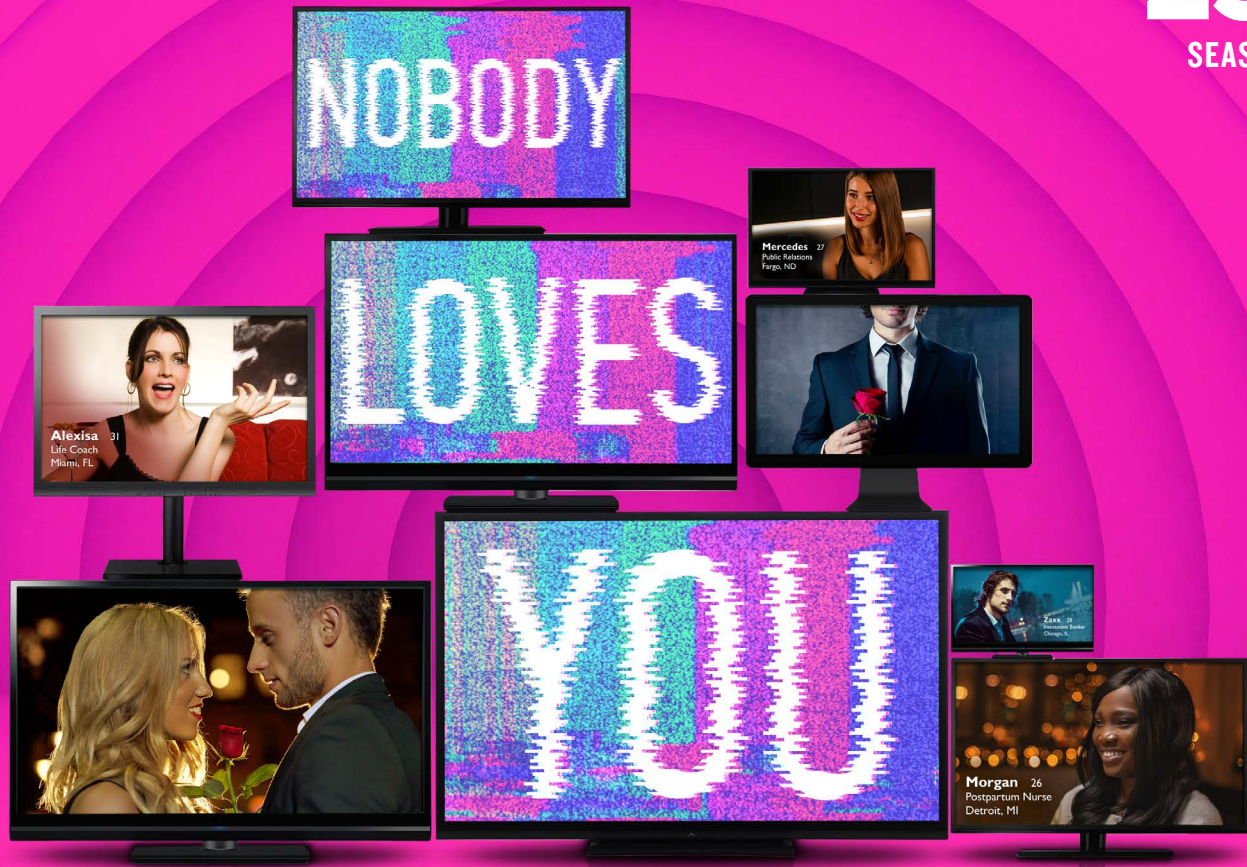


A.C.T. AMERICAN
CONSERVATORY
THEATER

THIS IS YOUR THEATER,
SAN FRANCISCO

24 SEASON
25 SEASON 58



A MUSICAL

Book by **Itamar Moses**

Lyrics by

Gaby Alter and Itamar Moses

Music by **Gaby Alter**

Choreographed by **Steph Paul**

Directed by **Pam MacKinnon**

RESOURCE & ACTIVITY GUIDE

WELCOME!

A.C.T.
EDUCATION &
COMMUNITY
PROGRAMS

We're excited to launch American Conservatory Theater's production of *Nobody Loves You!* This satirical musical comedy takes audiences on a hilarious journey through the world of reality TV dating shows. The play features book and lyrics by Itamar Moses, music and lyrics by Gaby Alter, and direction by A.C.T.'s Artistic Director Pam MacKinnon. Whether you're a high school student, an educator, or an adult with a love for theater, this guide will provide insights, activities, and discussion points to enhance your experience.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide explores how *Nobody Loves You* delves into the search for authenticity and connection in a world driven by spectacle and performance. It offers insights into the creative process, the inspiration behind the show, and the humor that defines this witty and thought-provoking musical. The guide also includes thought-provoking questions on authenticity, relationships, media, and reality TV to spark meaningful discussions.

These resources are for everyone—teachers, students and audience members of all ages.

For educators, it provides interactive activities that can be adapted for classroom discussions, group projects, or individual assignments, with sections designed to promote critical thinking, self-reflection, and social-emotional learning. Whether you're activating pair-shares, small group discussions, or full-class conversations, the guide includes step-by-step instructions and discussion prompts that can be scaffolded for different grade levels, interests and cross-curricular connections.

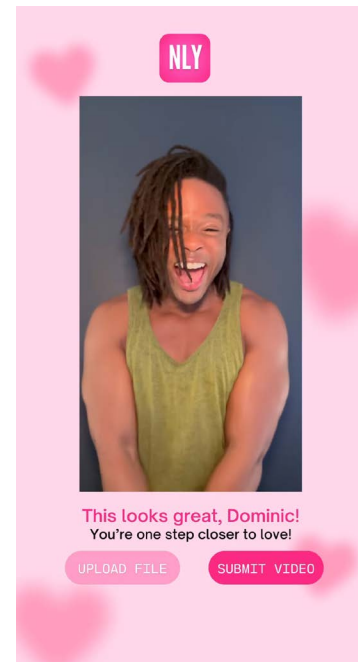
Developed in January 2025 by the A.C.T. Education and Community Programs team:

Editor	Natalie Greene
Content creation	Sierra Gonzalez
Design	Dani Karonis

Reach out to us at education@act-sf.org with questions, feedback, and support needs. For a full PDF version with click-able links, visit <https://www.act-sf.org/whats-on/2024-25-season/nobody-loves-you/>.

We hope you enjoy the guide and activate its pages alongside your imagination. Together, let's explore the intersection of love, authenticity, and connection in our modern, media-saturated world!

⚠ Content Advisory: This is a comedic musical exploring reality TV, and includes adult situations, rare mild profanity, nonexplicit consensual intimacy, and references to substance abuse. Educators may wish to preview themes before engaging with students.



NOBODY LOVES YOU SYNOPSIS



SYNOPSIS

Philosophy graduate student Jeff reluctantly auditions for a reality TV dating show, *Nobody Loves You*, in an attempt to win back his ex-girlfriend, Tanya. However, when Tanya doesn't make the cast, Jeff decides to stay on the show as an observer for his dissertation. He aims to study the contestants' behavior and analyze the nature of relationships in a manufactured environment.

Amidst the over-the-top antics of the contestants and the manipulative tactics of the producers, Jeff finds himself drawn into the absurdity of the show. Unexpectedly, he forms a genuine connection with Jenny, a sharp and skeptical assistant producer who shares his disdain for the fabricated world of reality TV. Together, they navigate the tension between authenticity and performance while confronting their own vulnerabilities.

