit.

Teach: Uh-huh . . . (*Stares out of the window.*)

Don: And so he's *shopping* . . . What?

Teach: Some cops.

Don: Where?

Teach: At the corner.

Don: What are they doing?

Teach: Cruising

*Pause.*

Don: They turn the corner?

Teach (*waits*): Yeah.

*Pause.*

Don: . . . And so he's shopping. And he's picking up a beat up *mirror* . . . an old kid's toy . . . a *shaving* mug . . .

Teach: . . . right . . .

Don: Maybe five, six things, comes to eight bucks. I get 'em and put 'em in a box and then he tells me he'll go fifty dollars for the nickel.

Teach: No

Don: Yeah. So I tell him (get this), "Not a chance."

Teach: (Took balls.)

Don: (Well, what-the-fuck . . .)

Teach: (No, I mean it.)

Don: (I took a chance.)

Teach: (You're goddamn right.)

*Pause.*

Don (*shrugs*): So I say, "Not a chance," he tells me eighty is his highest offer.

Teach: (I knew it.)

Don: Wait. So I go, "Ninety-five."

Teach: Uh-huh.

Don: We settle down on ninety, *takes* the nickel, leaves the box of shit.