

ALMEIDA THEATRE

Access Information Pack



Golden Boy

by Clifford Odets

Directed by Sam Yates

Contents

This document is a visual guide to support your visit to the Almeida Theatre. There are three sections:

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The Production

Please note the following information contains full plot spoilers.

Overview

Golden Boy was written by Clifford Odets and first produced in 1937. Set during the Great Depression, it follows a gifted young violinist who turns to professional boxing in pursuit of money and status, and the toll that choice takes on him and those around him.

Content Guidance

Golden Boy contains:

	Homophobic, racist, ableist, misogynist and strong language		Smoking of herbal cigarettes
	Violence		Injury
	Misogyny		Gambling
	Guns		Alcoholism
	Blood		Sudden blackouts
	Flashing lights		Video effects
	References to suicide, manslaughter, domestic violence and death.		

Performance Conditions:

Relaxed Environment Performances

The duty manager will make an onstage announcement before the performance begins to explain what a Relaxed Environment Performance is.

They will explain:

- Audience members are free to make noise, move about or come and go to take breaks and access the facilities as needed.
- If you need to step out of the auditorium for a break, there is also a TV monitor in the foyer to watch the performance from, so you don't miss any of the action.

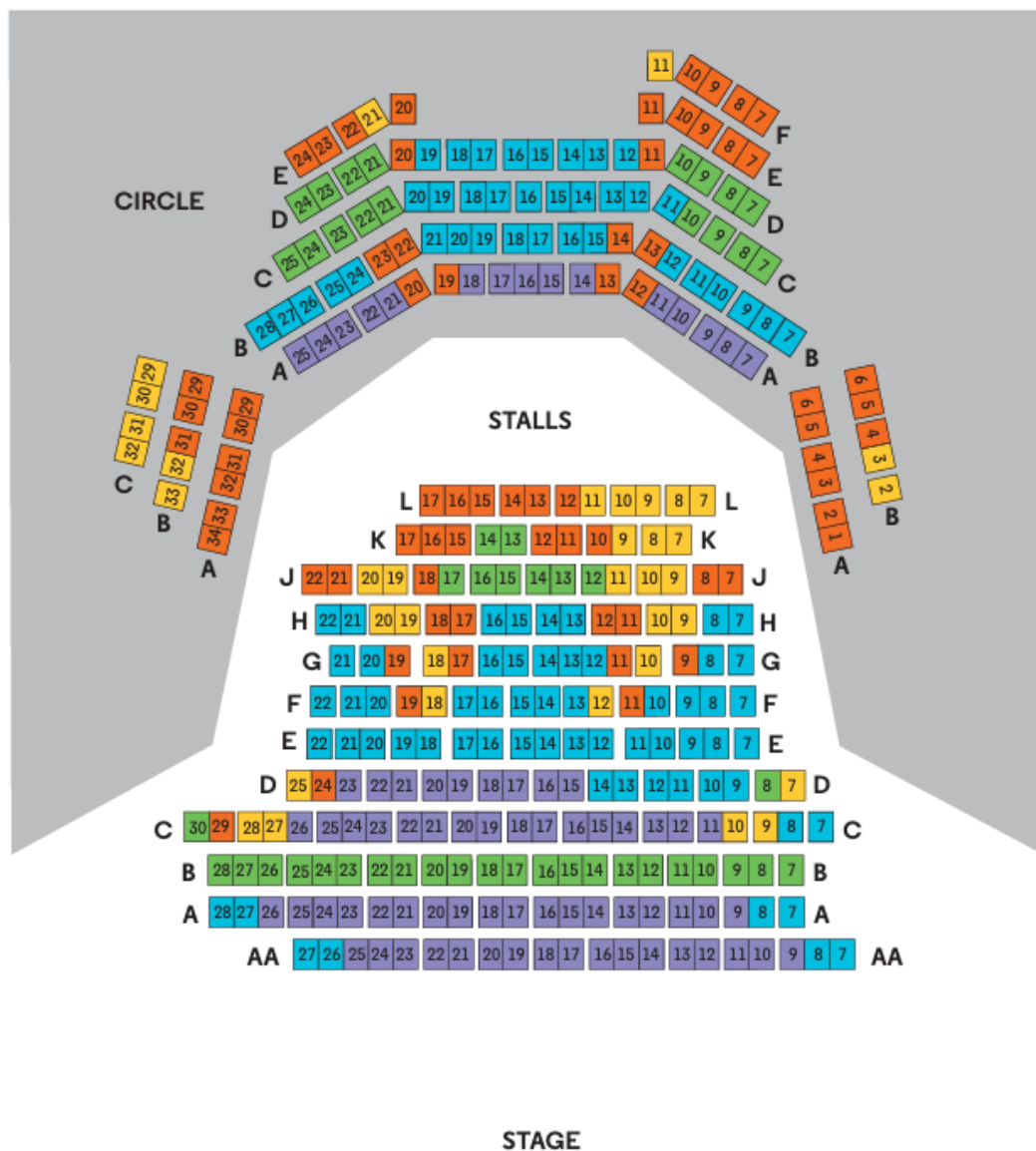
Running time and interval

The running time is 2 hours and 25 minutes, including a 20-minute interval. The first part lasts 1 hour and 5 minutes, followed by the interval, with the second part lasting 1 hour.

Seating

In this production, the stage is straight across like in a traditional proscenium arch theatre. The seats in the stalls are arranged in rows, with aisles either side. Further seating is available in the Circle level above. There is no step free access to the Circle.

GOLDEN BOY



What Happens in the Play?

Brief Synopsis

Golden Boy is the story of Joe Bonaparte, a talented 21-year-old Italian-American who is a promising violinist. We meet Joe at the beginning of the play, hungry for wealth and success. He turns to prize-fighting as a way of bettering himself, and in doing so abandons the violin. Despite his father's best efforts to make him reconsider, Joe continues to fight and becomes an exciting prospect on