

6 MAY - 3 JUNE 2023

APPROPRIATE

Written by **Branden Jacobs-Jenkins**

Directed by **Nathaniel Lees**



"I wonder what kind of story this weekend is going to be?"

SEASON SPONSOR



CORE FUNDER



SHOW SPONSOR



CONTENTS

Cast and Creatives.....1

About the Play.....7

Characters.....8

About the Playwright.....9

Artistic Director Alison Walls - Notes on the play.....10

Erased History...11

Themes and reactions.....12

Talking with Nathaniel Lees (Director).....13

Production Technologies.....14

Set Design

Costume Design

Lighting Design

Sound Design

Reflecting on the Play....18

Interview with an Actor21

Lily Bourne

Roy Snow

Eilish Moran

Race, Identity, and the American Play.....24

The role of the Assistant Stage Manager.....25

Reviews.....26

CAST / KĀHUI KIRIWHAKAARI



Eilish Moran

ANTOINETTE 'TONI' LAFAYETTE

In 1969, Eilish first tiptoed onto the stage at the age of four in Dame Ngaio Marsh's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. She joined The Court Company at 18 as a student actor and since then has become a regular on The Court's stage.

She has appeared in more than 80 productions at The Court. Some of her favourites include *August: Osage County*; *Homeland*; *Suddenly Last Summer*; *Dancing at Lughnasa*; *Travesties*; *Cabaret*; *End of the Rainbow*; *Blood Brothers*; *Ropable*; *Chicago*; *Titus Andronicus*; *In The Next Room, or The Vibrator Play*; *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*; *The Pink Hammer*; *Flagons and Foxtrots* and *Sense and Sensibility*.

Her television and film credits include the drama series *Hope and Wire* on TV3 and the short film *Run Rabbit*, directed by Robyn Paterson. Eilish is an Associate of The Court Theatre.



Serena Cotton

RACHAEL KRAMER-LAFAYETTE

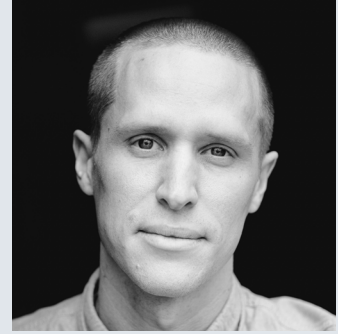
Serena is a graduate of the University of Otago (BA in Theatre Studies) and a 'drop out' of Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School (she left in her second year to play one of the leads in the critically acclaimed television drama series *The Insider's Guide to Love*).

This is Serena's third Court Theatre show. She previously appeared in *Five Women Wearing the Same Dress* (the first show post-February 2011 earthquake, before The Court had its own venue) and the immensely popular *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*.

Other recent stage credits include seasons in Auckland, Sydney and around New Zealand with Pop Up Globe (*Julius Caesar*; *Comedy of Errors*; *Macbeth*; *Hamlet* and *Measure for Measure*) and two new New Zealand plays: *The Hall* (Bullet Heart Club) and *Timberr...!* (Circa Theatre / Centrepont Theatre).

Recent screen credits include *Shortland Street*; *The Brokenwood Mysteries*; *Ablaze* and *The Gulf*.

Serena is a proud member of Actor's Equity.



Tom Eason

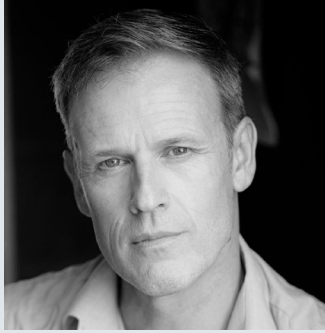
FRANÇOIS 'FRANZ' / FRANK' LAFAYETTE

Tom began his training here in Christchurch at Original Scripts Theatre School. Since then he has gained a Bachelor of Performing Arts (Acting) from Te Kura Toi Whakaari O Aotearoa: New Zealand Drama School.

His previous Court Theatre credits include *Astroman*; *The Pink Hammer*; *A Streetcar Named Desire*; *Frankenstein*; *The Girl on the Train* and *Māui Me Te Rā*. His other theatre credits include *Sea* and *Dust Pilgrim* (Red Leap Theatre); *The Wholehearted* (Massive Theatre Company); *The Breath of the Volcano* and *Skin of Fire*, performed in the Auckland International Arts Festival (Group F).

He has taught and directed for Toi Whakaari, The Court Youth Company and Original Scripts Theatre School. He is co-artistic director of Two Productions and has performed in their works *Moemoea*; *If You Only See One Show In Your Life*; *The Disaster Brothers*; *Balmy*; *The Powerful Event*; *Open for Business*; *Moby Dick* and *The Little Prince*.

CAST / KĀHUI KIRIWHAKAARI



Roy Snow

BEAUREGARDE 'BO' LAFAYETTE

Roy is a Court Theatre regular with numerous appearances over the last 15 years, most recently in *The Girl on the Train* and *Little Shop of Horrors*. Further Court Theatre credits include *End of the Rainbow*; *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*; *Chicago* and *Ladies Night*.

Last seen with the Auckland Theatre Company in their acclaimed production of *North By Northwest*, his other theatre credits include *The Rocky Horror Show* and *Cabaret* (ATC); *The Threepenny Opera* (Silo Theatre); *The Phantom of the Opera*; *Les Miserables* and *Evita* (Showbiz Christchurch).

Roy can be found renovating his old house in Geraldine, keeping his wife happy and walking his daughter's pug Tibbers.



Laurel Gregory

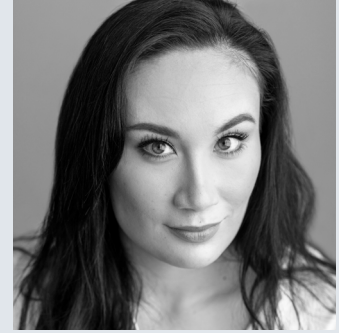
CASSIDY 'CASSIE' KRAMER-LAFAYETTE

Laurel is a graduate of the National Academy of Singing and Dramatic Art (NASDA - Bachelor of Performing Arts). This is her second production with The Court Theatre, her first being *The Wind in the Willows* in 2019.

Her other theatre credits include *As You Like It* (Third Bear); *Les Miserables*; *Wicked* and *Hairspray* (Showbiz Christchurch) and *Oliver Twist* (Lyttelton Arts Factory).

