



Audio Description Notes for *The Lehman Trilogy*

WELCOME

Welcome to the Guthrie Theater's production of *The Lehman Trilogy* written by Stefano Massini and adapted by Ben Power. This production is directed by Arin Arbus.

My name is Connie Fullmer, and I will be the audio describer for this performance, which is approximately 3 hours and 35 minutes long, including two intermissions.

The creative team for this production includes:

- Scenic Designer: Marsha Ginsberg
- Costume Designer: Anita Yavich
- Lighting Designer: Yi Zhao
- Sound Designer/Composer: Michael Costagliola
- Projection Designer: Hannah Wasileski
- Resident Dramaturg: Carla Steen
- Vocal Coach: Keely Wolter
- Movement Coordinator: Lorenzo Pisoni
- Jewish Studies Consultant: Pamela S. Nadell
- Historical Consultant: Dr. Soyica Colbert

This production contains mature themes and intense production effects, such as loud noises, gunshots, fog and the use of prop tobacco products.

SYNOPSIS

In 1844, Heyum Lehmann arrives in New York from Rimpar, Bavaria, to make his way in the “magical music box called America.” Heyum soon becomes Henry Lehman, opens a store in Montgomery, Alabama, and welcomes his younger brothers Emanuel and Mayer into the business: Lehman Brothers Fabrics and Suits. The brothers shift from selling fabric to selling raw cotton to mills — ultimately moving into banking and relocating the business to Wall Street in the wake of the Civil War.

The family and firm continue to grow as a new generation of Lehmans pushes the company into the 20th century. The new visionary, Emanuel's son Philip, eventually edges the founders to the periphery while his cousin Herbert, Mayer's son, takes his talents into politics. After the stock market's collapse in 1929, Philip's son Bobby tenaciously guides the company through the unknown waters of the Great Depression and into investing in arms during World War II. He then finds himself the sole Lehman left at the company and chafes at his cousin Herbert's New Deal-era regulations.

After expanding internationally and establishing a trading division, Bobby is succeeded by outsiders Pete Peterson and Lew Glucksman. In 2008, long after the final Lehman is gone, their namesake company collapses into bankruptcy during the subprime mortgage crisis, ending a 164-year legacy.

The Lehman Trilogy is told in three parts: Three Brothers, Fathers & Sons and The Immortal. Leaning into metaphor, dreams and third-person narrative mixed with first-person dialogue, this epic story is told with surprising intimacy and astonishing theatricality. It reaches for the big picture, the fateful decisions and the shifting sands of progress, all while questioning how we define heroes and villains — and where we draw the line between them.



STAGING AND PROPS

When we enter the theater, it looks like there's been a snowstorm on the stage, but on closer inspection we realize that the snow is really shredded paper. In the back left, there is a large mound of shredded paper that is about 8 feet tall. In front of the paper mound are three yellow corporate debris containers that are 4-foot cubes on wheels filled with shredded paper. There is one brown document box on the ground near the containers. Hanging from the ceiling are floating fluorescent fixtures with an industrial frame. Later in Act One, a wooden table with two wooden stools and a large wooden shelving unit are rolled onstage. The shelving unit has four shelves above drawers and cupboards. The shelves are full of bolts of fabric and boxes, and they are later stuffed with small bales of raw cotton. One actor will bring out a menorah from the cupboard.

In Act Two, much of the shredded paper on the floor has been swept up toward the mound. Now there are four leather-topped desks with four wooden desk chairs that have blue velvet cushions. At the front right of the stage, there is a blue velvet armchair beside a floor lamp. On one desk sits a ticker-tape machine, which is a glass dome housing several wheels through which the ticker tape runs.

In Act Three, the four wooden desks have been replaced by three modern Formica-topped and steel-based tables. There is a modern executive plastic swivel chair for each table. There are 12 document boxes scattered around the stage. The paper mound now features several period-appropriate computers with lines of bright green stock numbers displayed on the screens. The floating fluorescent fixtures and industrial frame move throughout the act to accentuate various dramatic moments.

Throughout the play, there are projections on the back wall. These projections often display the year in which the action is taking place. Other projections are silhouettes of locations such as docks, landscapes and skylines. There are also projections featuring a blackboard with columns of numbers, a Civil War battlefield, plantation fields, a crowd at a racetrack with horses speeding by in the foreground, the inside of the original New York Stock Exchange and the inside of the current New York Stock Exchange, including the numbers and symbols flashing by on the trading board.

CAST, CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES

There are three actors in *The Lehman Trilogy*. All three wear similar costumes, except in color. In Act One, all three actors wear knee-length double-breasted overcoats over knee-length suit jackets, matching vests, pants and starched white shirts with ties. In Act Two, the matching vests have been traded for sweater vests. In Act Three, they wear more modern suits with matching vests and suspenders.

Henry Lehman, played by **Edward Gero**, is the oldest of the three brothers, a German Jewish immigrant from Bavaria who emigrated to the U.S. in 1844 at age 23. Henry's costumes are primarily black.

Emanuel Lehman, played by **William Sturdivant**, is the middle Lehman brother who emigrated to the U.S. in 1847. Emanuel's costumes are primarily blue.

Mayer Lehman, played by **Mark Nelson**, is the youngest Lehman brother who joined his brothers in the U.S. in 1850. Mayer's costumes are primarily brown.

The three actors not only play the three Lehman brothers who founded the business but all other roles in the play. They portray their children and grandchildren, including Philip Lehman, Herbert Lehman and Robert or "Bobby" Lehman, as well as various minor characters such as wives, stockbrokers and



CAST, CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES (continued)

business partners. They never change their original costumes in each act — tailored three-piece suits — but may add a fan, scarf or veil to help portray various characters. The actors typically announce their new character names or roles through direct address as the play progresses.

THINGS TO KNOW

- *The Lehman Trilogy* is based on a true — but little-known — story about the Lehman family and their business, which collapsed in 2008 and rocked the U.S. economy.
- Three actors deliver powerhouse performances as they portray more than 50 characters over the course of 170 years.
- The Broadway production of *The Lehman Trilogy* received vast critical acclaim and won five Tony Awards in 2022, including Best Play.