The play humorously critiques the obsession with reality television, the performative nature of relationships in a media-driven age, and the cultural tension between being watched and being real. At its heart, *Nobody Loves You* explores universal questions: What does it mean to be authentic in a world dominated by spectacle? Can true connections flourish when love becomes a public performance?

"In a world where every kiss comes at the end of a selfie stick, can two people really connect?"
— *Nobody Loves You*



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CREATIVE INSPIRATION

INSIGHTS INTO THE CREATIVE PROCESS AND HUMOR BEHIND THE PLAY

The idea for *Nobody Loves You* came from watching how much reality TV influences how people think about love and relationships. Playwright Itamar Moses and composer Gaby Alter wanted to create a musical that pokes fun at these shows while still asking big questions about what it means to be real and find true connection. Moses, who wrote the Broadway musical *The Band's Visit*, loves mixing humor with moments that feel deeply personal. Alter, known for his catchy, pop-inspired songs, worked to make the music just as bold and funny as the show's characters. Together, they found a way to make you laugh at reality TV's over-the-top drama while thinking about how we all perform a little for others. They wanted the musical to feel fun and relatable but also to make you wonder: Can you really be yourself when the whole world is watching?

The following resources offer valuable perspectives on how the creators infused humor and social commentary into the musical, as well as their reflections on the reality TV phenomenon that inspired the show.



[Video Interview with Itamar Moses and Gaby Alter \(1:24\)](#)

This interview features the writing team discussing the development and inspiration behind the musical.



[National Alliance for Musical Theatre \(NAMT\) Interview \(3:44\)](#)

An in-depth conversation with Moses and Alter about their collaboration and the themes they explore in the show.



[Old Globe Theatre's behind-the-scenes video \(2:56\)](#)

A look into the world premiere production of *Nobody Loves You*, including insights from the creators.



CORE THEMES + EXCLUSIVE INSIGHTS

FROM THE SHOW'S CREATORS



These five themes weave their way through the story and music of *Nobody Loves You*:

Love and Authenticity
The Tension Between Reality and Performance
Social Media and Public Persona
The Quest for Validation
The Illusion of Control

On the following pages, we unpack each theme and highlight how the story and the show's creators connect to each theme. Gain an insider's perspective on *Nobody Loves You* with excerpts from an interview with its creative team:

Pam MacKinnon (Director): Known for her ability to balance humor with heartfelt storytelling, MacKinnon discusses how she approached the play's satirical yet deeply human themes. She shares her thoughts on staging the tension between authenticity and performance in a way that feels relatable and comedic.

Itamar Moses (Playwright): Tony Award-winning playwright Moses reflects on his inspiration for *Nobody Loves You*, including how reality TV's artificiality mirrors societal struggles with authenticity. He talks about infusing the script with humor and meaningful commentary.

Gaby Alter (Composer): Known for his dynamic pop-inspired compositions, Alter delves into the process of creating a score that mirrors the energy and absurdity of reality TV while supporting the emotional arcs of the characters.

Tip for Educators: If a particular theme connects to your class' curriculum or social-emotional learning goals, consider inviting your class to read the corresponding page below, and use the reflection questions to prompt discussion or writing assignments, either before or after the performance.



1. LOVE AND AUTHENTICITY

- ♥ **Script focus:** The characters on the reality TV show *Nobody Loves You* perform their relationships, but they must eventually confront the tension between their genuine selves and the personas they put on for the cameras. Themes of love and authenticity permeate the story, especially with characters like Jeff, who begins with skepticism about the show's authenticity but comes to realize his own role in the performance of love.
- ♥ **From the show's creators:** Itamar Moses, Gaby Alter, and Pam MacKinnon discuss how the musical critiques reality TV's manipulation of relationships, aligning with Jeff's journey of realizing that genuine love is complicated by societal expectations and media portrayal.
 - **Itamar Moses**

We knew from the very beginning that we wanted the arc to be about a guy who thinks he's above it and then realizes he isn't. That he ends up being the one sort of indicted by the whole experience.
 - **Pam MacKinnon:**

Yeah, I mean, it is such fertile source material because I think these dating shows do carve out these archetypes. ... And it does feel like there's a sort of delicious, and also, I think for the audience, an exciting parallel for people to jump onto.
 - **Itamar Moses:**

Yeah, [it's] the journey of someone who's skeptical about these shows, seeing how they manipulate people, but then being forced to confront their own vulnerability. It's about how much we all want connection and love, even if it means performing to get it.
 - **Gaby Alter:**

Yeah, and that idea of performance is so heightened now. When we first started writing this, it was mostly reality TV. Now with social media, it's everywhere. People are performing their love lives on apps or on Instagram, and it's like, where's the line between authentic connection and the image of connection?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

How do societal expectations and the influence of media--like reality TV and social media--impact our ability to form authentic relationships? Can you think of a time when you or someone you know felt the need to "perform" in a relationship or social setting, and how did that affect the connection?



2. THE TENSION BETWEEN REALITY WITH PERFORMANCE

- ♥ **Script focus:** The show within the musical blurs the lines between reality and performance, where contestants and even fans like Evan perform for the cameras, creating a hyperreal world where every action is an act of self-presentation..
- ♥ **From the show's creators:** The interview explains how *Nobody Loves You* explores the way people act differently when they are being watched. Reality TV exaggerates people's personalities, and social media takes this further, with everyone performing a version of themselves. The musical looks at the struggle between being real and putting on a show for others
 - **Pam MacKinnon:**

It is such fertile source material because I think these dating shows do carve out these archetypes. So if you, as someone who auditions, are already performing a sense of self or the self you want portrayed even in your audition for the show, then the producers grab that and over the course of using that human being craft even more of a character, both in maybe the present tense making of the show, and then certainly again in the edit of the show. So the party kid as portrayed in the audition—that's why I have value for your program—just gets sort of ramped up if that's useful for the season and it does feel like in the American musical comedy that these archetypes just are incredibly useful. So yeah, it does feel like there's a sort of delicious, and also I think for the audience, easy or more than easy, but sort of exciting parallel for people to jump on to.
 - **Itamar Moses:**

If you think also about those archetypes, you can match them to much older stories. You can go back to commedia dell'arte or to ancient Greece or something, and you can find the types. Theater and storytelling have always trafficked in these sorts of archetypes.
 - **Pam MacKinnon:**

Yep, a hundred percent. And that's whether the reality, the genius reality TV producers know it or not, they are touching ancient, almost like primordial storytelling characters, which is super, super gratifying. How in the intervening years, or what are some changes that have, as the world has changed and the sense of performing self maybe has now definitely gone beyond getting cast into a reality TV dating show, how has the musical continued to evolve given... the preponderance of millions, maybe even billions of people performing "self" on social media?
 - **Itamar Moses:**

Social media is proliferated and [there is an] ecosystem of people going on things like The Bachelor, and then having been on The Bachelor becomes their career because they go on subsequent shows like Bachelor in Paradise, and then they're on Instagram, and they're influencers. And then people, without even going on those shows, now seek being an influencer as a job. You make YouTube and TikTok like, so we had to change a few things about the show just to acknowledge basic realities about the world. But I think Gaby's right that the big difference is now, I think the lens through which everyone can see what the show is saying is a lot more acute.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What does the tension between authenticity and performance look like in your own life? How do you navigate these roles? How have you seen other people navigate these roles?