For the last two years, Laurel has been performing for Universal Studios Beijing, where she sang and danced as a Hogwarts Student in the Frog Choir and the Triwizard Spirit Rally (*Wizarding World of Harry Potter*), and also as a punk rock porcupine in *Sing on Tour* (based on the 2016 film 'Sing').

Only recently returned, she is excited to be back performing in the city she calls home.



Lily Bourne

RIVER RAYNER

Originally from Palmerston North, Lily moved to Ōtautahi to attend the National Academy of Singing and Dramatic Art (NASDA) and graduated with a Bachelor of Music Theatre in 2022.

Lily first stepped onto The Court Theatre main stage last year as Rita Vincent in *Flavons and Foxtrots*, and more recently worked behind-the-scenes for *Sense and Sensibility*. Her other performance credits include *The New Regent Street Spectacular* (World Buskers Festival, Strut'n'Fret); *Merry and Bright* (Blackboard Theatre Collective); *Grease* and *The Wedding Singer* (NASDA); and *Mamma Mia!* (Act Three Productions).

She is also a Teaching Artist in The Court Theatre Education Programme and is a former Jester Youth Company member. She is an avid choral enthusiast and is proud to have recently been selected to represent New Zealand in one of our national choirs.

Lily is proud to be a member of Equity New Zealand.

CAST / KĀHUI KIRIWHAKAARI



Barnaby [Barney] Domigan

AINSLEY KRAMER-LAFAYETTE

Barnaby is in year six at Burnside Primary School. *Appropriate* is his first Court Theatre show and he's also rehearsing for *Frozen JR.* which goes on stage in July.

His other theatre credits include singing in *Arohanui - From Christchurch with Love*; the role of Eric in *Matilda the Musical* (Showbiz Christchurch); several shows and music videos for the Music with Michal dance troupe, including NYE22 in Hagley Park; and annual dance recitals and medals tests for Anna Lee School of Dance, where he learns hip hop and jazz.

Barnaby sings lead in his school band, sings in choir, plays piano in the orchestra, and loves to play touch rugby and rugby for his school and Burnside Club. Last year Barnaby found a GIANT worm in his backyard and became a global sensation, interviewing with news networks all over the world.



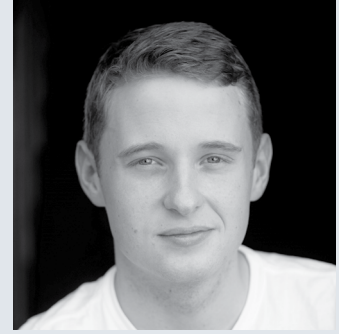
Franklin [Frankie] Domigan

AINSLEY KRAMER-LAFAYETTE

Frankie is in year four at Burnside Primary School. *Appropriate* is his first Court Theatre show and he's also rehearsing for *Frozen JR.* which goes on stage in July.

His other theatre credits include singing in *Arohanui - From Christchurch with Love*; several shows and music videos for the Music with Michal dance troupe including, NYE22 in Hagley Park; and annual dance recitals and medals tests for Anna Lee School of Dance, where he learns hip hop and jazz.

Frankie sings backing vocals and plays keys for his school band, sings in choir, plays piano in the orchestra, enjoys triathlons, runs cross country and loves to play basketball, touch rugby and rugby for his school and Burnside Club. He's recently started leading a kapa haka club at school and he has written some original haka.



William Burns

RHYS THURSTON

William is a theatre director, actor, maker, tech and teacher.

He was most recently seen at The Court as Pinkie in *Flagns and Foxtrots*. Other Court Theatre credits include being a member of the The Court Youth Company; sound and audiovisual designer for *Katzenmusik*; co-director of *Vernon God Little* and director of *The Unauthorised Biography Of...*

His other theatre credits include *Les Miserables* and *Miss Saigon* (Showbiz Christchurch); Assistant Director of *Mr. Burns: A Post Electric Play* (NASDA) and various projects with Two Productions.

William's self-produced solo shows include *Shit Finds Love*, three shows with his alter ego Peter Partridge and *The First Annual Parnell Croquet Club Facebook Live Telethon*.

William is a Teaching Artist for The Court Theatre Education Programme and is a member of Equity New Zealand.

CREATIVES / RINGATOI



Mark McEntyre
SET DESIGNER

Mark has been a set designer for numerous Court Theatre productions including *The Slapdash Assassin*; *August: Osage County*; *Hui*; *Postal*; *When the Rain Stops Falling*; *Constellations*; *Waiora*; *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*; *The Biggest*; *Mum's Choir*; *Elling*; *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*; *Flagons and Foxtrots* and *RENT*.

Mark has also designed sets for New Zealand International Festival of the Arts; Christchurch Arts Festival; Showbiz Christchurch; New Zealand Actors Company; Southern Opera; New Zealand NBR Opera Company; Tawata Productions; Taki Rua Productions; Auckland Theatre Company and Fortune Theatre.

Mark's latest work includes *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Wellington Opera, 2023) and *Dawn Raids* (Pacific Underground and Auckland Theatre Company, 2022).



Tony De Goldi
SET DESIGNER

Tony is a Scenic Artist working predominantly as a Theatre and Exhibition Designer and has been designing sets, props and costumes for the past three decades.

Tony has taught design at tertiary level and is presently Senior Tutor Production and Design at Toi Whakaari.

Theatre credits include *Kiwi Moon*; *Seasons*; *Odd One Out* and *Hinepau* (Capital E - National Children's Theatre); *The Biggest* (Tikapa Theatre); *The Vultures* (Tawata Productions); *Riverside Kings* (IKenSo Productions); the set for *Fresh off The Boat* and costumes for *A Streetcar Named Desire* (The Court Theatre).

Tony and Set Designer Mark McEntyre (together as Arts Collective 'G.O.M') designed set, costumes and props for *La Traviata* and *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Wellington Opera, 2023) and *Dawn Raids* (Pacific Underground and Auckland Theatre Company, 2022).



Daniella Salazar
COSTUME DESIGN

Daniella joined The Court Theatre's Costume Department in March 2021 as Costume Technician and gained the Costume Management role later that year. She had recently returned to Ōtautahi Christchurch after working in the fashion and textile industry in Melbourne, managing garment production workrooms followed by a sales role in wholesale trade materials.

