

WILSHIRE CENTER'S

# Larchmont Chronicle

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**By Sydney Swire Theatre Columnist**

The Greek myths on which "**Metamorphoses**" is based were old when the Roman Ovid retold them 2000 years ago. Writer/director Mary Zimmerman has extracted the essential insights into human nature that underscore these immortal stories; she knows they are less about lofty Olympians than about the forces of human nature. Aphrodite, the goddess of love, is the deity who figures most prominently in the tales Zimmerman has selected. But the stories tell not only of the poignant romance of Alcyon and Ceyx, who could never be parted, or of Orpheus, who braved the underworld to retrieve his beloved, but of the love that, when untempered by spirituality, becomes lust-for food, for incestuous sex, for gold, for answers. Zimmerman has a genius for finding the metaphor to transcend the spoken word and make an episode dramatically effective. A king who refuses to pay obeisance to the gods is punished by relentless hunger, embodied by a writhing hag on his back who will not release him until he dies a hideous death. The writing is succinct yet poetic, the staging artfully simple, but it is Zimmerman's use of a stage-wide pool of water which is truly inspired. It becomes a symbol not only of the boundless ocean, but of the human subconscious, of the irreconcilable distance between lovers, of the depths of hell and of human misery. The ensemble cast is uniformly strong, but it is Zimmerman's vision that thrills; she is a true original, and her "**Metamorphoses**" is magical.

**At the Mark Taper Forum, to Sun., May 21.**

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Arthur Miller's first Broadway play, "**The Man Who Had All the Luck**" is more than 55 years old, and a half century of hindsight, especially over such a literary career as Miller's, is easy. But it is undeniable that, between the often overwrought, over-written lines is the wisdom of a natural writer finding his voice and lifelong themes. David Beeves is a young auto mechanic whose life changes so dramatically for the better in one day that he is guilty and frightened for the next four years. The father of Hester, whom David longs to marry, opposes the match and is run over by a man whose car trouble has baffled every mechanic who looks at it. David is baffled too, until a mysterious stranger arrives at the garage and fixes the car. The owner is so grateful that he offers David a business opportunity that helps build a fortune, but years later, David is obsessed with a sense that the shoes of doom must drop momentarily. The idea of a destiny that exacts payment for every blessing has almost an Old Testament sensibility, yet the young Miller didn't have the objectivity to pare the work down to this essential conflict. But the story is fascinating, his sense of suspense unmistakable, and in the scenes between David, his father, and his brother Amos, harbingers of "Death of a Salesman," "All My Sons" and "The Price" are unmistakable. The best scene in the play, in