3. SOCIAL MEDIA AND PUBLIC PERSONA

- ♥ **Script focus:** The reality TV setting of *Nobody Loves You* plays with the idea of personas being crafted for public consumption. Characters like Tanya join the show to escape their real lives and create an idealized public persona, mirroring the modern obsession with curating personal brands.
- ♥ **From the show's creators:** The discussion in the interview highlights how social media has amplified this phenomenon, making the concept of public persona even more pronounced since the original conception of the show. The inclusion of songs like “The Twitter Song” directly addresses the role of social media in shaping relationships and personal identity.
 - **Itamar Moses:**

Social media has proliferated, and the ecosystem of people going on things like *The Bachelor* and then having been on *The Bachelor* becomes their career because they go on subsequent shows like *Bachelor in Paradise*, and then they're on Instagram, and they're influencers. And then people, without even going on those shows, now seek being an influencer as a job. You make YouTube and TikTok like, so we had to change a few things about the show just to acknowledge basic realities about the world.
 - **Gaby Alter:**

Yeah. I think in some ways it just changes the context of the show and maybe heightens the points we were trying to make. Because originally, I remember Itamar and I were talking about this question of why do people want to be watched? I mean, sort of a question about fame and that was one of maybe the original questions we had going into the show. So I feel like that's just, now, that's even more exaggerated in the era of social media, right?
 - **Itamar Moses:**

Yeah, I agree. If you think about what the landscape was in 2007 or 2008, which was when we were writing the first draft, and then even 2012, 2013, which was when the musical had its first cycle of productions, 2007 I think was the year I joined Facebook. There was no Instagram, and Twitter was still new. Now, we live in a world where everyone performs their lives all the time, not just reality TV contestants. That changes the way audiences relate to the show because the theme of performing for public attention isn't just about a few people on TV—it's about all of us.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

How do the themes of love and performance in *Nobody Loves You* relate to your experiences with social media and the way people present themselves online? When consuming social media, what signals that someone is presenting themselves in a false or highly-curated way, vs. an authentic and real way? If you have a social media presence, what are your approaches and preferences?

CORE THEMES + EXCLUSIVE INSIGHTS

FROM THE SHOW'S CREATORS

4. THE QUEST FOR VALIDATION

♥ **Script focus:** Throughout the show, characters like Samantha and Christian seek validation in love, but they also navigate the game-like nature of reality TV, where their self-worth is tied to their performance in front of the camera.

♥ **From the show's creators:** The creators note that the show originally explored the idea of people seeking fame and approval, which now feels even more relevant in the age of influencers and social media. This excerpt supports the idea that characters like Samantha and Christian seek validation in love but also play into the “game” of reality TV, where their personal worth is measured by audience reactions. The creators acknowledge that this theme is even more relevant today, with social media making public validation a constant part of relationships and identity.



- **Pam MacKinnon:**

Yeah, I mean, it is such fertile source material because I think these dating shows do carve out these archetypes. So if you, as someone who auditions, you're already performing a sense of self or the self you want portrayed even in your audition for the show, then the producers grab that and over the course of using that human being craft even more of a character, both in maybe the present tense making of the show, and then certainly again in the edit of the show.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

How does social media and reality TV influence the way people seek validation in relationships? Do you think the pressure to present a “perfect” version of love and self affects how people experience real connections? Why or why not?





5. THE ILLUSION OF CONTROL

- ♥ **Script focus:** The contestants believe they are in control of their fate in the show, but the producers, like Nina, dictate the terms. This creates a narrative about how individuals' lives are manipulated and orchestrated, both in the context of reality TV and in broader societal structures.
- ♥ **From the show's creators:** The creators point out that, even though the show is about finding love, the true message is that the show manipulates and exploits people's emotional vulnerabilities, a commentary on control in media and relationships.
 - **Pam MacKinnon:**

It is such fertile source material because I think these dating shows do carve out these archetypes. So if you, as someone who auditions, you're already performing a sense of self or the self you want portrayed even in your audition for the show, then the producers grab that and over the course of using that human being craft even more of a character, both in maybe the present tense making of the show, and then certainly again in the edit of the show.
 - **Itamar Moses:**

We knew from the very beginning that we wanted the arc to be about a guy who thinks he's above it and then realizes he isn't. That he ends up being the one sort of indicted by the whole experience.
 - **Gaby Alter:**

Yeah. I think in some ways it just changes the context of the show and maybe heightens the points we were trying to make. Because originally, I remember Itamar and I were talking about this question of why do people want to be watched? I mean, sort of a question about fame and that was one of maybe the original questions we had going into the show. But the deeper message is that these shows are designed to create emotional highs and lows for the sake of entertainment. The producers are in charge, and the contestants are just reacting to what's being orchestrated behind the scenes.
 - **Itamar Moses:**

Yeah, that's right. There's this feeling that the contestants believe they have choices, but those choices are so controlled and manipulated by the structure of the show that they're basically just playing out a script they didn't write. I think that's one of the biggest critiques we built into "Nobody Loves You"—the idea that reality TV sells an illusion of agency when, in fact, it's about control.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

How do reality TV shows—and social media—create the illusion that people have control over their own stories when, in reality, they are being shaped by outside forces? Can you think of ways this happens in real life, beyond entertainment?

WORD SEARCH



I D Q Z F D G L D S M J G G A G N M I I V D X
D R J B F P K V J O O Y H W M O W K O V K F Z
A A E Z Y H J D J C S T N L L A C I S U M Y L
T M V Y N I T N S I E I Y I M I S A T I R E L
I A O T H L N C E A S C H G H S C R I P T J D
N F L I N O A I L L F I E H U R O M A N C E I
G K P L O S T N F M Y T N T G Z A V H B N H R
S C S A I O S I I E N N O I T A R E G G A X E
H A A E T P E M E D N E R N U A L T E R K J C
O R H R C H T O N I E H A G P R O D U C E R T
W T T J E Y N D A A J T M X S S L P J D H Y O
L D N E N E O O V W S U A E L C A T C E P S R
F N A F N Y C V E B U A T X U E C N E I D U A
A U M F O B A Y N A T H I F B Y R O N J H X G
F O A U C A E Y W E P E R F O R M A N C E T G
P S S M F G V S C O D E H C T A W U B Y L U D

Characters:

JEFF
JENNY
TANYA
BYRON
SAMANTHA
DOMINIC
EVAN

Themes:

REALITY
AUTHENTICITY
LOVE
PERFORMANCE
CONNECTION
PHILOSOPHY

Playwrights and Creators:

ITAMAR
GABY
ALTER
MOSES

Key Terms:

SELFIE
PRODUCER
CONTESTANT
SATIRE
MUSICAL
WATCHED

Related Concepts:

SOCIAL MEDIA
DRAMA
SCRIPT
DATING SHOW
LIGHTING
SOUNDTRACK
AUDIENCE
DIRECTOR
ROMANCE
EXAGGERATION
SPECTACLE

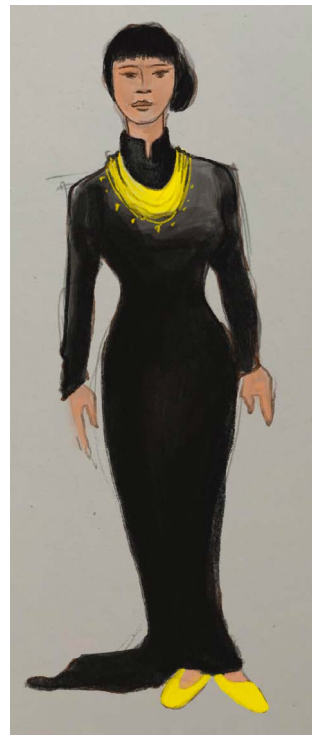
EXPLORING REALITY TV ACTIVITY SEQUENCE

CREATING, PERFORMING, AND PRODUCING CHARACTERS

In *Nobody Loves You*, contestants on a reality TV dating show must balance being their authentic selves with playing a version of themselves for the cameras. The following three activities allow students to create a unique reality TV contestant, act them out, and curate a mini mock reality TV production.