Daniella is thrilled to have landed her dream job in costuming at The Court Theatre. Her Court Theatre credits include *Ladies Night*; *Once* and *Frankenstein* (Costume Technician); *Little Shop of Horrors*; *Flagons and Foxtrots*; *RENT* and *Sense and Sensibility* (Costume Manager); and *The Girl on the Train* (Costume Designer).



Matt Short
SOUND DESIGNER AND OPERATOR

Matt began his career working in marketing for a major London record label. He has since worked as a senior camera operator in broadcast television and other media platforms.

Matt returned to New Zealand to co-film, record sound and compose music for an adventure guide series for TVNZ. Over the last ten years he has composed music and designed sound effects for many major brand advertising and marketing films.

Matt's previous Court Theatre credits include *Things I Know to be True; Easy Money; In the Next Room, or The Vibrator Play; The Littlest Ninja; Stephen King's Misery; Mum's Choir; Hansel and Gretel; Thumbelina; Elling; Les Liaisons Dangereuses; The Arsonists; The Pink Hammer; A Streetcar Named Desire; The Girl on the Train; Flagons and Foxtrots* and *Sense and Sensibility*.



Sheena Baines-Alhawamdeh
LIGHTING DESIGNER

Sheena is the Events Manager for Spectrum Lighting and Sound and is a lighting designer with over 30 years' experience.

Her previous Court Theatre credits include *Mother Courage; Great Expectations; Proof; Angels in America; Kiss me Kate* and *Frankenstein*. Her other theatre credits include *The Wedding Singer (NASDA); Suor Angelica (Toi Toi Opera); Peoria Ballet (ONU)* and *Copenhagen (Auckland Theatre Company)*, as well as touring extensively with Mark Hadlow.

Sheena is an accomplished Event Manager and spent 13 years at the Christchurch City Council, where she produced Classical Sparks, Summer Theatre and Botanic D'Lights.

Sheena moved to Spectrum Lighting and Sound in 2018 after being a client, having been impressed with the passion on site and the problem-solving expertise within the team.



Jo Bunce
STAGE MANAGER

Jo graduated from Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School with a Diploma in Technical Production in 1996 and has been working in theatre for over 25 years.

She freelanced for many years in Wellington as a lighting designer / operator and stage manager, as well as working overseas in London and Edinburgh and in film. She was an on-set production assistant for *King Kong*.

Jo is the Head Stage Manager at The Court Theatre and has been involved in over 50 Court productions going back to 1996, including *End of the Rainbow; The Hound of the Baskervilles; Blood Brothers; One Man, Two Guvnors; Shepherd; Constellations; Waiora; The Events; Venus in Fur; Ideation; Stephen King's Misery; Les Liaisons Dangereuses; The Arsonists; A Streetcar Named Desire; Ladies Night; Frankenstein; The Girl on the Train; Flagons and Foxtrots* and *Sense and Sensibility*.



Haydon Dickie
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

Haydon has worked on and off camera for both stage and screen. He starred in the short film *Mr Savant* (Winning Film, Somedays Stories Film Challenge 2019), and starred in and worked behind-the-scenes on the short film *Truth.exe* (Official Selection: Boston SciFi Film Festival; Science Fiction Film Festival (Sydney); Monthly Finalist - Changing Face International Film Festival; and Winner - Best Student Film, Miami International SciFi Film Festival). He is also a producer and actor in the yet-to-be-released feature film based on *Truth.exe*, entitled *The Bostrom Scenario*.

Haydon was a member of The Court Youth Company 2019 / 2020 and stage managed the Company's 2021 productions of *Boys* and *The Unauthorised Biography Of...* He was Assistant Stage Manager for *RENT* and Stage Manager for *Cinderella*. Haydon has also worked with New Zealand Opera.

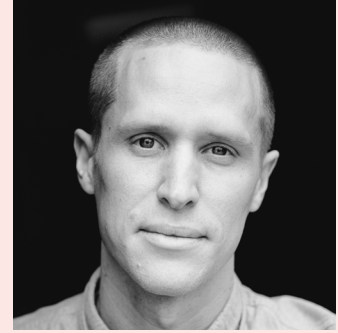


Rosie Gilmore
REHEARSAL ASSISTANT STAGE
MANAGER

Rosie is a graduate of Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School (Bachelor of Design: Stage and Screen).

Her previous Court Theatre credits include *Katzenmusik*; *Whā* and *The Unauthorised Biography of...* (Designer).

Rosie's other theatre credits include Cubbin Theatre Company's production of *Sportsball* (Designer); Red Scare's production of *Homemade Takeaways* (Set Designer); Toi Whakaari's production of *Women Beware Women* (Set Designer); National Theatre / New Zealand Festival's production of *The Brief and Frightening Reign of Phill* (Assistant Designer) and various productions with Two Productions as a Designer.



Tom Eason
FIGHT CHOREOGRAPHER

Tom's biography is listed under CAST

"All this life you live - what's it for if no one's there to tell you about it? To hold on to it and then give it back to you? To remind you of the things you forgot or never knew you even knew? I always thought that was what family was for."

- ANTOINETTE 'TONI' LAFAYETTE (APPROPRIATE)

ABOUT THE PLAY

WRITTEN BY BRANDEN JACOBS-JENKINS

After their father dies, the Lafayette siblings gather at their crumbling ancestral estate to clear out the family house for sale. There, they discover the most unexpected of secrets and are forced to confront realities they would prefer had never been revealed. At once familiar yet shocking, *Appropriate's* audacious and unexpected humour will leave you as open-mouthed as its revelations.

"A bracingly clever play, as twisted and pointed as a corkscrew... viciously funny and profoundly unsettling... Jacobs-Jenkins springs many surprises as his drama runs its suspenseful and gripping course."

– WhatsOnStage

HAVE A GO

Work in groups. Imagine you have been asked to write a play based on your family, what would be the main themes? What would be your characters narrative?

DISCUSS

Whose story is this?
As a class discuss who you feel empathy for and why.





