

He Substance Of Fire

By **Jon Robin Baitz**

Play no. 442

Opening show: 21/09/1992

Creative team

Translated by; Ben Bar-Shavit

Director: Haim Topol

Sets: Adrian Vaux

Costumes: Edna Sobol

Lighting: Arie Katzl

Cast

Isaac Geldhart: Shlomo Bar-Shavit

Martin Geldhart: Icho Avital

Ervin Geldhart: Dany Rutenberg

Sherry Geldhart: Gilia Stern

Marge Hacket: Yona Elian Keshet

The story of a large reputable publishing house, "Kreeger & Geldhart" and the power struggle between the father and sons over the control of the business and the endeavors in the modern world of publishing that views making money as the main goal.

Isaac Geldhart, the head of the family and the director of the publishing house, is a Holocaust survivor. As a boy he went through the war hidden in a cellar. He immigrates to the United States, studies in the best colleges and marries the daughter of the publisher, Kreeger. He joins the publishing house and decides to publish fine, classical European Literature and absolutely refuses to compromise with the popular taste of the public. The world in this opinion is inundated with trash and it is up to the publishing house to stand in the breach and fight the trend. Publishing books by authors as Proust, Pirandello and the likes is his way to better the world and its values.

At the onset of the play, we encounter Isaac six years following the death of his wife, sinking deeper and deeper into his own private world. He begins to publish exclusive and expensive publications of books such as an atlas of the Holocaust, the history of Spanish Jewry – significant books which do not arouse much interest in the public of readers.

His son, who serves as the accountant of the publishing house, tries to persuade him to publish more popular books in order to improve the financial standing of the business. The father adamantly refuses. The son enlists his brother and sister to try to persuade their father. When they fail, a life and death war breaks out in the family.

The second act introduces the father to a social worker, who comes to examine the father's mental and psychological competence. A complex love-hate relationship forms between the father and the social worker, and the obstinate man softens and begins to become open to change in this behavior and in his relations with his family.