Each activity builds on the next, guiding students from character creation to performance and reflection. However, they are also designed to stand alone so they can be used as individual assignments as needed.

- Activity 1: **Create Your Own Contestant** – Students design a unique reality TV character, developing their personality, motivations, and on-camera persona.
- Activity 2: **The Authenticity vs. Performance Challenge** – Students step into the role of their contestant, performing as if they were part of a reality TV show.
- Activity 3: **On-Camera vs. Off-Camera Persona** – Students explore how their character behaves when the cameras are on versus when they think no one is watching.



ACTIVITY 1: CREATE YOUR OWN CONTESTANT

CHARACTER CREATION ACTIVITY

Before stepping into the world of reality TV, students will design their own unique contestant for *Nobody Loves You*, a reality dating show. This activity encourages creativity, character development, and critical thinking about how contestants are portrayed and why they might behave a certain way in such an environment.

Students will create their contestant in their journal, workbook, or using the provided worksheet.

1. Brainstorm Your Contestant

- Name: What is your contestant's name? Is it flashy, quirky, or simple?
- Background: Where are they from? What's their story? (e.g., occupation, hobbies, family life)
- Personality: Are they dramatic, funny, shy, or competitive?
- Motivations: Why are they on the show? Are they looking for love, fame, or personal growth?

2. Define Their Role on the Show

What type of contestant are they? For example:

- The Drama Starter
- The Underdog Everyone Roots For
- The Overachiever
- The Wildcard

How do they interact with other contestants and producers?

3. Describe Their Reality Show Persona

What is their on-screen "brand"? (e.g., flirty, mysterious, outspoken)

What's their signature catchphrase or behavior that makes them stand out?

4. Visualize the Contestant

- What do they wear on the show? (e.g., glamorous outfits, quirky accessories)
- How would they appear in promo photos or social media posts?



Optional Activities!

- **Let's See It:** Draw a portrait or create a digital mockup of the contestant. Use the costume mock-ups from *Nobody Loves You* as inspiration when shaping your character's look, personality, and overall vibe. Think about their gestures, posture, and nonverbal expressions to bring them to life.
- **Social Media Post:** Write a fictional tweet or Instagram caption from their perspective.
- **Role-play:** Act out a scene as your contestant, interacting with the show host or another contestant.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What inspired the choices you made for your contestant? How do you think the audience would react to your character? What does this activity reveal about how people behave on reality TV versus in real life?

ACTIVITY 1: CREATE YOUR OWN CONTESTANT

CONTINUED



MY *NOBODY LOVES YOU* CONTESTANT WORKSHEET

Use the questions on the page above to help you brainstorm and define your character.

1. Brainstorm Your Contestant

Contestant Name: _____

Background:	Personality:	Motivations:
-------------	--------------	--------------

2. Define Their Role on the Show

What type of contestant are they?	How do they interact with other contestants and producers?
-----------------------------------	--

3. Describe Their Reality Show Persona

What is their on-screen "brand"?	What's their signature catchphrase or behavior that makes them stand out?
----------------------------------	---

ACTIVITY 1: CREATE YOUR OWN CONTESTANT

CONTINUED

4. Visualize the Contestant

What do they wear on the show?	How would they appear in promo photos or social media posts?
--------------------------------	--

5. Create a Story Arc

What's their journey on the show?	Do they stay authentic or lean into playing a character for the cameras?
-----------------------------------	--

NEXT STEP: BRING YOUR CONTESTANT TO LIFE

Now that students have created their contestant, it's time to step into their shoes in the next activity
The Authenticity vs. Performance Challenge

ACTIVITY 2: THE AUTHENTICITY VS.

PERFORMANCE CHALLENGE



OBJECTIVE:

In *Nobody Loves You*, people on reality TV try to be real while also acting for the cameras. This activity builds on the contestant characters students just created, allowing them to step into their roles and experience the challenge of balancing authenticity with entertainment.

At the end of this exercise, students will transition into the next activity, **On-Camera vs. Off-Camera Persona**, which explores how their character behaves when they think no one is watching.

ROLES

Each group will divide into the following roles:

- **Contestants:** Play the characters they created in the last activity, deciding how much of their real selves to show on camera.
- **Producer/Cameraperson (Same Person):** Controls the show's direction, pushing for drama, telling contestants how to act, and deciding when to film. Says **"Action!"** to start filming and **"Cut!"** to stop, holding up an imaginary camera while filming. *Note that in real life, the Producer and Cameraperson are different people, however we have consolidated the roles for the purpose of this game.*
- **Host:** Guides the show by asking exciting or emotional questions to get strong reactions. These could be personal, dramatic, or surprising.

Teaching Tip:

To help students understand how the Producer and Host control the narrative, have a teacher or adult play the Host and/or Producer roles in the first few rounds before inviting a student to take over. Please note in this game the Host has a bigger role, and in the next game the Producer has a bigger role.

SCENARIO SETUP

Your group will act out a **pivotal reality TV moment**. Choose from the options below, or create your own:

Option 1: Confessional Interview

Contestants will be interviewed about their experience on the show.

- Sample Interview Questions:
 - "What's your biggest fear in this competition?"
 - "Why do you want to find love?"
 - "What's one secret you haven't told anyone?"
 - "How do you think the audience sees you?"
 - "Who do you trust the least in this competition?"
- **Create Your Own:** Students should come up with at least 2 additional dramatic or emotional questions.

ACTIVITY 2

CONTINUED



Option 2: Challenge Competition

Contestants will compete in a simple but dramatic challenge.

- **Suggested Challenges:**
 - **Musical Chairs:** A high-stakes version of the classic game. Play up the drama—contestants who lose must give a confessional on why they failed.
 - **Rapid-Fire Q/A:** The host asks absurd or difficult questions, and contestants must answer under pressure. Consider adding pressure by the host using a timer, perhaps 10 seconds per question.
 - **Talent Show:** Contestants must showcase a talent or skill for the audience / other contestant. Strange and made-up “talents” encouraged!
 - **Create Your Own:** Groups can invent their own reality-show style challenge.

Option 3: Elimination Ceremony

Contestants will experience an elimination round where one of them is sent home.

- **Fill-in-the-Blank Script:** Have students complete the following Mad Libs-style elimination script and perform it:

Host: “Tonight, one of you will be leaving the competition. It’s been a tough decision, but the person who will not be staying is _____ (Contestant Name) _____.”