THE CHARACTERS



**ANTOINETTE 'TONI'
LAFAYETTE**

The eldest sister of the Lafayette family and mother of Rhys



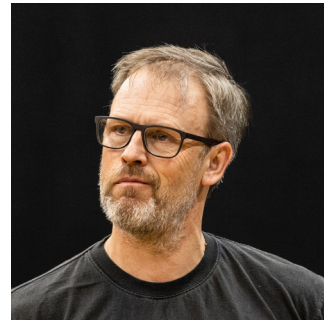
**RACHAEL
KRAMER-LAFAYETTE**

Bo's wife and mother of Cassidy and Ainsley



**FRANÇOIS 'FRANZ /
FRANK' LAFAYETTE**

Youngest Brother of Toni and Bo



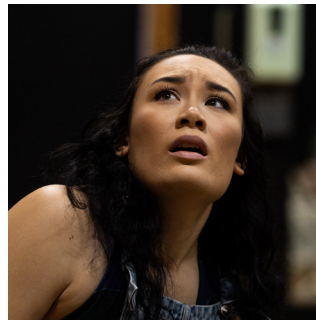
**BEAUREGARDE
'BO' LAFAYETTE**

Middle Brother of the Lafayette family, Rachael's husband and father of Cassidy and Ainsley



**CASSIDY 'CASSIE'
KRAMER-LAFAYETTE**

Daughter of Bo and Rachael, sister to Ainsley and cousin to Rhys



RIVER RAYNER

Fiancée of Franz/Frank Lafayette



**AINSLEY
KRAMER-LAFAYETTE**

Youngest child of Bo and Rachael and Cassidy's brother



RHYS THURSTON

Son of Toni and Cassidy's cousin



ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

Branden Jacobs-Jenkins is a Brooklyn-based playwright and producer and two-time Pulitzer Prize finalist. Recent credits include showrunner, executive producer and writer for HULU / FX's drama series, *Kindred*, based on Octavia E. Butler's groundbreaking novel.

Previously, Jacobs-Jenkins was a consulting producer on HBO's Emmy-winning limited series *The Watchmen* and Prime Video's sci-fi western, *Outer Range*.

Theatre credits include *Girls, Everybody, War* (Yale Rep; Lincoln Center/LCT3), *Gloria* (Vineyard Theatre), *Appropriate* (Obie Award; Signature Theatre), *An Octoroon* (Obie Award; Soho Rep, Theatre for a New Audience), and *Neighbors* (The Public Theater).

A Residency Five playwright at Signature Theatre and a 2020 Guggenheim fellow, his honours include a USA Artists fellowship, the Charles Wintour Award, the MacArthur fellowship, the Windham-Campbell Prize for Drama, and the inaugural Tennessee Williams Award.

In addition to holding an MA in Performance Studies from NYU, Branden is also a graduate of the Lila Acheson Wallace American Playwrights Program at the Juilliard School.

He currently serves as Vice President of the Dramatists Guild council and sits on the boards of Soho Rep, Park Avenue Armory, the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize and the Dramatists Guild Foundation. This autumn, he joins the faculty of Yale University as Professor of Practice.

Jacob-Jenkins was named a MacArthur Fellow in 2016, with the foundation noting his "use a historical lens to satirise and comment on modern culture, particularly the ways in which race and class are negotiated in both private and public settings."

Partly for that reason, his work has been described as 'subversive' and 'innovative'. He has also been acknowledged as a playwright who expertly captures the nuances of domestic American life, just as his heroes Sam Shepherd, Tennessee Williams and Eugene O'Neill have. All of them, he says, have been telling stories about race long before him; many of us didn't notice, because it was through the dominant lens many stories were always told. "So, do you think that you've not been making work about race? You've been making work about whiteness."



ARTISTIC DIRECTOR ALISON WALLS NOTES ON THE PLAY

Some plays stay with you. I first encountered *Appropriate* in New York in 2014. It was a memorable discovery of an incredible play and an incredible playwright. Jacobs-Jenkins is one of the most exciting (and lauded) playwrights in America today. A writer fascinated by dramaturgy and genre, with *Appropriate*, Jacobs-Jenkins skilfully takes on the familiar family drama genre but adds new layers and biting sharp comedy that is simultaneously confronting and hilarious. Woven into the Lafayette family drama is the deeper, far-reaching drama of U.S. history, race, racism and identity.

A play like this requires a director who can appreciate the complexity of the text—its depth, its bite, its humour and its poetry. It also requires a director who understands the work of the actor. Nathaniel Lees—well-known as one of Aotearoa’s finest actors—is just such a director. With nuanced and complex characters and finely tuned writing, it is the kind of work that allows skilled actors to really exercise their craft and spark off each other. Our superb cast have seized this challenging material with both hands. Stage manager Jo Bunce supports the process with capability and care. The focus and energy in the rehearsal room is gripping and I know will be even more thrilling on stage.

DISCUSS

What is a play that you’ve seen that has always stuck with you? What was it about this play that made it memorable?

The other, unlisted, character in the play is the crumbling Arkansas estate. Set design by Mark McEntyre and Tony De Goldi captures not just the place but the weight of history—from all those boxes to the staircase and chandelier. Sheena Baines-Alhawamdeh’s lighting evokes time and place but also mood, while Matt Short’s sound design reinforces the haunting and haunted atmosphere—the music and wordless complexity of time. Daniella Salazar’s costume design captures the realness, the familiarity of the characters.

The work of these brilliant creatives combines to underline and accentuate the whole of this unforgettable play.

Here's to memorable theatre!

ERASED HISTORY

Between 1882 to 1968, 4,743 lynchings were officially recorded in the United States. Seventy-two percent were Black people.

Many of these crimes were photographed and, almost unbelievably, in the late 19th and early 20th century, some were turned into postcards.

“In a typical lynching postcard, the victim is displayed prominently at the centre of the shot, while smiling spectators, often including children, crowd the margins of the frame, posing for the camera to prove their presence. Facial expressions suggesting remorse, guilt, shame, or regret are rare.”

They served not only to ‘celebrate’ the power of the white majority and the ‘justice’ meted out on untried victims, but to intimidate African Americans and other minorities, and those who supported them.

The cards were sometimes kept as souvenirs and sometimes mailed, until in 1908 the postcards were banned by the US Postmaster General. However, as late as the 21st century were still available for sale “from dealers who offered them in whispered tones and clandestine marketplaces.

In 2002 artist Ken Gonzales Day displayed altered images from the postcards in his *Erased Lynching Series*. He photoshopped the victims and the horror of their fate out, forcing the eye to focus on the crowd committing, observing and supporting the violence, thus forcing “the viewer to focus on the crowd and, in doing so, to address the underlying racism and bias what was so foundational to many of these acts of collective violence.”

RESEARCH / DISCUSS

How does the history of America and acts of racism from the past affect our world today?