the New York prize-fighting scene. Joe goes on to win major fights, the first resulting in him breaking his hand, the second resulting in Joe accidentally killing his opponent in the ring. Overwhelmed by guilt over the killing, and by having destroyed his own soul in the pursuit of wealth, fame and power, Joe flees with Lorna (the girlfriend of his manager, with whom he has fallen in love) in his powerful sports car, leading to a fatal crash that kills them both.

Setting

The play is set in New York during the Great Depression of the 1930s, moving between Tom Moody's Broadway office, the Bonaparte family home, a park bench, a gymnasium, and a dressing room at the boxing arena.

Content and Themes

Themes: Art versus commerce; exploitation and capitalist greed; violence and brutality; alienation, identity and insecurity; romantic and familial love.

Content information: Throughout the production, there are references to and depictions of physical violence, including the brutality of boxing. A gun is used on stage to threaten and stage blood is used. There are references to a death following a boxing match, domestic violence, alcoholism, suicide and a fatal car crash. The production also includes misogynistic remarks, manipulative and coercive behaviour, organised crime and threats of violence, alongside themes of financial hardship and family conflict over money.

Potential triggers: Verbal abuse and insults; physical aggression, including grabbing and shoving. The production's most intense sequence comes late in Act 3, around the championship fight and its aftermath (Act 3, Scene 2).

Sensory and Staging Overview

If you are affected by any of these elements, you are welcome to take breaks at any time.

Sound: A string quartet plays live at several points during the production.

Sometimes the music can be loud. The musicians are positioned at the back of the stage on a raised platform, concealed behind a folding shutter. At one point, the violinist comes down from the platform and plays live within a scene. There is frequent shouting and raised voices throughout, ranging from brief bursts of anger or excitement to more sustained and intense exchanges.

Lighting: Several scenes take place in dim or low lighting.

Staging: A single naturalistic set is used to represent the play's different locations, with changes in lighting, sound and projections helping to establish each setting.