Contestant: (Choose: “Wait, what?!” / “I knew this was coming...” / “This is total B.S.!”)

Remaining Contestants: (Choose one: Awkward silence / Gasps of shock and awe / Fake comforting gestures, feeling sorry for them / etc..)

Host: “Before you leave, do you have any final words?”

Eliminated Contestant: _____ (Fill in their final speech—do they go out dramatically, gracefully, or angrily?)

- **Create Your Own:** Students can modify the script to make it more personalized or dramatic.

Reflection Questions

Once the reality TV scene is complete, take a moment to reflect:

- How did your character present themselves on camera?
- Were they acting differently than how they might behave in real life?
- Did they exaggerate certain traits to be more entertaining? Or cover up real-life traits to be more likeable?

Now, take this further in the next activity, **On-Camera vs. Off-Camera Persona**, where you will step into what happens when the cameras are off.

ACTIVITY 3: ON-CAMERA VS. OFF-CAMERA PERSONA



OBJECTIVE:

Reality TV contestants craft a version of themselves for the audience, but who are they when the cameras aren't rolling? This activity explores the difference between how characters behave on-camera versus off-camera and how reality TV influences public personas.

This exercise builds on The Authenticity vs. Performance Challenge by shifting the focus. In the last activity, students performed as contestants on a reality show, shaping their on-camera image. Now, they will explore what happens when the cameras turn off—does their character act the same, or do they let down their guard?

SETTING UP THE ACTIVITY:

Before jumping into the off-camera scene, students should reflect on their character's public vs. private self and brainstorm details to make their performance more authentic.

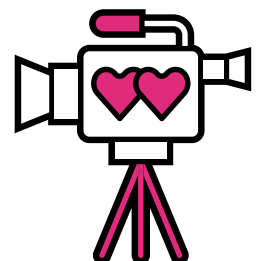
At the start of this activity, students (individually or as a group) should decide:

- How much of their on-camera personality is real?
- What emotions or traits are they hiding from the audience?
- Do they feel pressured to play a certain role (e.g., villain, underdog, flirt)?
- How do they really feel about the competition, the producers, and the other contestants?

Each contestant should think about where their off-camera moment will take place. The setting can influence how open or guarded their character is. Possible locations include:

- **Backstage area** – Contestants drop the act while waiting between scenes. Do they gossip, scheme, or vent about the competition?
- **Confessional booth** – A private moment meant for the cameras, but does the contestant keep up the performance, or do they slip up and reveal something real?
- **Personal space** (dressing room, lounge, bedroom) – Where contestants think they are alone or only with trusted allies. Do they break down, form real friendships, or strategize off the record?
- **Off-camera producer conversation** – A producer pushes a contestant to stir up drama, coaches them on what to say, or edits the footage to change the audience's perception.

These moments can be randomly assigned (draw from a hat), chosen by the producer, or selected by the contestant themselves based on what best fits their character's arc.



ACTIVITY 3

CONTINUED

PERFORM & COMPARE:

1. Act out the off-camera moment, focusing on how contestants behave when they aren't being filmed.
2. Immediately transition into an on-camera version of the same situation. How does everything change when the cameras are rolling?
 - Does their body language become more exaggerated?
 - Do they suddenly play up emotions for the audience?
 - Does the tone of the scene shift as contestants perform for the show?
3. Compare the two versions and reflect on the differences.

AUDIENCE REFLECTION & FEEDBACK:

After the scene, the group (or a designated audience) engages in a discussion to analyze the performance and its themes.

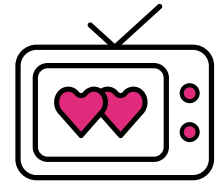
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How did the setting change the way your character acted?
- Who in your group acted completely different off-camera vs. on-camera?
- Did anyone stay the same in both versions? Why?
- How does space influence how we behave in real life—do people act differently in private vs. in public?
- What does this say about how reality TV and social media shape what audiences believe?



MEDIA LITERACY ACTIVITY

THE TRUTH BEHIND REALITY TV



GOAL: Analyze how reality TV constructs “reality” and shapes audience perceptions.

OBJECTIVE: This activity helps students analyze how reality TV constructs “reality” and shapes audience perceptions. By breaking down the techniques used in reality television, students will explore how performance and editing influence what viewers believe, connecting these ideas to *Nobody Loves You*.

Introduction: Reality TV is a genre where real people (not actors) are filmed in unscripted situations, but much of what we see is heavily edited or staged to create drama and entertainment ([Wikipedia](#)). To start, students will brainstorm reality TV shows they are familiar with. Some examples include dating shows like [Love Island](#) (recoupling moments, 7:35) and [Love Is Blind](#) (emotional confrontations in the pods, 1:57), competition shows like [Survivor](#) (strategy discussions and eliminations, 13:22), and social experiment shows like [The Circle](#) (catfish reveals, 4:22).

Watch a Clip: Show a short clip from a reality TV show or a scene from *Nobody Loves You* that demonstrates how contestants perform for the cameras or how editing shapes a story. Possible clips include [The Bachelor](#) (dramatic elimination, 4:03), [The Real Housewives](#) (reality TV argument, 5:33), or [Big Brother](#) (contestant confessionals, 3:24), or the examples included above.

Activity: Break students into small groups and assign each group a different role in analyzing the same clip. Contestants will discuss their real motivations and whether they are acting for the cameras. Producers will analyze how editing and direction shape the audience’s perception of the contestants. The Audience group will consider what assumptions viewers make about contestants and how editing influences their beliefs about what is real. Each group will analyze the clip from their perspective and share their findings.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How much of reality TV is scripted or manipulated? How do you know?
- What techniques do producers use to create drama?
- Do contestants feel pressure to “perform” a role?
- How does this connect to *Nobody Loves You* and its themes of performance and authenticity?
- What responsibility do reality TV producers have in shaping public perception?

Extension Activity: Students will create a storyboard for a fictional reality TV scene, showing what really happens versus how it is edited for drama. They should think about how producers use music, confessionals, and cuts to change a story.



FANTASTIC VIDEO RESOURCES



Take a peek behind the curtain of *Nobody Loves You!* These videos and interviews give you a chance to hear directly from the creative team and cast about the process of bringing the show to life. Learn about the inspiration behind the musical, how reality TV influenced the story, and what goes into making the characters and themes resonate on stage.

[Meet the Writers: Itamar Moses and Gaby Alter](#) (1:24)



- *What's inside:* A fun chat with the playwright and composer about how they came up with the idea for *Nobody Loves You* and how they tackled blending humor with heart.
- *Question to consider:* How do the writers' thoughts on reality TV shape the story and characters?

[Reality TV in Real Life: Heath Calvert Talks Byron](#) (1:55)



- *What's inside:* *Step into the Wacky World of Reality TV with Nobody Loves You's Heath Calvert*, the show explores how we perceive ourselves through an eclectic cast spanning generations, blending *Big Brother* and *The Bachelorette* dynamics. It highlights how social media shapes our identities and influences real connections, offering something valuable for everyone, from young viewers to those in their 60s.
- *Question to consider:* What is the relationship between finding love, being authentic, and creating a persona in *Nobody Loves You*, and how are these elements brought together in the show?

THE GENTLE ABSURDITY OF COMEDY



Gaby Alter, Itamar Moses, and Pam MacKinnon on the first day of rehearsal. Photo by Nakia Gibbs.