What can we do to keep changing this generational cycle?



THEMES AND IMPACT ON THE AUDIENCE

HAVE A GO

As an audience member, what does this play make you think about? Using the headings below as a starting point, explore how the play made you feel about these topics and what choices the production team made to get you thinking this way.

DISCUSS

What do you think are the major themes in the play and what impact these have on the audience.

FAMILY

Audience response	What made you feel this?

SECRETS

Audience response	What made you feel this?

COMEDY

Audience response	What made you feel this?

COMMUNICATION

Audience response	What made you feel this?

RACISM

Audience response	What made you feel this?

HISTORY

Audience response	What made you feel this?



Talking with

NATHANIEL LEES

DIRECTOR

Leading the challenge to premiere this powerful story is director Nathaniel Lees, well known to Aotearoa and international audiences for his theatre, TV and movie work. Despite a busy schedule, once Nathaniel read the script, he “knew then that this is a story that needs to be told”.

Lees has assembled a compelling cast, many of whom are familiar to Court Theatre audiences, to present the uncomfortable revelations and questions of *Appropriate*. “This cast has made it so much easier. They have so much experience and such a mixture of that experience” says Lees. That depth of experience is needed to bring to life the Lafayette family, a family that is the epitome of ‘dysfunctional’. “They think they know so much about each other, but there is a surprise in there for all of them. It’s a joy how these actors interact, how hungry they are to learn from each other and to tell this story.”

Also key to the experience and story of *Appropriate* is also the physical environment it inhabits, and which helps tell the story. “I love working with designers and actors in theatre” Nathaniel says. “An audience in a theatre can look anywhere - across the whole stage, the total environment. We can be looking at different things, so that all has to work together. These elements add even more texture to what you’re watching than is possible on film. Moments are underlined with lighting, or focussing, and as you watch it adds to your view, how you deal with it and how you experience it.”

For Lees, *Appropriate* does exactly what theatre should do. “Theatre is there to challenge” he says. “It will make people think, ‘what is my attitude to this? Is this part of our history as well? Is it part of my history? If it doesn’t affect me, do I care?’”

For Lees that idea of appropriate / appropriation is one of the most interesting aspects of the play. “Appropriation is using other cultures to create benefit to yourself. This play requires us to ask, what can I say about this culture I live in without appropriating something within it and simply using it for my own purposes? If it’s not of your culture or you don’t understand what it is to have had that particular experience, then you can’t say ‘we’. You do not know. ‘We’ have very different experiences.”

Appropriate shines a light on those different experiences and perspectives, from within the microcosm of a family to the much wider and resultant cultural, historical and societal impacts. “If it shocks, it shocks, but this play will not be uncomfortable for everyone. For some people this will be an acknowledgement, underlining their experience. I hope it initiates discussion and then they talk about their different points of view, and I hope they listen to each other.”

REFLECT

What was your experience viewing this play?
How does it relate to you and the world you live in?



Production Technologies

MARK MCENTYRE AND TONY DE GOLDI

SET DESIGNERS

The set embodies the whole, it holds the old culture together in a way – old history of slavery and civil rights. Arkansas was very old – it was originally inhabited by the French. The house is a holding place of lost white society. The remnants of this – like the British Empire – are faded and jaded. They are there, but disappearing, literally in many cases – as in some of these southern states, African Americans are now the majority.

There is a ghosting aspect to the set – an ephemerality about it. It's quite architectural, but we wanted it to feel as if it could evaporate out of the space.

The props and furniture anchor some of those histories that are talked about or alluded to. Military memorabilia, legal papers that reference the father's past roles. There are also hints of the mother – fur coats – and they also allude to early history of Arkansas as part of fur trade in the early French colony. The state was built on fur, then slavery with cotton. These elements help hint at the whiteness of the inhabitants.

There are heaps of cameras on the set. Working in multiples. The idea of photography alludes to the photos of lynchings – who is capturing the image (and what for). Cameras are a form of power – cataloguing views and ideas. We take some of these ideas from

the script and amplify them through set and props. We reflect part of their older family history. In the play they talk about stuff belonging to the boys when they were children, so we included toys amongst the props.

We wanted to hint at the idea of the old man sitting watching TV and living his last days watching life vicariously, while disappearing.

The set reflects the turmoil. Sense of order and past wealth, rather than just junk everywhere. Every element that goes into the design process contributes to the narrative in some way. Whether they form an explicit element or extrapolate an idea in the play. We tend to construct the space as not just as a backdrop – it is part of the action – it is an actor and contributing to the text.

Lots of people have experience of the shutting up of the home when their parents die. None of the characters feel like they belong any more in this place. It's the old family home but they are strangers to it. This family are flawed, to say the least. Many White Americans haven't acknowledged the influence of their own history. Unfazed by the horror of what they are seeing. This hints that a new generation won't have changed – they see nothing that needs changing, but responsibility is generational (as in, it is carried by each subsequent generation. The set is the last decaying remnant of this thinking.

Production Technologies

DANIELLA SALAZAR

COSTUME DESIGNER



What was your process designing the costumes for this show?

I read the script several times, and each time I'd notice something new about a character or understand their arc in a deeper way. One of the things I love most about costume design is the exploration of each character's personal journey – not only how they relate to each other, but I love to think deeply about their individual histories, why are they like this? who are they becoming, what has brought them here? is their transformation complete? etc.

How do the costumes support the themes of the show?

I felt it was important to make each character a fully rounded person through their costume, by that I mean I wanted to convey their back story through their clothes. Franz is a good example of this, I see him as experiencing an identity crisis. He is heavily influenced by River's spirituality, yet he is fearful of exploring this (or anything really) on his own terms. I tried to make this clear with his jewellery choices. He wears an evil eye necklace, a crystal, a shark's tooth, a kabbala bracelet etc...all of which are protective symbols within differing mythologies and religions. Franz is using his jewellery as talismans to support his emotional growth, with the hope to rid himself of his shame.

What is your favourite costume and why?

Rhys' costume is one of my favourites because I think it very accurately displays a young man who thinks he's very tough and very street, but his fashion choices only serve to appropriate African American culture in the way that many young white men do, whether unintentional or not – both are problematic. To appropriate Black culture intentionally implies that he believes his problems are the same as the average African American young man, which to me, reeks of White entitlement. My hope is that it adds another layer to the title of the show and leaves the audience thinking of broader racial themes.