Boxing sequences and sensory effects: The boxing matches are conveyed through a combination of choreographed movement, sound effects, music and projected imagery. These elements build in intensity, creating a sense of the violence and brutality of the fights. At times, the projections that fill the back wall show a live camera feed from inside a punchbag. The actor faces the camera directly, appearing to look out at the audience from the screen. As the bag swings with each successive blow, the projected image moves and shifts, creating an increasingly disorientating effect. The combined impact of the

movement, shifting imagery and layered sound can be intense, particularly as the sequences build towards a climax.

Movement: At times, characters use stylised movement to express or emphasise the emotional elements of the story.



Characters



Joe Bonaparte



Lorna Moon



Tom Moody



Tokio



Mr Carp/ Barker



Mr Bonaparte



Frank Bonaparte



Roxy Gottlieb



Eddie Fuseli



Pepper White/ Lewis



Mickey/ Drake/ Driscoll

**The following two performers will alternate the role of
Young Joe Bonaparte:**



Joe Bonaparte - a gifted young violinist who becomes a professional boxer

Mr Bonaparte - Joe's father

Frank Bonaparte - Joe's older brother, and a union organiser

Mr Carp - the Bonapartes' neighbour and Mr Bonaparte's friend

Tom Moody - Joe's manager

Lorna Moon – Tom Moody's girlfriend with whom Joe later falls in love

Tokio - Joe's boxing trainer

Roxy Gottlieb - Moody's business partner and co-manager

Eddie Fuseli - a gangster and gambler who buys a controlling stake in Joe's career

Young Joe - a non-speaking role who appears periodically throughout the play, as the embodiment of Joe's younger self

Pepper White - a rival prize-fighter

Barker - the manager of Joe's final opponent

Driscoll - a boxing official

Lewis and Drake – two sports journalists

Scene by Scene Synopsis

ACT 1

Prologue

The play opens with an abstract, wordless sequence. Joe is already on stage as the audience takes their seats, sitting alone at the kitchen table in dim light.

Young Joe enters and plays the violin while Joe listens. As more music is heard, Joe opens a shutter at the back of the space to reveal the live quartet. Young Joe hands him the violin and Joe holds it up, but does not play. He suddenly grabs his coat and puts it on, then closes the shutter on the quartet. Young Joe quickly leaves, and Moody and Lorna arrive as the action moves into the first scene.

Scene 1

Content Warnings: Verbal abuse and insults, physical aggression (grabbing and shoving).

Fight manager Tom Moody and his girlfriend Lorna argue about their uncertain future, as Moody plans to divorce his wife Monica while also struggling to steady his business. Joe Bonaparte arrives to announce that Moody's fighter, Kaplan, has broken his hand and is unable to fight. As Moody calls his partner Roxy Gottlieb to work out what to do, Joe pitches himself as a replacement fighter. When Moody's trainer, Tokio, arrives, he reveals that it was in fact Joe who broke Kaplan's hand during sparring. Desperate to save the fight, Moody takes Joe on.

Scene 2

Content Warnings: References to physical violence, mentions of war and bombings, reference to death including the death of a parent.

Later that night at the Bonaparte home, Joe's father (Mr Bonaparte) and neighbour Mr Carp discuss life, war, and philosophy. Mr Bonaparte shows Mr Carp an expensive violin he bought as a birthday gift for Joe, to support his musical endeavours. Joe's older brother Frank arrives and reads a newspaper report that Joe has fought and won a professional fight, which comes as a shock to everyone. Joe arrives home with a bloody face and declares his intention to give up music temporarily so he can pursue prize-fighting, as he wants a life with money, fame, and success.

Transition

Joe drags a large punching bag into the space. The quartet's violinist follows and begins to play as Joe hangs the bag and starts throwing punches at it. Live images of Joe fill the back wall. Another boxer joins him, and their fight plays out in stylised form as they work the bag together and spar, before both leave.

Scene 3

Content Warnings: Sexism including misogynistic remarks, manipulative behaviour, emotional manipulation and coercion.