Nobody Loves You creators Itamar Moses and Gaby Alter have known each other since they were children. Director Pam MacKinnon sat down with them to talk about their origin stories, their inspirations, and how they found themselves writing about the evanescent world of reality TV.

PAM: I'd like to begin by asking both of you what was the original inspiration, the original spark for this musical?

Itamar: I literally remember where we were, Gaby. We were in a Thai restaurant. It's not there anymore, I think it's a bank now, but it was on the second floor of a building on 7th Avenue in Park Slope. So you and I were having dinner there, and we were thinking of doing a show together, and I remember pitching this idea I'd had: "Maybe it could be about reality TV."

Pam: And what year was this?

Gaby: 2006 or 2007.

Pam: What were the popular shows on in the moment?

Itamar: Back then, I think it was mainly *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette*, *Survivor*, and *The Real World*.

Gaby: There was also *Big Brother*.

Pam: So 2006, you have an idea. Gaby, when did you know what it would sound like?

Gaby: I tend to write things that are more pop influenced, and I like to try different genres of pop. We figured that because it was about

a reality show that it would have that kind of score, as opposed to a more traditional one. Once we got in a room together, we found more details of how it would sound based on the lyrics and the characters' voices, and the overall tone of the comedy, which is sort of silly and precise at the same time.

Pam: Who was the first character who popped onto the page?

Itamar: We knew early on that there were reality TV types that we would play around with, and that's where Samantha and Megan and Christian started to come from. Those were probably the first among the contestants and then

we knew we wanted a guy who we would follow through the story who was more like us. Jeff is sort of the avatar for me and Gaby, who's like, "Well, I'm skeptical about these shows and I can look down on them and see how they're manipulating people." But we knew from the very beginning that we wanted the arc to be about a guy who thinks he's above it...and then realizes he isn't.

Pam: It is such fertile source material, because these dating shows do carve out these archetypes. If you audition, you're already performing the self you want portrayed on the show, then the producers grab that.

Itamar: And, if you think about those archetypes—the wild girl, the shy guy, whatever—you realize that they're actually very old. You can find them in *commedia del arte*. Or ancient Greek plays. Theater and storytelling have always trafficked in these sort of archetypes.

Pam: How in the intervening years, as the world has changed, how has the musical continued to evolve? I'm most struck by the preponderance of millions, maybe even billions of people "performing self" on social media these days, and I wonder how that has crept into this show for you?

Gaby: In some ways it just changes the context of the show and heightens the points we were trying to make. Originally, Itamar and I were talking about this question of why do people want to be watched? And that's gotten even more exaggerated in the era of social media.

Itamar: Think about what the landscape was in 2007 or 2008, which was when we were writing the first draft. I think 2007 was the year I joined Facebook. Instagram launched in 2010. There was no TikTok. There was no Snapchat. And the landscape of reality TV was more limited and it was a little bit more niche and so at the time, we thought the show was functioning as a warning, in a way.

As a result of that, I think there was more distance between the show and the audience. But now, social media has proliferated, and merged with reality TV: people go on *The Bachelor* and then having been on *The Bachelor* becomes their career. They go on subsequent shows like *Bachelor in Paradise*, and then they're on Instagram, they have a podcast, they're influencers. People's entire lives are a performance.

Gaby: In 2007, there was some internet dating, right? But then that really crescendoed.

Itamar: That's right. I think Tinder exploded right after we first premiered this show. It is the gamification of all romance. And that also speaks to the themes of the show.

Pam: This musical has a company of eight actors—not a big musical, but also not a tiny musical. Can you talk about the fun of thinking through double casting? It feels

very specific—sometimes the double casting is a really awesome stretch for an actor, and sometimes it's sort of like, "Oh, it's a repetition of core." And I wondered how you approach this in writing it.

Itamar: Doubling and tripling is a thing that we (as an audience) accept in plays and musicals, but I think it generally works better if it's also part of a conscious aesthetic choice. It does have a financial advantage—it's cheaper to make the cast smaller—but if you're going to do that, I always like it to make sense. So you find ways for it to say something about how certain characters or similar, or different, or maybe special in a certain way because they don't double.

In *Nobody Loves You* in particular, it maybe also connects to this idea of the performance of self. But we didn't go into it thinking, "We'll use doubling to make

this subtle meta theatrical point about performing personality." It was just a practical consideration that ends up leading to certain fun echoes and jokes and maybe thematic resonance.

Pam: You talked a little bit, Gaby, about this being a pop score that plays in different genres. I wonder if, in thinking about for instance Dominic and Evan, played by the same actor, does doubling affect composing?

Gaby: I wouldn't say the doubling affects it. I think it's more about the characters and how you want to portray them musically.

Originally, [we] were talking about this question of why do people want to be watched?

Dominic is a “bro,” so his sound is kind of basic, straight-ahead rock. And then Evan is a gay man and kind of flamboyant, so I wanted his music to be more light and fun and upbeat. I usually just start out on instinct, and see if it works.

Pam: The two of you are both from the Bay Area, you both went to Berkeley High. How does having grown up in the Bay Area influence your artistic voice?

Gaby: I would say there’s sort of a gentle absurdity to our comedy, which plausibly comes from the Bay Area. There’s a place for goofiness in the Bay without being mean. A famous example is The Lonely Island, who like us are Gen X graduates of Berkeley High.

Itamar: I think that’s right, there’s definitely a Bay Area comic voice of which The Lonely Island—Andy Samberg, Akiva Schaffer, and Jorma Taccone, all of whom we went to high school with—is probably the most famous example. It seems to be characterized by a combination of intelligence and silliness and, like Gaby said, a lack of mean-spiritedness.

Gaby: And we’re both kids of academics. The main character in *Nobody Loves You*, Jeff, is an academic. I remember when we were starting this show, I was like, “How is the general public going to relate to this guy? He’s a PhD student.”

Itamar: Right and then the trick is that, while Jeff takes that very seriously, the show doesn’t. Because no one takes academia less seriously than the children of academics.

Gaby: That’s right.

Pam: And what does it mean to have this show produced at A.C.T.?

Itamar: It’s thrilling. I’m actually really excited and sort of moved by it because yes, it’s one of the major theaters near where I grew up and where I saw many of the seminal formative things.

Pam: And what were those, do you remember?

Itamar: I started really getting into theater in high school—I started thinking more about being a playwright and so that was when I started seeing everything at Berkeley Rep and A.C.T. But specifically, I remember seeing A.C.T.’s production of *Angels in America* [1994] and it was literally the next day that I started writing my first play. I mean, I’d read *Angels in America*, and I was interested in it, but I went to see it, and I was like, “I have to try to do this.” So it’s sort of the production that arguably pushed me over the edge into becoming a playwright, literally in the theater where we’re going to be doing this.

So that’s amazing but I also saw A.C.T.’s *Arcadia* and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, and more. And it was my first job in the theater the summer before my senior year of college. I was a TA in the Young Conservatory and read scripts in the literary office. I took BART into the city every day to go to the office on Grant Street. So I have a lot of very formative A.C.T. memories. Top that, Gaby.

Gaby: I can’t.