Any interesting facts about the costume choices? Or any challenges?

Initially I struggled to "find" Toni, mainly because the actor playing Toni is so lovely in the real world but so bitter and hateful in the play. Eilish had the idea to cut all her hair off, which I completely agreed was the right decision, and by doing so I was able to clearly see what I wanted for Toni. It's wonderful when these collaborations happen organically, and it demonstrates how important it is to be flexible and cooperative for the good of the show. Any creative process is always evolving.

What was your personal experience of working on this show?

I loved this show from the first time I read the script! I was so moved by the complexity of themes and the many layers behind each sentence, it's beautifully written and carries such emotional and intellectual depth, if you are willing to search for it. The family dynamic resonated with me because I come from a family that speaks their truth and so naturally, I think the characters are all very relatable.

It has been a privilege to work with such a gifted cast and creative team, and to know that Nathaniel trusted me with my design choices and allowed me the freedom to deliver my vision was such a rewarding creative experience, because as a costume designer that is not always the case.



Production Technologies

SHEENA BAINES- ALHAWAMDEH

LIGHTING DESIGNER

What was your process designing the lighting for this show?

I always start with the script and reading it. Then I constantly look at the four values of lighting design throughout the process – visibility, mood, dimension and selectivity – and question what is important for the piece of work and how the lighting fits with set and costumes and sound as well as the action on stage. Discussions with the Director and seeing rehearsals are an integral part of the journey. I visualise what I expect it to look like and then rationalise that down to what is available, how much time we have and what the budget is.

How does the lighting design support the themes of the show?

The time of day and the heat was obviously an important part of the story as well as supporting the ending of the play. As the play is darkly funny and very dialogue heavy it was very important to see the actors so we could hear them.

What is your favourite lighting moment and why?

One of the challenges with having a night-time candlelight scene is that we needed to get the lights on and the rationale that Toni turns them on wasn't scripted but fitted with how she would behave. That cue ended up looking lovely and felt real. I also love the last image as that is what the Set Designers and I imagined when we first discussed the play.

Any interesting facts about the lighting choices? Or any challenges?

The process was greatly enjoyable as the production almost seemed to take a different path from what we first envisaged but in a good way. Nathaniel Lees did an awesome job in the rehearsal with the cast, and it became more real than surreal which was really interesting to see develop.

What was your personal experience of working on this show?

It is always great to come in and do a show and work with some of the most talented and creative people who are wholly committed to the production being the best it can be and serve the storytelling with every small detail. The details in this piece are phenomenal and I hope the audience can see the thought and love that went into each decision.



Production Technologies

MATT SHORT

SOUND DESIGNER

What was your process for designing the show?

Firstly, I read the script for the required sound effects. I then consider whether music or original compositions would support the play. I look to see how many scenes there are and what the set will be like in conjunction with scene changes. Obviously meeting with the Director and discussing their vision is very important.

How does the sound support the themes of the show?

It was important to me to support the script and actors with a sound design which wasn't in any way taking the focus away from them. Nathaniel and I decided that after the opening track where the cicadas slowly take over the music, would be the only music until the curtain call. I loved this unique approach as I felt adding music would take us out of the immersive world we were trying to create.

Is there any part of this sound design that you are particularly proud of?

I'm proud of succeeding with a less is more approach which this script allows. The sounds as the set is falling apart were fun to create.

Do you have any interesting facts about the sound design or any challenges?

Every play has its challenges, and it's always inspirational to be involved with such a diverse difference in approach to design that each play requires. All the designers immerse themselves in the script, the location and the era. Everything needs to be authentic. I can't just use our West Coast cicadas we are all used to hearing. I need the sound of Arkansas cicadas. The difference is very subtle but important.

What was your personal experience of working on this show?

Working with Nathaniel was a real pleasure. Watching him guiding the actors during rehearsals, transforming this confronting script into the final product we are all proud of was inspirational. I always enjoy working with the other designers and seeing all our creative work come together for opening night. The cast have all been amazing too and they are at the heart of this production.

REFLECTING ON THE PLAY

HAVE A GO

In groups work to complete the tables below. Use the information in this pack and add your own ideas and thoughts on how The Court Theatre's production of *Appropriate* used drama elements, techniques, conventions, and technologies within this performance. Remember to consider why the director / designer / actor made these choices and what impact this had on your interpretation of the play.

DRAMA ELEMENTS AND HOW THEY IMPACT THE MEANING AND UNDERSTANDING

ELEMENT	HOW IT WAS USED	THE IMPACT
TENSION		
SITUATION		
MOOD		
CONTRAST		
TIME		
CAST		
LANGUAGE	The actors use profanity and racial slurs in the show.	We are shocked and made to feel uncomfortable. This also allows us to question and realise our own boundaries in today's society.



DRAMA ELEMENTS AND HOW THEY IMPACT THE MEANING AND UNDERSTANDING

TECHNIQUE	HOW IT WAS USED	THE IMPACT
USE OF SPACE		
BODY		
MOVEMENT		
VOICE		
MONOLOGUE	There are a few monologues throughout the play. Franz's monologue about swimming in the lake, and Toni's monologue at the end of the play are particularly memorable.	
ENSEMBLE		



PRODUCTION TECHNOLOGIES AND HOW THEY IMPACT MEANING AND UNDERSTANDING

ELEMENT	HOW IT WAS USED	THE IMPACT
TECHNOLOGY		
SET		
LIGHTING		
PROPS		
SOUND	<p>At the beginning of the show, we sat in almost silence for 5 minutes whilst listening to cicadas and taking in the set as the lights gradually changed. There was no action on stage. Just set and sound.</p>	
COSTUME		
EFFECTS		



Interview with an actor

LILY BOURNE

RIVER

What are the biggest challenges of the role of River?

The biggest challenges I find with River as an actor are making her truthful. It's very easy for me with the information we're given about her to make her a more stereotypical, 2-Dimensional 'nothing' character and play into the 'hippie' image. It's been really important for me to focus on finding her sincerity and truth with everything that she does. Her motivations stem from an authenticity that no one expects of her and her love for Franz, regardless of how the others want to paint her.

What do you think are the main messages in *Appropriate*?