Two months later, Moody, Roxy Gottlieb, Tokio, and Lorna are worried about Joe's boxing style. Joe plays an excellent defensive game but "pulls his punches". Mr Bonaparte visits the office and accidentally reveals that Joe is a trained violinist who fears injuring his hands. After Mr Bonaparte leaves, Moody

realises why Joe holds back, and instructs Lorna to use her charm to manipulate Joe into committing fully to boxing.

Scene 4

Content Warnings: Mentions of death and suicide.

Joe and Lorna sit on a park bench listening to the distant music of a carousel. Joe opens up about his love for music, his feelings of isolation, the death of his mother, and his desire for power, speed, and money. Recognising that Lorna was sent by Moody to win him over, Joe turns the conversation back on her, exposing her own unhappiness in her life. Joe vows to go all-in on fighting and to buy a fast car to prove himself. The scene reveals a growing mutual attraction between Joe and Lorna.

Scene 5

Content Warnings: References to domestic violence, suicide, and alcoholism.

Three weeks later, Joe packs his bags at home for a 15-bout Midwest road tour. Lorna visits the Bonaparte home and reveals her troubled past, including her abusive father and her mother's suicide. Before leaving, Mr Bonaparte presents Joe with the violin he bought him for his birthday. Joe holds the violin but then puts it back in its case and asks his father for his blessing to fight. Mr Bonaparte refuses to give his blessing, fearing Joe will lose his soul and destroy his musical talent.

ACT 2

Scene 1

Content Warnings: References to weapons, organised crime, implied threats of violence, coercion, manipulation, and misogyny. A racial slur.

Six months later in a gym, Joe has become a formidable fighter, but Moody and Tokio worry about a recent knockout loss in Philadelphia caused by Joe seeing a violinist and losing focus. Fuseli, a dangerous gangster and gambler, arrives and demands to buy a share of Joe. Moody, Roxy and Lorna are concerned by Fuseli's interest in Joe, so Fuseli pitches himself to Joe directly. Joe agrees to Fuseli's co-ownership to gain better fights and press coverage, ignoring Moody's objections. Moody, increasingly worried about how to manage Joe, urges Lorna to seduce Joe to keep him focused on fighting and away from his family.

Scene 2

Content Warnings: Emotional distress and crying, references to poverty, physical intimacy including kissing.

Lorna and Joe meet at the park again; this time Joe confesses his deep love for Lorna and asks her to leave Moody. Lorna admits her complex debt of gratitude to Moody, who rescued her from poverty. However, as they share an emotional moment whistling together, Lorna breaks down, realising she loves Joe. They embrace and plan for Lorna to tell Moody that she is leaving him.

INTERVAL

Scene 3

Content Warnings: Threats of physical violence including maiming, emotional heartbreak and betrayal, and aggressive confrontation.

The following day in Moody's office, Frank Bonaparte returns \$600 that Joe sent home, stating their father refuses Joe's boxing money. Moody happily informs Lorna that his wife has agreed to a divorce and they can marry soon. When Joe and Fuseli enter, Joe confronts Lorna after seeing Moody kiss her. Joe and Moody have a heated argument, with Moody suggesting Fuseli should buy Moody's share of Joe so he and Lorna can go and live their lives in peace. A confused Joe tells Lorna to confess her true feelings to Moody. Lorna — unable to hurt Moody — lies and tells Joe that she loves Moody. Heartbroken, Joe leaves the office, after which Fuseli aggressively reprimands Moody for his argument with Joe. When Fuseli has gone Lorna tells Moody that she loves Joe and Moody sobs.

Scene 4

Content Warnings: Physical locker room fight, emotional breakdown and crying, verbal slurs and insults, aggressive fighting, very loud sounds and shouting.