[laughter]

Gaby: But let’s see...in my twenties and late teens, my friends and I would write rock musicals together and self-produce them. We performed them at La Val’s Subterranean Theater—this little blackbox theater underneath a pizza parlor in North Berkeley. And that’s where I started doing musicals in 1993, so this is amazing. We did that for, I don’t know, ten years, before I moved to New York. A couple of times we performed in San Francisco in smaller spaces. But I mean, this is hard to believe that we’re actually doing our musical here at A.C.T.

Pam: Well, I’m thrilled that we’re doing this show. I’m thrilled that we get to be in the rehearsal hall together and build it. It’s not a world premiere, but there is so much to explore here. I think it’s best of both worlds: it’s new, but I think everyone agrees that we know how it works. So we have the creative space to try things, to stretch a bit, but there’s a clear roadmap.

Itamar: Exactly.

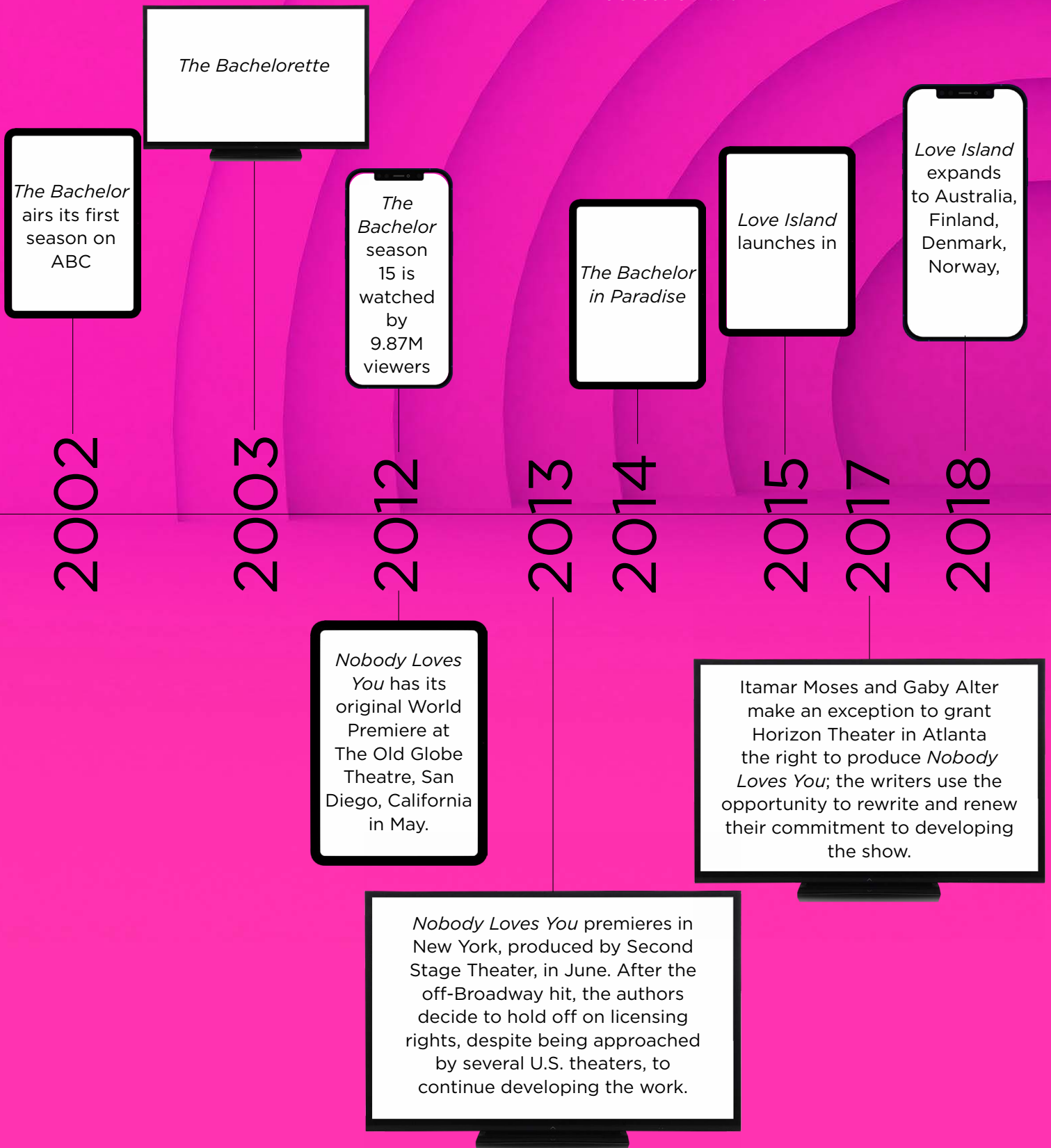
Gaby: Right, that’s right. Sturdy.

Pam: It’s a sturdy new musical.

CONSTRUCTING REALITY

BY XAVIER DZIELSKI

Since *Nobody Loves You's* first production 13 years ago, the "always-on" nature of personal performance has saturated all facets of American life, parallel to the rise of social media personalities and influencers. This production of *Nobody Loves You* seizes on a decade-long explosion of reality TV dating shows and their global domination, satirically needling the phenomenon and our obsession with it.



Nobody Loves You premieres in New York, produced by Second Stage Theater, in June. After the off-Broadway hit, the authors decide to hold off on licensing rights, despite being approached by several U.S. theaters, to continue developing the work.

2019

Viewers spend an average of 1.1 million minutes per month watching reality dating shows

2020

Love is Blind drops its first season on

2021

Viewers spend an average of 4.3 million minutes per month watching reality dating shows (a 300% increase over a 4-year period)

Moses, Alter, and MacKinnon lead a NYC-based script workshop in June, coming away with two new songs.

2023

The Golden Bachelor premieres, and is one of the most-watched premieres in franchise history

A 3-week developmental workshop takes place in May in New York, yielding significant casting, movement, and music composition progress.

2024

Love Island reaches production milestone of 25 franchise shows in 25 different countries

Nobody Loves You opens at American Conservatory Theater, running Feb 28-Mar 30!

2025

Love is Blind launches *Love Is Blind: Habibi*, its 9th franchise production in its 8th language (Arabic)

Itamar Moses approaches Pam MacKinnon, who has directed six productions of Moses's plays, about directing *Nobody Loves You*.

Designer Jason Ardizzone-West joins the project in January, and choreographer Steph Paul joins in March.

COMING TO THE THEATER

PRIOR TO YOUR VISIT

- Read the A.C.T. [“Rules of Play”](#) to learn more about how we hope you arrive, engage and enjoy the show!
- If your students would benefit from additional information about **theater etiquette**, consider discussing some of the points made by [Blake Theater](#).
- [Double check A.C.T.’s COVID-19 updates](#).
 - If you are feeling unwell, please stay home. If you or a member of your party is experiencing symptoms similar to those of COVID-19 or have had known exposure to someone with COVID-19, please stay home.
- [Learn about ACCESSIBILITY at A.C.T.](#)



WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU ARRIVE AT THE THEATER

- Front of House Staff, including security personnel, ushers, and house managers are trained to assist guests and ensure that safety measures are followed. If you feel uncomfortable or perceive a risk at any time, please speak with one of these team members.
- During the show, please stay in your seat unless using the restroom.
- No cell phone use during the performance. No photo, no video.