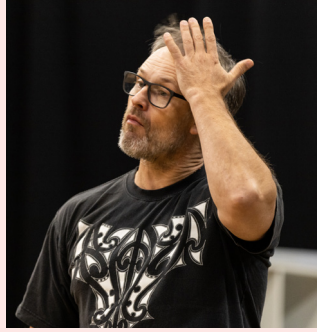
I think the main messages in the show are all to do with perspectives, acknowledging that the world is made up of lots of different kinds of people and that we all deal with adversity in different ways. It's also a very well written story of family at its core, and the complex relationships that we deal with throughout our lives. It analyses people's reactions to things we all know are wrong and how their traditions, beliefs, innate morals and unconscious biases affect their outward behaviour.

What has been your experience working on this show and what is your connection to it?

I have truly never worked so hard in a show before. I'm still very fresh, having just graduated so my experience isn't anywhere as vast as some of the others, but it has been a gift and an honour to work alongside all of these incredible people. Everyday brought a new challenge— deeper thinking, more questions to answer, more understanding to find, new feelings settling into my body and harder to push. I've never done a show like this before with so much meat and meaning so it's been incredibly rewarding as an actor but also as a person to share this with audiences.

Do you have a favourite moment in the show?

I do really enjoy the second half of the show, of which I only do the first scene of course! All of the revelations and the pace make it extremely fun to play every day, and it's one of the only times we're all onstage together. I also love playing the softer moments with Franz, it's just such a contrast to the rest of the show so it's nice to sit in those lovely caring moments and occupy space like that before it all falls apart later.



Interview with an actor

ROY SNOW

BO

How did you prepare for the role of Bo?

Preparation is fairly similar for me for every role. Read the script. Understand it. Figure out where he sits in the play, thematically, narratively, intention-wise and what his job/purpose is within these things. Sounds more complex than it is. Usually involves a lot of pondering.

What do you think are the main messages in *Appropriate*?

The whole story is what's important here. Bo's is another cog in the machine and if I do my job well the audience will be left with a lot of thinking to do. That's where the greatness of this play lies.

What are the biggest challenges of this role?

The plays emotional content. Lines.

What do you think are the main messages in *Appropriate*?

There are a few pertinent messages in this play. And like all great plays they are best determined/discovered by the viewer.

What has been your experience working on this show and what is your connection to it?

Great experience. I have no real connection to it. It's a story I know little about outside the history of racial tensions in the U.S. I would also caution any actor to become too involved with the reality of any particular play lest it pollute your performance. Do as much research necessary to inform your performance, not influence it.

Do you have a favourite moment in the show?

Favourite moment. The opening, crickets and the gradual light build at the start of the show.



Interview with an actor

EILISH MORAN

TONI

How did you prepare for the role of Toni?

Some of my preparation to play Toni – I wrote down everything that was said about Toni by other characters in *Appropriate* and then looked at all the facts in the play about her, i.e. her family, her job, her son and her relationships to the other people in the play. I worked on the accent she uses. I imagined how she was feeling when all the things in *Appropriate* happened to her. I wrote anything down that came to me while I was working on the script. These are a few examples of what I did to prepare for this role.

Why do you think Toni's story is important to tell?

Toni's importance to the play! Toni, like the other siblings in the Lafayette family, is a flawed, broken person who has got to a stage in her life where her personal loss is affecting her actions.

What are the biggest challenges of this role?

One of the biggest challenges of this role are the emotional journey that Toni has and the energy it takes to sustain that as an actor. On a practical level, the actor performing this needs to be rested, i.e. get enough sleep, be fit, for me that looks like going to the gym and has enough fuel to sustain the role over two and a half hours. Everything has to come together to perform a role like this. The actor needs to have researched the character thoroughly so they know how she will behave and also map where the peaks and troughs of emotion are so

that Toni isn't yelling all the time! These are just some of challenges for the actor playing a role like this.

What do you think are the main messages in *Appropriate*?

I think one of the main messages of the play are questions about what is appropriate (suitable) and how people appropriate (take without permission) other people and/or objects. What is appropriate for people to witness, take, sell, own? Another is the question of racism and fear/ignorance of the 'other', i.e. of people and ideas you refuse to have a personal and empathetic association with, for example, the African American people who were traded as slaves.

What has been your experience working on this show and what is your connection to it?

My experience working on the play *Appropriate* has been pure joy. Importantly, the cast trust each other. We feel emotionally safe to share and portray big emotions within the play and we also feel physically safe with each other as we need to interact physically with each other. Also, the cast and our Director, Nathaniel Lees, worked closely together to discover the emotional journey of all the characters so that our performances have depth and knowledge from knowing the play well. We talked about the play and its messages (themes) constantly. Finally, the play *Appropriate* itself is very cleverly written so it gives the actor a lot to discover and continue to discover as the play is performed.

RACE, IDENTITY, AND THE AMERICAN PLAY

BRANDEN JACOBS-JENKINS

“Theatre is a place where you're supposed to transform, where you're supposed to experience the magic of being something, but not being something. And you know, that's all about identity, that's all about race as we've received it.” Branden Jacobs-Jenkins