Six weeks later, in a stadium dressing room before a crucial fight against Lombardo, tensions are high. Joe gets into a locker room scuffle with fighter Pepper White after Pepper insults him. Fuseli enforces strict control over the room, driving away anyone who might distract Joe. Mr Bonaparte visits Joe one last time; seeing Joe's complete transformation into a cold, money-driven

fighter, Mr Bonaparte gives up and gives Joe his blessing to fight. Tokio attempts to give Joe calm, technical guidance, but Joe breaks down sobbing before hardening himself and entering the ring. The fight unfolds in a more abstract way, with Joe working against the punching bag as the quartet plays. Images from a live feed of Joe's perspective are projected across the back wall, fragmenting and distorting the action. Joe wins the fight against Lombardo; however, Tokio examines Joe's hand and reveals it is severely broken, ending any possibility of him ever playing the violin again.

ACT 3

Scene 1

Content Warnings: Violence, threats of violence, emotional abuse and manipulation, financial corruption, loud shouting.

Moody's office, several weeks later. Joe is meeting with two journalists ahead of his championship fight with the Baltimore Chocolate Drop. The journalists question Joe, who has transformed into an arrogant and cynical star fighter; one reporter, Drake, is visibly irritated by Joe's aggressive and cocky attitude. During the press interaction, another journalist, Lewis, congratulates Moody on his upcoming marriage to Lorna — which is news to Joe. Tokio urges Joe to forget about Lorna and find something or someone else to love. After everyone has left, Lorna enters the office and Joe confronts her about her engagement. Lorna accuses Joe of having given up his soul and turned into a cold, heartless killer like Fuseli. After Lorna exits, Fuseli arrives; as Joe reflects on Lorna's words and mentions to Fuseli that he has ambitions for a life outside the ring, Fuseli pressures him back into line.

Scene 2

Content Warnings: Mob intimidation, a gun drawn on a character, a death in the boxing ring (reported, not shown), guilt, intense anxiety and emotional breakdown, a chase involving Young Joe, and stage blood.

Young Joe begins to apply stage blood to Joe, as he prepares for the championship. While the bout against the Baltimore Chocolate Drop takes place offstage - heard through crowd noise and a tolling bell - Lorna goes nervously into the dressing room. Fuseli bluntly orders her to leave town and stay away from Joe for good. When Lorna mentions she is marrying Moody tomorrow, Fuseli erupts, accusing her of corrupting and destroying Joe, and in a rage he draws a gun on her. During this, Young Joe is chased by Joe and scrambles up to safety with the quartet. Joe pulls the shutter closed on them, then violently swings and jumps on the punching bag, pulls it to the ground and pummels it as though it were his opponent. Joe returns victorious and bloodied, having knocked out his opponent to win the title. Distraught, Barker brings news that the Chocolate Drop has died from Joe's knockout blow. Devastated by the realisation that he has killed a man, Joe breaks down completely. Lorna consoles him, and they flee the arena together.

Scene 3

Content Warnings: Fatal car crash, death of Joe and Lorna, grief, bereavement, and very loud sounds and shouting.

Late that night, Moody, Roxy and Fuseli are drinking and celebrating Joe's victory, bragging about how much money they stand to make. Mr Bonaparte

asks what there is to celebrate when his son has killed a man. Moody dismisses his concern before Fuseli confronts Joe's brother Frank and mocks his union work. Moody becomes increasingly anxious because Lorna is still missing. Fuseli coolly taunts Moody, informing him that Lorna belongs to Joe now, then announces his intention to buy out Moody and Roxy entirely, claiming 70% ownership of Joe for himself. The phone rings: Moody answers, expecting his hotel or Lorna, but the call is for Mr Bonaparte. Mr Bonaparte doesn't move, so Frank takes the call.

While Moody drunkenly shouts about his rights and contracts under American law, Frank listens to the police in Babylon, Long Island, then tells the others that Joe and Lorna have both been killed instantly in a high-speed car crash. As he breaks the news, Joe and Lorna return in fresh clothes, as if in an alternate reality, and begin to lay the table. The lights fade on the others as Joe and Lorna sit down together, joined by Young Joe, creating the image of a family in happier times. They talk quietly as the string quartet plays for a few moments, then the lights fade slowly to black and the play ends.