STUDENT MATINEE PERFORMANCE

- Students are welcome to bring water bottles, refill, and use them in the theater. We sell non- alcoholic drinks and light refreshments in Fred’s downstairs, at affordable prices for students and teachers! Food and glassware are not permitted in the auditorium. Beverages in lidded cups, cans, and single serve bottles may be enjoyed at your seat!
- To ensure a positive experience for all, we kindly request chaperones monitor noise and phone use when your group is in the theater. Likewise, we hope you let the students enjoy and experience the show on their own terms!
 - Laughter is welcome, and verbally responding to the show in a respectful way is welcome. We want the students to express themselves as they enjoy the show. Theater is alive and precious in that aliveness.
 - That said, disrespectful engagement is a bummer for many, and we ask you to help monitor for that. Encourage students to be present and mindful, and enjoy coming together to experience live theater.
- There will be a talkback after the Student Matinee; your students will have the opportunity to ask the performers questions! Please consider staying for the additional 15-20 minute engagement opportunity. Invite your students to consider their curiosities in advance, and encourage them to participate in the Q&A.



CAST

A MUSICAL



Jason Veasey
Byron



Molly Hager
Megan



Seth Hanson
Christian



A.J. Holmes
Jeff



Ashley D. Kelley
Nina/Tanya



John-Michael Lyles
Dominic/Evan



Ana Yi Puig
Samantha



Kuhoo Verma
Jenny



Sleiman Alahmadih
u/s Dominic/Evan, Byron



Sophia Alawi
u/s Jenny, Nina/Tanya



Stevie Allen
u/s Megan, Samantha



Roen Nooran
u/s Jeff, Christian

PAM
MACKINNON
Artistic Director

JENNIFER
BIELSTEIN
Executive Director



AMERICAN CONSERVATORY THEATER
PRESENTS

NOBODY LOVES YOU

THIS PRODUCTION IS MADE POSSIBLE BY

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David Jones and Joe D'Alessandro

FOUNDATION SUPPORT



OFFICIAL HOTEL PARTNER



BOOK AND LYRICS BY **ITAMAR MOSES**
MUSIC AND LYRICS BY **GABY ALTER**
CHOREOGRAPHED BY **STEPH PAUL**
DIRECTED BY **PAM MACKINNON**

THE CAST

Grips **Sophia Alawi***, **Stevie Allen**
Megan **Molly Hager***
Christian **Seth Hanson***
Jeff **A.J. Holmes***
Nina/Tanya **Ashley D. Kelley***
Dominic/Evan **John-Michael Lyles***
Samantha **Ana Yi Puig***
Byron **Jason Veasey***
Jenny **Kuhoo Verma***

UNDERSTUDIES

Dominic/Evan, Byron, Grip **Sleiman Alahmadieh*†**
Jenny, Nina/Tanya **Sophia Alawi***
Megan, Samantha **Stevie Allen**
Jeff, Christian, Grip **Roeeen Nooran**

STAGE MANAGEMENT

Production Stage Manager **Christopher R. Munnell***
Assistant Stage Manager **Julia Formanek***
Assistant Stage Manager **Nick Carvalho***

CREATIVE TEAM

Scenic Designer **Jason Ardizzzone-West**
Costume Designer **Sarita Fellows**
Lighting Designer **Russell H. Champa**
Sound Designer **Jessica Paz**
Orchestration & Arrangement **Gaby Alter**
Music Director **Jane Cardona**
Dramaturg **Joy Meads**
Casting **The Telsey Office / Lindsay Levine, CSA**
A.C.T. Casting **Lee Ann Dowd**
Associate Choreographer **Rickens Anatua**
Associate Music Director **Daniel Feyer**

A.C.T. PRODUCING TEAM

Associate Artistic Director **Andy Chan Donald**
Director of General Management & Operations **Louisa Liska**
General Manager **Amy Dalba**
Director of Production **Martin Barron**

Developed in part at Rhinebeck Writers Retreat

Nobody Loves You was presented at the National Alliance for Musical Theatre's Festival of New Musicals in 2012. www.namt.org

World Premiere presented at The Old Globe Theater, San Diego, California in May 2012

New York Premiere Produced by the Second Stage Theatre, New York, June 2013, Carole Rothman, Artistic Director

*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States
†Dance Captain

The videotaping or making of electronic or other audio and/or visual recordings of this production and distributing recordings or streams in any medium, including the internet, is strictly prohibited



THE BAND

Keyboard 1/ Conductor **Jane Cardona**
 Keyboard 2 **Daniel Feyer**
 Violin **Christina Walton**
 Guitar **Mike Smith**
 Cello **Ami Nashimoto**
 Bass **Kendra Kop**
 Drums **John Doing**

SONGS

*As of February 12, 2025. Subject to change.

Nobody Loves You
 I Just Want To Be Loved
 Nobody Loves You (Reprise)
 You're Incredibly Real
 Just Wait A Bit More ("I Just Want To Be Loved" Reprise)
 Come On In
 So Much To Hate
 The Twitter Song
 The Minefield Tango
 It Feels Good
 Love Is An Act
 Crush Ceremony
 Finally
 It Feels Good (Reprise)
 Love Triangle
 Final Crush Ceremony
 I Don't Care What Anybody Thinks
 You Let Me In ("Come On In" Reprise)
 Finale ("The Twitter Song" Reprise)

SETTING

The not-too-distant present



NOBODY LOVES... GOING HOME EMPTY HANDED

Visit our merch stand in the main lobby and check out *Nobody Loves You* themed items as well as general A.C.T. memorabilia! With a variety of items and price points, we've got something for everyone.



AFTER THE SHOW

Revisit parts of this guide that you didn't use before, including readings, videos & links, as well as activities and discussion prompts.

♥ **Questions for *Nobody Loves You* reflection, writing, or discussion:**

- Why produce *Nobody Loves You*, and why not? Did you feel the play connected with things happening in the world today? Did it resonate with you personally? Why or why not?
- How do the characters' decisions and attitudes towards love and authenticity reflect societal norms today, and in what ways might these dynamics resonate or clash with contemporary views on relationships and reality TV?
- Which parts of *Nobody Loves You* felt timeless to you, and why do you think people from both the past and today can relate to those moments?
- What did you think of the ending of the play? Were you satisfied with what happened to the relationships between the characters? Why or why not? If you could write an alternate ending, what would it be?

♥ **Use a "SEE - THINK - WONDER" discussion model:**

- What did you see in the show? What are some memorable moments, and why?
- What did you think during the show? What were your favorite moments, and why?
- What do you wonder about the show? What are you still curious about?
- If you could learn more about any of the characters, relationships, or events, what would you want to know?
- If you could learn more about any of the artists involved in the production, what would you want to know?

♥ **Creative responses:**

- Create something to send to the actors, director, creative team members, and production staff of *Nobody Loves You*. This could be a letter expressing opinions and asking questions, or it could be a creative response to the show (a poem, a song, a dance, a drawing, or a collage).

Email it to education@act-sf.org, and we will pass it along!

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NATIONAL ARTS STANDARDS ADDRESSED IN THIS GUIDE

<https://www.nationalartsstandards.org>

Creating: Conceiving and developing new artistic ideas and work.

Performing/Presenting/Producing: Realizing artistic ideas and work through interpretation and presentation.

Responding: Understanding and evaluating how the arts convey meaning.

Connecting: Relating artistic ideas and work with personal meaning and external context.

