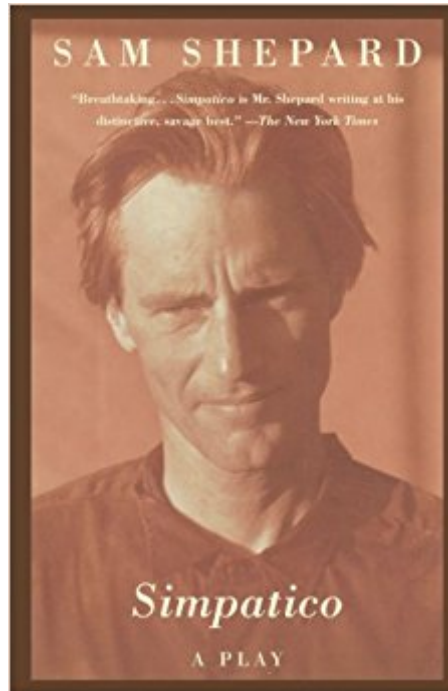


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Simpatico



Synopsis

Set within the netherworld of thoroughbred racing, this hair-raisingly funny new play by the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *True West* explores the classical themes of memory, loyalty, and restitution. *Simpatico* launches readers into regions where high society meets the low life, and where, as one of the main characters observes, "someone is cutting someone else's throat."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The script of Shepard's three-act drama about a desperate man trying to hold onto his wife and career is set against a backdrop of professional horse racing. Pulitzer-winner Shepard structures his latest exploration of new American archetypes as a detective story.

This duo offers a full-length play and a collection of 14 shorter dramatic works from various points in Shepard's career. As one of the best of the modern crop of American playwrights, Shepard belongs in all collections. With the current Broadway outing of his 1979 play *Buried Child* receiving multiple Tony Award nominations, interest in the playwright and actor should increase. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc.

I have not seen this play, and accept that the right actors might have made it more entertaining than it was to me on the page. But on the page it bored me. I didn't like and couldn't care about any of the characters: the men are hustlers and the women are caricatures of gals who follow such men.

Friends whose taste I usually share loved a 2013 Chicago production of *Simpatico*. But after reading it, I'm not motivated to buy tickets. Shepard's world is not a place I care to inhabit; this author's famed "American masculine energy" leaves me cold.

We read the play, viewed the movie, went to the play and then discussed all. Although our group is used to that process, we had problems remembering what this film offered that was not in the play as written or staged. Interesting mix of opinions...some hated the script, loved the play and hated the film and some loved the film over the script or the play. I liked the script and the film more than the stage production we saw. *SIMPATICO*, however you experience it, promotes great discussions.

Shepard has been a favorite playwright of mine since the 80s. *Simpatico* stands out as being a modern film noir. It is in my top 5 this season for submissions to direct at local theaters. See the film, Nolte, Bridges, Finney, Stone & Kinner. GREAT

I am not at all sure what Shepard was trying to do here - write a hit? Write a comedy/drama? Show a kinder, gentler, more entertaining side? Say something about America? Whatever it was, it does not really work. Granted I have found him to be a playwright whom it is better to experience on the stage than on the page. I thought "Buried Child" was crap when I read it, and terrific when I watched it. It could be the same with this, but I doubt it. The play starts off like another "True West". Two men: one twisted, one together, one a loser, the other a success. But it turns out to be a different situation. Mr Success is dependent upon Mr Loser and sends him money to keep his mouth shut about something. Apparently several years ago they blackmailed a racing official with some sexual photography. Mr. Loser still nurses a grudge against Mr. Success, because Success took his wife and ran away with her after the dirty work was done. Not a bad setup, but the tone begins to vary a lot. It feels as though Shepard never figured out where he really wanted to go with this. Other characters are thrown into the picture, such as a young woman who is a strange conglomeration of naivety and knowingness. This girl has somehow gotten involved with Loser and then begins to pal around with Winner. Loser then goes to visit his ex-wife, who is Winner's current wife, and try to win her back or something. By the end it is hard to understand, or to care much, about what is going on with these characters. This piece lacks the fire and tension that make the best Shepard plays into something truly special (plays like "The Tooth of Crime", "Fool for Love", and "True West"); and it doesn't have the inventiveness that make some of his other pieces into such wacky fun. But I still want to see it, in case I have to take this all back someday.

A recommended Shepard must-read! From *Cowboys* (1964) at the Theater Genesis to *Icarus's Mother* (1965) at Caf f  Cino to *La Turista* (1967) at La MaMa to *The Tooth of Crime* (1972) at Open Space, Shepard's "lost men" have stumbled across the stage in a way that has chronicled the fascinating interstice between eras and between generations. Shepard represents the desert poet, the rambling musician, the ill-fated prairie homesteader of American cultural memory, alone in a crowd and unassuaged by logic or love. *Curse of the Starving Class* (1977), *Buried Child* (1978), and *True West* (1980) moved him away from the perception that he was simply an avant-garde artist, an experimenter, and established his style and wide identification as a mainstream American playwright. In *Fool for Love* (1983) and *A Lie of the Mind* (1985), he joined Rabe and Mamet as portrayers of American masculinity in conflict with warring emotions and sexual violence. *A Lie of the Mind*, particularly, drew a line in the sand of public recognition as a dense work of loft and dimension, an imprecation and apologia of the last lone white male bellowing in the bleak boozy night. As for *Simpatico*, it touches on all the Shepardian themes in its exploration of men, and women, on the edge, entering into a precarious and ever-shifting balance of power. It is, in the words of one director, "a meditation on heartache". Shepard, in his potentially pessimistic world, won't break into an emotional investigation of heartache per se, but examines the undercarriage of the heart and its wild persistent beat in an empty landscape. When *Simpatico* opened at New York's Public Theatre in the fall of 1994, critics raved and razzed in equal measure. Some audiences may not want to take the journey, but there are riches to be mined here. In jolting shift from Kentucky to California, *Simpatico* traces a web of secrets, betrayal, love, loss, and black comic hope. Sam Shepard's American master-series continues.

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