The lights brighten and the actors bow.

About the Almeida Theatre

How to get here

The Almeida Theatre is on Almeida Street in Islington. The postcode is N1 1TA. It is a large, white concrete building and it is situated halfway up the road.

The outside of the theatre looks like this:



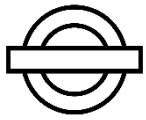
Journey to the theatre

The nearest underground stations are **Angel** on the Northern line or **Highbury & Islington** on the Victoria line, and London Overground.



You can find more information on our website here:

almeida.co.uk/your-visit/getting-here/



Highbury & Islington Station to Almeida Theatre

This is what **Highbury & Islington** station looks like outside.



Follow the path out of the station to the right onto Upper Street.

The theatre is about 1 kilometre down the road on Almeida Street.

On your journey down from Highbury, you will pass these **landmarks**:

This is Union Chapel.
It is near bus stop G.



If you don't want to walk, you can get buses 4, 19, 30 or 43 and get off at St Mary's church - bus stop N – for the theatre.



This is where Upper Street crosses Islington Park Street and Canonbury Lane.

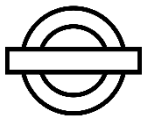


This is Islington Town Hall.



This is what Almeida Street looks like as you arrive at the theatre.





Angel Station to Almeida Theatre

This is what **Angel** station looks like outside.



From Angel station, turn right onto Upper Street and cross the busy road at the pedestrian crossing.

Continue along Upper Street for about 1 kilometre.

The theatre is on the left on Almeida Street.

On your journey down from Angel, you will pass these **landmarks**:

This is the main bus stop across the road from Angel station – bus stop Y.



If you don't want to walk you can get buses 4, 19, 30 or 43 and get off at bus stop P, opposite St Mary's church.



This is Islington Green.



This is St. Mary's Church.



This is what Almeida Street looks like as you arrive at the theatre.



Information about the theatre

You can watch a video tour of the building on our website here:

<https://almeida.co.uk/your-visit/access/>

Inside the main entrance of the theatre, there is a foyer where people can wait. This is what the foyer looks like.



It can get quite busy here before the start of the play.



When you arrive, the front of house team will greet you.



There are lots of staff available in the building if you have questions or if you would like directions to your seats. They are very happy to help you.

Almeida Theatre staff wear black t-shirts with white writing.



If you need help with your ticket, you can speak to the box office team. It can be quite noisy at the box office, and you may have to wait in a queue. Their desk looks like this.



If you have a digital ticket, you can find it in your email inbox, and it will look like this.

**ALMEIDA
THEATRE**

Romans, a novel
Relaxed Environment



Performance date
Wed 1 Oct

Start time
7:30 PM

Section	Row	Seat
CIRCLE	F	12

Please use on street entrance

Mr Al Meida

Order No: 1137734

£ 0.00 Ticket type: Complimentary

Latecomers may not be admitted
[Click here to read our full terms and conditions](#)

Box Office **020 7359 4404**
Almeida Theatre, London N1 1TA
almeida.co.uk

 **ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

The Front of House assistants will scan your ticket as you enter the auditorium.



The entrance to the stalls is via the ramp to the right of the foyer.



The entrance to the circle is on the outside of the building located to the right of the main entrance.



There is step-free access to the foyer and stalls. There is one accessible toilet at the back of the foyer.

This is the café and bar, where you can buy hot and cold drinks and food.





If you have any questions or feel worried about your visit, please do contact us at access@almeida.co.uk or call our box office on 020 7359 4404.

Opening Hours

You can find our Box Office opening hours on our website here:

<https://almeida.co.uk/your-visit/booking-information/>

The Almeida Café & Bar opens two hours before every performance and remains open until 11 pm, with the kitchen closing 30 minutes before the show starts.

The auditorium opens 30 minutes before the performance begins – you are welcome to take your seats from then.