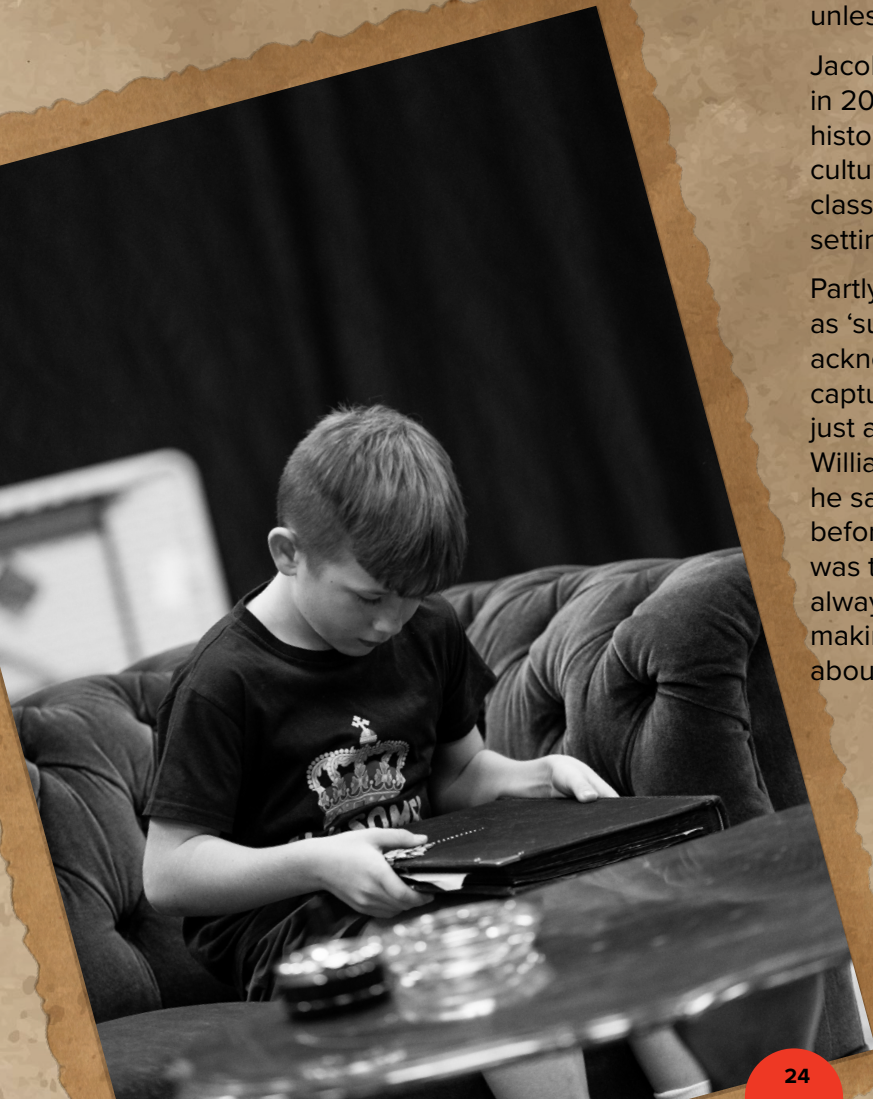
Race is an inescapable fact of life for Jacob-Jenkins and so he brought it into creative works, particularly his earlier plays *Neighbors*, *Appropriate* and *Octaroon*, in the early 2010s. Family is where we learn much of what we come to believe about the world and our own identity, and the frame in which Jacob-Jenkins sets these stories are domestic ones, in which the familiar works to highlight incongruity and create discomfort.

“It's possible to get very far along in life and have unfinished business with people. Every book ends, and you feel something is resolved, but life can be weird. Relationships warp people, and they carry that to new people. Being alive is about trying not to be too warped and staying yourself as much as you can.”

In *Appropriate*, Jacob-Jenkins has written a story about family and these warped relationships that mould us. He has also created a story that comments on race yet is inhabited only by white characters. What – or rather, who – is missing, speaks loudly in its visual absence. “Because the trappings were just what – you know, quiet as it's kept – we bring into a space, and how we are trained to politicise bodies in the context of the theatre. So, how do I actually get around that unless I make getting around that the point”.

Jacob-Jenkins was named a MacArthur Fellow in 2016, with the foundation noting his “use a historical lens to satirise and comment on modern culture, particularly the ways in which race and class are negotiated in both private and public settings.”

Partly for that reason, his work has been described as ‘subversive’ and ‘innovative’. He has also been acknowledged as a playwright who expertly captures the nuances of domestic American life, just as his heroes Sam Shepherd, Tennessee Williams and Eugene O'Neill have. All of them, he says, have been telling stories about race long before him; many of us didn't notice, because it was through the dominant lens many stories were always told. “So, do you think that you've not been making work about race? You've been making work about whiteness.”



The role of the **ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER**

HAYDON DICKIE

What is the role of an ASM?

It's the job of an Assistant Stage Manager to be the right hand to the Stage Manager. An ASM takes charge of the stage setup preshow. It's our job to make sure all the props/set pieces are where they need to be before the show starts. We are also responsible for props tracking and making sure all props are in a safe working condition for the show and reporting to the Stage Manager if something needs changing or fixing. During the show we also take responsibility to move set pieces, move props backstage so they are where they need to be for the actors at any given moment. This is extremely useful on bigger shows at the theatre so that the Stage Manager can focus on calling the show.

What do you do during the production?

I am responsible for keeping up to date props tracking lists for the pre-set for the show. I also am in charge of organizing the reset of the stage before every show before Jo (the Stage Manager) comes through and does final checks to make sure everything is ready to go.

I also make sure all the backstage props are set and ready for the actors. This show also has working phones and a torch. It's my job to make sure these are all charged/working before every show. A character also gets wet during the show, it's my job to organize the water he uses and makes sure it's warm for him to wet himself.

I also am the extra person next to the Chaperones backstage to make sure the children who play Ainsley are where they need to be to go on stage. This particular play also has a very small role at the end of the play that required an actor that wasn't in the rest of the play. I was asked to do this small role as well.

This means I go on in costume as the building inspector at the end of the play to survey the house before the show ends.

How did you end up in this role? What pathway did you take?

I started my arts journey in the Court Youth Company where I performed in four shows with the Company from 2019-2020. From there, I asked if I could work behind the scenes on the show for the next year because I loved the script for the show. When I came to the first rehearsal, I had a long chat with the Director who then asked me to stage manage the show. I wound up loving it and wanted to do it as a career.

Since then, The Court Theatre has given me amazing opportunities to learn and develop my skills. I have worked as an Assistant Stage Manager on a few big shows to learn how to run a show and I recently got the opportunity to stage manage my first big show for the theatre. I have also had the opportunity to work with NZ Opera as an ASM.

What has your experience been working on the show?

This is one of the most well written shows I've had the privilege of being a part of. Every time I watch the show, I discover something new that writer Brandon Jacob-Jenkins has put into his world. It's a pleasure to be a part of such a complex piece of theatre. From an ASM point of view, this show offers some unique opportunities that not every show offers. Such as the set destruction at the end of the play. It's been a great learning experience to see how things like that can work behind the scenes.

REVIEWS

Reviews are a really important part of theatre; it is great to hear other people's perspectives and thoughts on the show!

Check out some reviews of The Court Theatre's opening night performance of *Appropriate*.

Backstage Christchurch: [Backstage Christchurch - Theatre Reviews | Christchurch | Facebook](#)

Theatreview: Appropriate: [Theatreview](#)

Flat City Field Notes: Review: [Appropriate – a provocative dark comedy about the meaning of inheritance](#)

HAVE A GO

Do some research into this play and its context. Write your own review of your experience watching the play and thoughts on the performance.



THE
COURT
EDUCATION